

SITTIN' PRETTY

SURE, PERFORMANCE-RACING BUCKETS LOOK SMASHING, BUT THERE'S MORE BENEFITS TO SEATING UPGRADES THAN A FLASHY INTERIOR



ASK A TYPICAL MUSTANG ENTHUSIAST WHAT KIND OF UPGRADED EQUIPMENT THEIR DREAM-MACHINE WOULD HAVE AND CHANCES ARE THEY WILL RATTLE OFF THINGS SUCH AS EXHAUST, ENGINE, SUSPENSION, NITROUS, SUPERCHARGERS, WHEELS/TIRES AND BRAKES. WITH GOOD REASON, AS ALL OF THESE ITEMS WILL OFFER SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS TO ANY MUSTANG'S FUN FACTOR AND OVERALL APPEAL. ONE OF THE UNSUNG HEROES IN THE MUSTANG WORLD, HOWEVER, IS HIGH-PERFORMANCE SEATS.

Most people overlook the importance of an ergonomically designed and supportive racing seat until they are forced to think about it—when they are pushing their pony to the limit and find themselves slipping and sliding around on the stock seats. Common sense would indicate that when you are driving at this level the only thing on your mind should be the road or track and not how much the factory seats resemble a beanbag.

Don't get us wrong. The factory seats are adequate and comfortable for everyday duties and occasional spirited driving, but they certainly do have their limitations. Anybody who has ever driven a sports car with form-fitting seats will tell you that they are mandatory to achieve the most out of your car.

Even though the majority of Mustang owners will never push their toys to the edge, there are many benefits that a performance-racing seat offers over the stockers. First and foremost is the uncompromised comfort and full body support. This, in plain terms, will keep you firmly planted behind the steering wheel during hard cornering or a face-flattening launch. Needless to say, if you can stay squarely behind the steering wheel, you will have much better control over your vehicle and will no doubt be able to drive at a higher level. Furthermore, performance-racing seats are significantly lighter than the stock seats found in a late-model Mustang (if you have ever removed your front seats from



your Mustang you will know what we mean). Knowing that weight is the enemy in any kind of performance driving, a weight reduction is always good news. In addition, performance-racing seats offer show-stopping good looks to match the rest of your tricked-out Mustang. Fact is, many people purchase a set of performance seats simply for the aggressive demeanor that it gives their car. That sounds like an ideal combination to us: awesome performance and killer looks.

All of the previous attributes of a performance seat are a welcomed addition to any street and racing vehicle. With this in mind, we chose to install a set of Corbeau seats on Andrew Michaelson's 1999 Mustang GT. Andrew is not shy with the accelerator, and certainly is not afraid to sling his Mustang around a corner. Outfitted with a host of aftermarket performance suspension goodies, this pony was built for the twisties. His stock seats, however, were not. As a result, Andrew turned to Corbeau to fill his need.

Corbeau is one of the industry leaders in ultra-high-performance seats, with a rock-solid reputation and meticulous attention to detail. Corbeau offers a dizzying assortment of racing/street seats to suit everybody's needs and budgets. They offer high-performance seats that

are specifically designed for street, race, or off-road driving conditions. Moreover, Corbeau seats can be had in several sizes (for larger or smaller drivers), a variety of colors to match your Mustang's interior, and are available in either cloth or leather upholstery. Specifically, Corbeau's lineup of seats ranges in price from \$159.99 to \$819.99 per seat, and weigh between 13 and 32 pounds per seat. In comparison, the stock leather power seats that equip this '99 GT test vehicle weighed in at an astronomical 61 pounds per seat.

With the many offerings that Corbeau has, we chose the VX2000 model. This seat is one of Corbeau's finest, and features an anatomically advanced design to comfortably seat drivers of all shapes and sizes. Highlights include state-of-the-art injection molded foam, composite molded shell for the back of the seat, integrated shoulder, kidney and thigh support, racing harness belt capability, and a fully adjustable seat back that flips forward for easy rear seat access. The VX2000 seat comes standard in a variety of cloth colors, however, this '99 GT was equipped with the factory leather interior, and in order to match it the VX2000 seats were ordered in matching black leather. The leather-wrapped VX2000 sells for \$614.99 per seat compared to

1. Slide the seat forward and, using a screwdriver, remove both plastic covers located on the backside of the seat on the floor. Next remove the two bolts that secure the seats to the floor.

2. Slide the seat all the way rearward and remove the two bolts that secure the front to the floor.

3. With the four bolts removed, turn the seat onto its side and unplug the electrical connector on the bottom (some cars may not have an electrical connector). Now you can completely remove the front seat from the vehicle.

4. Remove the single nut that secures the factory seatbelt receiver to the factory seat bracket. Next, unplug the electrical connector on the bottom side of the seat. This will allow you to completely remove the seatbelt receiver from the stock seat.



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the cloth upholstered VX2000s price of \$424.99 per seat (these are GTR High Performance's retail prices).

Although these are one of Corbeau's larger seats, the weight is still relatively light—32 pounds each compared to 61 pounds for the stock units. Therefore, by virtue of swapping out to the Corbeau seats we were able to trim nearly 60

5. Line up the new Corbeau-supplied seat bracket to the bottom of the Corbeau seat. Note that the seat brackets are driver and passenger side specific. Using the supplied hardware, attach the Corbeau brackets to the seat. Notice that you will have to install the supplied washers at each corner of the seat bracket. These washers will be placed between the Corbeau brackets and seats. These simply act as spacers. Now you can re-install the stock seatbelt receiver on the Corbeau seat and secure with original nut.

6. Carefully place the Corbeau seat into the car and line up the front and rear mounting bolt holes. Install the factory seat retaining bolts in the front and rear and secure. The installation is now complete. Make certain to check that the bracket and seat are fully adjustable and are not interfering with anything. Repeat the above steps for other side.

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pounds of excess fat. To facilitate the installation process, Corbeau makes custom fit seat brackets to easily adapt these world-class seats into your Mustang. This eliminates the need to cut-up your stock seat brackets for a painless and clean installation. For the late-model Mustang, the custom seat brackets range in price from \$27 to \$85 per bracket depending on your vehicle's exact needs. At first glance this might seem a bit pricey, but considering the tremendous visual impact and performance characteristics that the Corbeau seats yield, it is a relative bargain. Besides, with as much time as you spend behind the wheel of your pony, shouldn't you go first class all the way?

The professional crew at GTR High Performance in Rancho Cucamonga, California, volunteered to show us what is involved in this process. GTR specializes in high-performance upgrades for late-model Mustangs, so they made short work of the seat installation. Truthfully, this job is relatively straightforward and should be within the scope of the typical do-it-yourselfer that has a good assortment of standard hand tools. If you aren't inclined to tackle this job solo, GTR

offers professional on-site installations at reasonable prices, and is a full-line distributor for Corbeau Seats.

So, how do they work? More specifically, how do they fit, look, feel and perform? With the installation complete, we had an opportunity to try the Corbeau's on for size. The instant you sit down you realize that this is what a performance seat should feel like. The VX2000 wraps itself around you and cradles your body. The cushions are firm and supportive, but far from uncomfortable. In fact, due to the supportive design of the Corbeau you are less likely to become fatigued in a long commute. The fit and finish is second to none. The leather-wrapped Corbeau seats nicely compliment the stock interior, and look right at home with the factory rear leather seats.

Following a thorough test drive we were able to objectively evaluate the seats and their performance. For normal driving duties the seats are quite civilized and surprisingly comfortable. Unlike the stock seats, the VX2000s work their magic and help keep the driver firmly planted when leaning into sharp turns. Perhaps the biggest compliment that

we can think of is that during aggressive cornering we completely forgot that we were evaluating the seats! In other words, our minds were completely on the road and driving around the next corner as fast as possible rather than straining to stay in the seat. In our opinion, that speaks volumes.

So, are Corbeau performance seats right for you? If you value unsurpassed styling, comfort and performance, the answer is a definitive yes. ■

SOURCES

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