

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

1999 MUSTANG COBRA

When Ford introduced the Mustang in the spring of 1964, the demand for it was so great that one customer waited in his car at the dealership until his check cleared the bank. But racing legend Carroll Shelby, creator of the Ford-powered AC Cobra, turned the sheep-in-wolf's-clothing Mustang into a serious sports car with the limited edition GT350 and GT500-series 'stangs, last seen in 1970. The

basic idea was resurrected with the 1993 Mustang Cobra, a Mustang GT heavily modified by Ford's Special Vehicle Team.

We got an early look at the latest version at Willow Springs raceway. The '99 Cobra continues to be blessed with a special aluminum 4.6-liter, four-cam, 32-valve V8 engine that now puts out 320 horsepower, and is hand assembled by workers who sign each engine. The front end styling has

the pony emblem, but no surrounding "corral," and the fog lamps are round compared to square ones for standard Mustangs. The old-style live rear axle has been replaced by a much needed independent rear suspension (IRS), which insures better contact with the pavement, particularly in hard cornering at high speeds. Expect the price to range from \$27,995 to \$31,995.

—Rosville Embry



BIG TRUCK ON THE BIG ISLAND

"The Big Truck on the Big Island," was the biggest news for Toyota since the debut of the Lexus division, according to Don Esmond, Toyota division group vice president and general manager.

Hawaii's Kona Island, known as The Big Island and home to the largest and most active volcanoes in the world, was the setting for my first impression of the Big Truck, the all-new Toyota Tundra.

Toyota's first attempt to compete in the full-size truck segment, the T100, couldn't match the power and size of domestic built trucks such as the Ford F-150 or Dodge Ram. But it did give the Japan-based carmaker six years to learn about the full-size pickup buyer, according to Esmond.

This time, the company has loaded its Tundra pickup with a powerful new V8, and advanced technology and features found only in luxury sedans.

On and off-road handling and performance, acceleration (0-60 mph in 7.87 seconds), and braking were exceptional.

Built at an all new \$1.2 billion factory in Indiana, Toyota will produce 100,000 trucks per year, including the four door Access Cab, which seats six. Tundra goes on sale in June at \$22,250 for the high-volume 4x2 SR5 V8 Access Cab and \$14,995 for the standard-cab V6 with manual transmission.

—Randi Payton

THE ALL-NEW 2000 NISSAN XTERRA

Nissan describes its stylishly muscular and rugged Xterra SUV as a "toolbox for your life," or a vehicle with plenty of storage space.

Beware if you're looking for luxury items such as leather seats or automatic climate control; you'll have to look to the upmarket Pathfinder for that. This vehicle is strictly for "doers", and its option list

includes such items as waterproof seats and a first aid kit. The curvy narrow-laned Monterey mountain roads were no challenge for the smooth-handling Xterra. The bucket seats kept me firmly in place when cruising over rough patches of highway. Impressive features include a tubular roof

rack that can carry up to 125 pounds, a removable roof-top basket for up to 30 pounds of gear and a "bump" on the tailgate exterior which is actually interior storage and would be a great place for storing that first-aid kit. The mid-size SUV is equipped with 10 tie-down hooks, a tool board for tire changing equipment and anti-lock brakes. Xterra comes in both 2-wheel and 4-wheel drive versions, with a choice of four or six-cylinder engines and seven exterior colors. The 2000 Xterra is priced beginning around \$17,500.

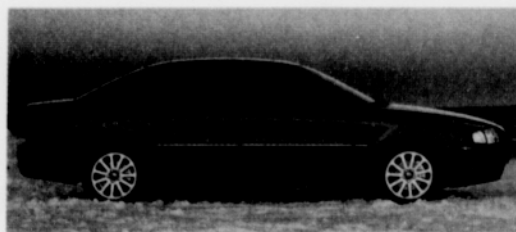
—Stacey R. Green



VOLVO'S VERSATILE '99 S70 AWD AND S80 SEDANS

The Swedish philosophy of focusing on the well-being of the common man is the same core safety value Volvo puts into their vehicles. From the inside out, the new S70 AWD sedan and S80 sedan are the

safest Volvo sedans yet. While available in the V70 wagon for several years, the S70 sedan finally gets



Volvo's excellent all-wheel drive (AWD) system. Acting as a front-wheel drive system first, up to 95% of the engine's power is diverted to the rear wheels when spinning is detected.

To advance the S80, Volvo added a Dynamic Stability and Traction Control (DSTC) system, along with anti-lock brakes with Electronic Brake Distribution, to optimize steering capability and braking performance.

These systems function mainly on wet and slippery surfaces. With that in mind, we traveled to the French town of La Braie, Canada to