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First Drive: 2021 Ford Mustang Mach-E Is a Thrilling New Breed

Ford's first purpose-built electric vehicle impresses drivers and onlookers

By Gabe Shenhar

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The Mustang Mach-E is Ford's first electric vehicle designed to be an EV from the outset, rather than spun off from an existing model. It wears the Mustang name and adapts a few styling cues from the iconic muscle car, but this is really an all-new animal.

For starters, it's an SUV with room for five rather than a low-slung coupe. Based on our initial experience and the enthusiastic reactions from onlookers, we think Ford's heritage-inspired approach to this expanding EV segment might pay off.

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Ford first dipped its toes into the EV world in 2011 with the Focus Electric, a conversion of its compact hatchback. Now the Blue Oval re-enters the EV arena with a much more credible model that has a robust range and high-tech galore all wrapped up in a popular SUV-ish body style.

Adorned with one of Ford's most valuable possessions, the Mustang sub-brand, the cool factor is built-in. These opening credentials should help the Mach-E battle the Tesla Model Y and a host of other upcoming EVs priced between \$40,000 and \$60,000. Needless to say, we have an order for our very own Mach-E, but until we get ours, we rented one from Ford to get some initial impressions.

The Mach-E comes either as a rear- or all-wheel drive and with a choice between two battery sizes, a standard 68 kWh or an optional 88 kWh. The EPA rates the standard range at 230 miles and the extended range at 300 miles for rear-drive versions. Our example, an extended range, premium AWD is rated at 270 miles; AWD versions have slightly less range than their RWD counterparts. Charge times from empty on a 240-volt connector are about 10.5 hours, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

our own Mach-E soon for a road test.

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What we rented: 2021 Ford Mustang Mach-E
Premium AWD

Powertrain: 346 hp combined from two electric motors; 1-speed direct drive; all-wheel drive; 88 kWh battery

MSRP: \$49,700

Options: 88 kWh extended range battery \$5,000, Rapid Red metallic paint \$400.

Destination: \$1,100

Total cost: \$56,200 (before \$7,500 federal tax credit)



CR's Take

We are thoroughly impressed with the Mach-E. It is quick, agile, quiet, and fun to drive. Like all EVs, its power comes on smoothly and without delay. With a robust range of more than 250 miles, it's an EV that many people can use every day. Unlike the original Mustang, this tall hatchback has four doors, room for five, and a rear hatch that maximizes versatility. Optional all-wheel drive broadens its appeal in the snow belt.

The car is brimming with high tech with a large touch screen, wireless connectivity, and standard active safety features. As with other EVs, long trips require extra planning to determine when and where to charge; Quick charging on the go isn't as convenient as it is with Teslas. Ford says owners can benefit from DC-fast charging on the Electrify America and Greenlots networks and bring the battery from a 10 percent to 80 percent level in 40 minutes, but these venues are still few and far between. The Mach-E utilizes a 12 kW onboard charger, and that means owners who charge at home can benefit from having a 50 ampere home charger installed.



What We Like

Power delivery: The Mach-E takes off decisively and continues to gallop in a smooth, linear manner. Three driving modes can fine-tune the driving experience, with Whisper being the quietest and most efficient. Engage presents a nice balance of efficiency and responsiveness. Unbridled unleashes a quicker throttle response, adds heft to the steering, and brings a soft growl that ramps up the harder you accelerate. There is never any shortage of power in any mode. Ford claims that this particular version can sprint from 0-60 mph in 4.8 seconds.

Handling: Taut and agile, this new breed of a Mustang tackles corners with exuberance. The tied-down body stays even-keeled, and turn-in response is quick yet not darty. The car's rear-wheel-drive bias and low center of gravity contribute to the sporty feel. We can attest that this electric Mustang is fun to pilot on a winding road, and it's an emissions-free pleasure to boot.

more pronounced wind and road noise. That's not the case here.

Interior room and versatility: Having an SUV body lends itself to inherent versatility. This is the first Mustang that has four doors and seats five. Rear-seat room is ample even for passengers who are 6 feet tall or more. There's generous room for luggage, and the built-in versatility of a hatchback is very handy for loading large items. We also appreciated the flexible, yet sturdy cargo shade.

Front trunk: Like Tesla and other electric cars, the absence of an engine in the front means there's room for additional onboard storage.

Seat comfort and driving position: We're pleased with the faux leather seats on our rental so far. They're comfortable and supportive, but the power lumbar adjusts only in two ways, rather than the preferred four. The driving position is well sorted out, thanks to a range of seat adjustments and ample room around the driver.

Wireless connectivity: Android Auto and Apple CarPlay pair wirelessly and work seamlessly. There is also wireless charging. The FordPass app lets owners precondition the cabin before setting off and monitor the vehicle status remotely.

Viewing miles and battery state-of-charge: Unlike a Tesla, where drivers have to choose between viewing the range in terms of miles or state of charge, the Mach-E displays both clearly and conveniently.



What We Don't Like

Rear hatch remote opening and closing: Instead of a clear button on the driver's door trim for opening and closing the rear hatch, the Mach-E requires you to dive into the screen and go through a three-step sequence to open the hatch from the driver's seat. That's not very conducive to curbside pickups, which became essential for some during the coronavirus pandemic.

Brake pedal feel: We found it rather tricky to stop smoothly in some situations. The pedal is either too touchy at low speeds or requires a hefty foot on the pedal for scrubbing off speed quickly. Most of us liked the one-pedal driving mode that takes advantage of the regenerative braking.

Standard version's range: Depending on the version, Mach-Es come with ranges that span 230 to 300 miles. The one we tried is pegged at 270 miles by the EPA. That's a robust range for an EV. But the standard range, at 230 miles, is about half that of a typical gas car and may not be reassuring enough to convince potential buyers to jump on the EV bandwagon.

extended range version from empty. Granted, that won't happen very often. But even bringing the battery from a 40 to 70 percent level takes 4 hours on a 240-volt connector, and that equates to 70 miles' worth of range. That said, most owners who charge overnight at home won't have a problem.



What We'll Keep Our Eyes On

Controls: Ford calls the Mach-E's infotainment system Sync 4A. It includes a dazzling 15.5-inch portrait-oriented infotainment screen that looks like a giant iPad. This is your gateway to all audio, phone, climate, navigation, and EV info functions. There is a learning curve, but we found it manageable. The system responds quickly, but some functions take more than one step to perform and some require swiping to get at deeper levels of information. We applaud the physical volume and on/off knob. That said, we'll need more experience with it for a final verdict.

then pull the door and enter the car. It sure allows for a sleek and aerodynamic effect, but we'll have to see whether this two-step sequence retains its novelty and proves convenient even on a rainy day, when you just want to jump in.

Ride: The suspension is firm, keeping the Mach-E very steady and controlled, and contributing to its remarkable agility. But the trade-off is a ride that might be overly stiff for some. It's still better than that of the Tesla Model Y, but we'll wait to spend more time with our own Mach-E to get the full picture.

Advanced driving aids: Every Mach-E comes standard with Ford's CoPilot360 Active 2.0, which includes auto emergency braking, lane departure warning and lane keep assist, blind spot warning, and rear cross traffic alert. It also includes adaptive cruise control. Ford promises an over-the-air update that will bring a limited self-driving ability helped by monitoring driver's eyes. We're looking forward to evaluating these features as well.



Electric cars are bringing some of the biggest changes the auto industry has seen in years. On the "[Consumer 101](#)" TV show, Consumer Reports expert Jake Fisher explains to host Jack Rico why these vehicles might not be as newfangled as you think.

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