

# Fuel Circle

Over the years, Lidio's Yellow Car has seen all manner of mods—today it's a multipurpose ride with modern EFI manners

**XTREME**  
STREET  
'STANGS!



**Text and Photos by Dale Amy**  
“I never followed the path that many others do with their Mustangs, where after many years the car becomes a gutted tin can that can only be trailered to events.”

—Lidio Iacobelli  
You can consider the above quotation as Lidio Iacobelli's mission statement for his well-known and faithful LX coupe. Longtime readers will certainly be familiar with Lidio's “Yellow Car,” which

has been a perennial part of the 5.0 drag scene seemingly since time began. For those who aren't, we should tell you that Lidio—the ever-fastidious owner of Alternative Auto Performance—has been carefully and craftily messing with the little notchback since his then-girlfriend, now-wife, bought it brand-new in 1988. “I tried my hardest,” Lidio recalls, “to get her not to buy a coupe, not get yellow, and not get an AOD. I wanted blue or black, a hatch, and a T5.” As you can see, Lidio has about the



same level of influence on his significant other as do the rest of us. In spite of this original disappointment, he now appreciates its uniqueness nearly as much as we do. And despite having spent the past 13 years gradually turning it into a stroked and blown nine-second missile, Lidio has never been willing to gut the Tropical Yellow coupe just for the sake of speed. Quite the contrary, in fact, as it even still sports its factory K-member and A-arms, and weighs a hefty 3,450 pounds

with Lidio in the stock, tan-cloth driver seat.

Ironically, in its present 18-psi-blown, 392-inch form, with nearly 600 ponies on tap at the wheels, the little LX is more streetable and civilized than ever. This is thanks partly to this non-gutting policy, but also to the advances in modern electronic fuel injection and the laptop tuning at which Lidio has become such a master. But we're getting ahead of ourselves...

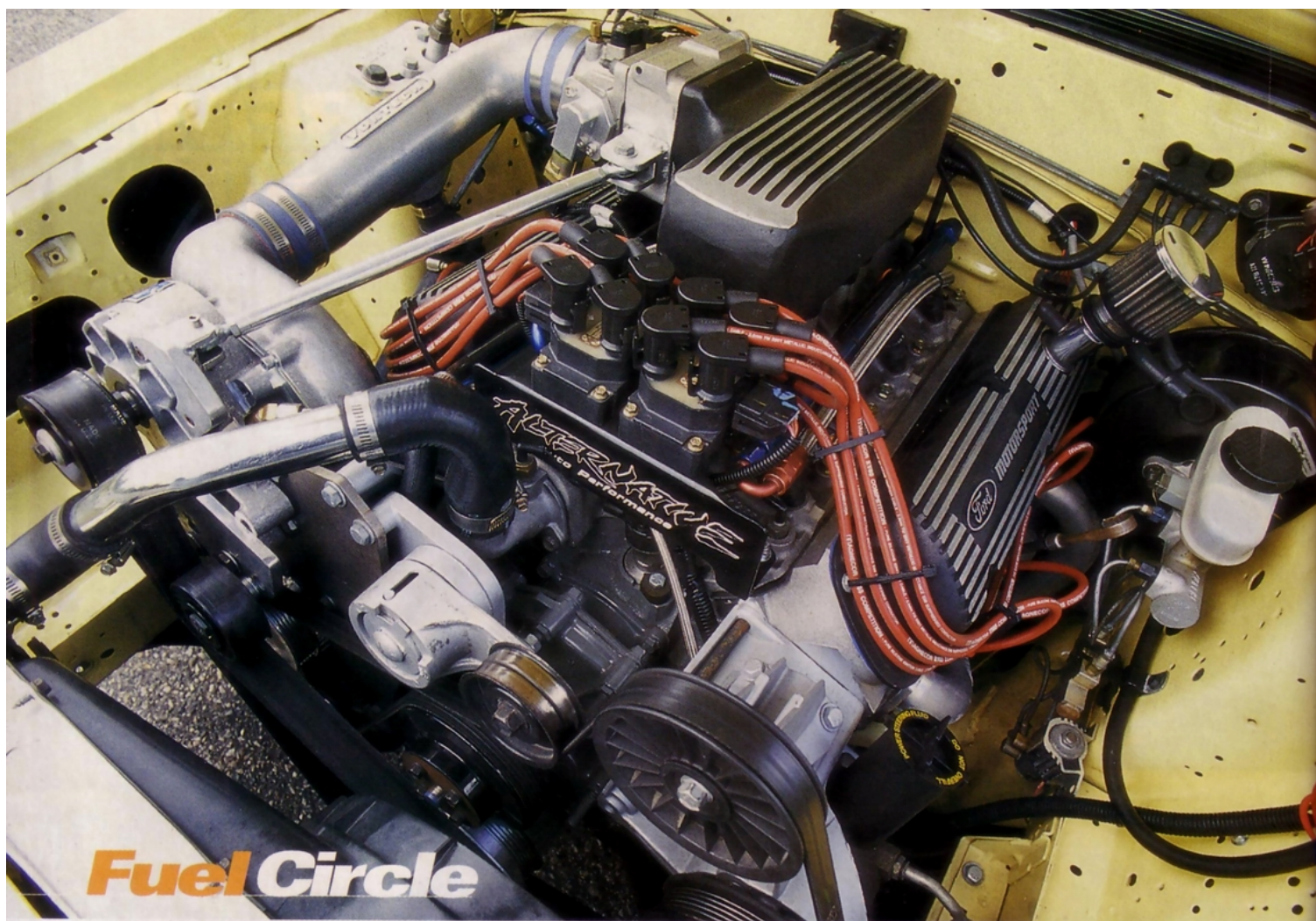
With less than 50 miles on the odometer in 1988, it all began rather humbly (the car, after all, was not his). The removal of the airbox, a bump in timing, some 3.73 gears, and an H-pipe put the

With its pale yellow skin screaming innocence, there's little clue of the monster within (and, no, we don't mean Lidio). Filled out just right by the Cobra RS, the only other nonfactory exterior bits include the H.O. Fibertrends hood and special-edition '93 LX wing. Lidio had the coupe repainted in 1999, converting the side moldings to body color at the time.



**Horse Sense:** If you think you've seen Lidio's car before, you have. Not only has it graced the pages of several Ford magazines over the years, but it also played model for a BFGoodrich ad campaign. The car was pictured doing a burnout in ads, posters, and banners.





car into the low 14s, despite its crippling AOD, and that was about it for a while.

Marriage came in 1991, and with it, apparently, more rights to his bride's Mustang—which Lidio soon converted to a T5 with a goal of getting it into the 12s without touching the factory heads or cam. A 12.92 pass was realized after the addition of 1.5-inch long-tubes, Flowmasters, Ford Racing Performance Parts 1.7 rockers, a 77mm Pro-M meter, and the then-obligatory 160-degree thermostat. Ported '69 351W heads and a Crane 2030 cam then followed. "The car didn't respond to these heads and cam like I wanted to see," Lidio says. "They only produced mid 12s, not low 12s like I thought they should—plus I really didn't super-tune the car like I would today."

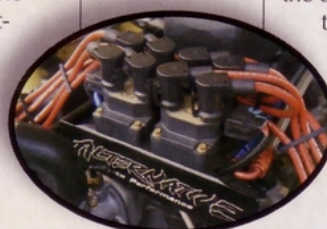
Naturally, this was just the beginning, especially after Alternative Auto Performance became a Vortech dealer in 1992. Lidio soon fit an A-Trim centrifugal, then a B-Trim, with which the LX ran low 11s, still with the iron Windsor heads. Always willing to experiment, he even tried an air-to-air intercooler,

but the car ran better without it.

In 1994 Lidio resolved to make the by then well-known coupe more emissions friendly by going back to the stock cam and adding Edelbrock's new Performer 5.0 heads, in which form it managed high 10s through catalytic converters. Around the same time, he came to the realization that "clutches in heavy, fast cars didn't mix," and swapped back to an AOD, beefed in his own shop and fitted with a Stallion converter (whose products he's stuck with ever since).

For the '95 season, in went a "big" Wolverine cam and on went cast-iron GT-40 heads and an R-Trim blower, which culminated in mid 10s before winter closed in and gave Lidio time to rethink the combo once again. It must have been a long winter, because he made the (then) big step of fitting a Lightning-block 351W—with an FRPP F303 cam nestled inside and Trick Flow Twisted Wedge alloy heads on top. He eventually replaced the R-Trim with a T-Trim once it

*Though it appears to be an operating-room-clean race engine, the Yellow Car's 392 stroker is a tractable 580hp pussycat on the street, thanks to its real-time tunable FAST management system and Lidio's considerable tuning skills. The big Windsor has impeccable manners, yet it's 9.74-second capable and, so far, utterly reliable.*



became available. That combo was originally hobbled by having to run short-tube headers, at least until Hooker came along with its 1¾-inch long-tubes that would fit a 351 in a Fox with AOD. Those headers are still on the car today.

With the 351 running strong, Lidio started looking for other ways to amuse himself. So in 1997 he turned the car—constantly on slicks and drag skinnies for the previous few years—back toward its street roots by reinstalling the factory sway bars and adding FRPP's classic "C" lowering springs paired with Koni yellow road-race dampers. Cobra R 17x9 rims completed the transition from what had become basically a dedicated drag car into a well-rounded, dual-purpose ride. Just the same, it would still rip through the quarter in the 9.90s, though that required a sufficiently high boost level to occasionally put the hurt on the Lightning block's stock hypereutectic pistons. With heavy commitments at the shop and home during 1999,



Old Yeller was semiretired for a while, but the best was yet to come.

By late 2000, Lidio had become quite a fan of the 392 stroker combo, so he decided to build "what I hope will be the last long-block combo the car will ever need." Starting with an FRPP four-bolt 351, Lidio and Alternative technician Marc Smielewski added a Scat stroker crank, Eagle Rods, and Diamond 9:1 pistons, and topped the stout short-block with bowl-ported Trick Flow R heads. "The overall goal with the 392," Lidio says, "was to go as fast as it did before (high 9s), but do it with less boost and cheaper leaded fuels, not the expensive C-16."

At the same time, in a move that Lidio is convinced adds greatly to the car's outstanding street manners, a speed-density FAST system replaced the EEC IV and mass air as the engine-management system. As we've documented in previous articles, Lidio gets all warm and fuzzy on the idea of the laptop-tunable FAST for both race and high-powered street cars. In place of the AOD, a modern AODE now sits astern of the 392, under the stand-alone control of a Baumann Engineering Baumannator transmission control box, another piece of high tech about which Lidio has nothing but good things to say. As a finishing touch to the always-sanitary engine bay, Lidio adapted Ford's modular-era electronic distributorless ignition system.

In a way, the Yellow Car has come full circle in the past 13 years, from dedicated daily driver to serious drag racer and now back to a form that is once again more than happy on the street.



*Not much has changed since 1988 in the notchback's tan interior, save for the addition of a six-point cage and A-pillar boost and fuel pressure gauges. Well, OK, Lidio did add an Alpine CD player with remote control. The heavy car's quick e.t.'s are even more impressive considering its AODE automatic has no transbrake.*



And apparently Lidio's not done yet, as he has big Baer Claw brakes in mind for his next project. The specific rotors on his wish list will be big enough for road-course duty, yet small enough to still allow mounting 15-inch slicks and skinny front runners.

Where will Old Yeller evolve from here? We'll keep you posted. **5.0**

## 5.0 TECH SPECS

### ENGINE AND DRIVETRAIN

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Block         | FRPP 351 9.5-in deck   |
| Bore          | 4.030  |
| Stroke        | 3.90   |
| Displacement  | 392 ci   |
| Crank         | Scat   |
| Rods          | Eagle  |
| Pistons       | Diamond  |
| Camshaft      | Lunati custom  |
| Heads         | Trick Flow Twisted Wedge R bowl-ported   |
| Intake        | 351 GT-40 lower, Downs upper   |
| Throttle Body | .75mm Accufab  |
| Exhaust       | Hooker 1½-in long-tube, 3-in H-pipe, and two SUV three-chamber Flowmasters with two resonators in H-pipe |
| Power Adder   | Vortech T-Trim, 18 psi   |
| Transmission  | AODE with Baumannator Transmission Control System  |
| Rearend       | 8.8 with Moser 31-spline axles and Auburn Pro diff and 3.73 gears  |

### ELECTRONICS

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Engine Management | FAST speed density                             |
| Injectors         | .83 lb/hr                                      |
| Ignition          | EDIS with MSD DIS-4 and stock Cobra coil packs |

### SUSPENSION AND CHASSIS

|                 |                                |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Struts/Shocks   | Koni Yellow                    |
| Springs         | FRPP "C"                       |
| Rear Suspension | Megabyte Jr. lowers            |
| Caster/Camber   | H.P. Motorsports               |
| Rollcage        | Reifer's Metal Craft six-point |
| Wheels          | Cobra R                        |
| Tires           | BFGoodrich                     |
| Brakes          | Stock                          |

## Fuel Circle

