

By Jim Dietzler
Photography by John Hunkins

The Midwest has always been known for having the most terrifying weather anywhere in the continental U.S. Tornadoes, hailstorms, thunderstorms and lake-effect snows routinely let loose their fury across the land. When Aaron Treppa makes a run in his Stang, those left in his wake can only wonder what kind of raging whirlwind has been unleashed on them.

In 1993 Aaron, a car stereo and alarm installer from St. Clair Shores, Mich., bought this GT for \$1,500. That's no typo; what Aaron got for his relatively tiny pile of greenbacks was a completely gutted, recovered stolen vehicle.

Aaron had plenty of experience with the ponycars before he picked up and created his latest monster Mustang.

Take a worked-to-the-nines 351-cubic-inch Lightning, drop it in an extremely modified '93 Mustang convertible, and you've got one mean Midwestern strip stormer.

MICHIGAN'S 10-SECOND LIGHTNING STORM



remote control to open them. If anyone ever breaks in by cutting through the top, there isn't any way for them to open the doors to get out! Of course everybody sticks the horses on the fender, but I felt that looked funny, so we recessed those into the panel."

Once the paint work was complete, Aaron laid down 200 lbs. of Dynamat noise-deadening material from the firewall to the rear passenger area. A 1,000-watt stereo system hooked to 17 separate speakers was installed. "At the time, I really hadn't planned on building a drag racer, so a lot of extra weight went in early on," he said. A new interior was then installed, including a set of custom



Aaron Treppa monitors the 351's vital statistics with Auto Meter Pro-Comp fuel pressure and boost gauges mounted in the air conditioning vents.



yellow-on-black Recaro buckets.

With most of the cosmetic work out of the way, Aaron set his sights on the empty engine bay. He had considered a built up 302-cubic-inch Ford powerplant, but, he related, "I decided that since I had gone that far with everything else, I couldn't skip on the engine."

Instead he chose a 351 Lightning mill. Before the powerplant was installed, he shipped it off to the folks at Alternative Auto Performance of Mt. Clemens, where, under the watchful eye of shop owner Lidio Iacobelli, they went to town on the powerplant by adding a Lunati camshaft with a custom blower and 1.7:1 rockers. A GT-40 intake manifold was bolted onto street-ported and O-ringed Edelbrock Performer heads.

A Vortech S-Trim blower fed by a Pro-M 77mm mass air sensor generates 12 lbs. of boost, and a Vortech Super FMU pumps fuel through 3/8 lines to an Accufab 75mm throttle body to Vortech fuel rails linked to 36-psi injectors.

Setting off the lightning is MSD's 6AL ignition system coupled to an MSD Blaster 3 coil and Magnacore KV85 wires. The 351's thunder is routed

through MAC 1⁵/₈-inch headers bolted to a custom H-pipe that discharges through 2-chamber Flowmaster mufflers.

The AOD transmission features a B&M trans cooler, 3500-stall-speed torque converter and Baumann shift kit. It transfers the Lightning's power to a factory 8.8 rear with 3.55 gears. A set of Mickey Thompson 245/45/ZR17s mounted on Image 17x8.5 rims puts the estimated 550-plus horsepower to the pavement. Preventing the chassis from doing its own horsepower-generated version of twist-and-shout is a set of custom subframe connectors and a drive-shaft loop.

With only 600 miles on the odometer since the rebuild, it's easy to see that this ride is no daily driver. Aaron says he likes to reserve his time behind the wheel for rare occasions when he has a free moment and for the strip. At Milan (Mich.) Dragway, Aaron and the yellow Lightning have turned in a series of consistent runs in the 10.70s at 127 mph in the quarter-mile. He plans to bolt on a set of fully ported Trick Flow Specialties Twisted Wedge heads, 4200-stall-speed converter, 31-spline rear axles with an

Auburn Pro rear, and a 6-point roll cage. He hopes the improvements will get him into the 10.40s.

Aaron intends to tie the knot with fiancée, Lynn Nagel, this spring. How does she feel about his hobby? "Lynn gets everything she wants, especially when you figure that she knows I spent \$50,000 on the Mustang. She's really into it; she takes care of the cleaning and waxing," he answered. However, Aaron stated that the Mustang, like nearly everything else in life, is just a material possession, "I almost sold the car in order to get enough money to buy a house," he told us. "Lynn didn't want me to sell it, so I didn't. If someone makes the right offer, I'll sell it. It's the right car to move into if you want a ready-to-run 10-second convertible. After all, everything has its price."

In the meantime, Aaron will just have to tolerate the "unbelievable looks" he gets when he does take the Stang out for the occasional cruise and show at the local hang outs. Tough life, eh? ▶





His Mustang ownership resume reads like the inventory sheet for a used Ford lot. "I've had an '82, then I bought an '87 that I built up as a road racer," he told us. "After I sold that car, I picked up an '88 convertible that I built as a Saleen replica. I sold that car and then bought an '89 Saleen hardtop, sold that and then bought the '93."

Why so many Stangs? "I don't know what it is with them, but I have always liked the '87-93 body style. It's a good, clean-looking car, especially when it has a decent set of ground effects on it. The goal with the '93 was to be totally different from anything else out there," he answered.

When it comes to the double-take department, Aaron's ideas hit the mark. One of the first tasks was to strip off what the thieves hadn't. He removed every unpainted nut and bolt so that when the

car was painted, it would represent factory originality. He had Elite Autobody of Mt. Clemens, Mich., paint the body, engine compartment, Stormin Norman hood, Saleen rear wing, and ground effects kit in a custom-mixed, eye-blinding yellow.

To take the uniqueness one step further, Aaron fell back on his knowledge as an installer for Car Stereo and Alarms of Madison Heights, Mich. "I knew I wanted to shave the handles and French the antennas, but when it came to the doors, trunk and hood, I wanted to be totally different," he explained. "The hood, trunk and doors have no handles at all and are electronically actuated. I use a

