

say if that's right, but on the basis of thrashing both cars on the track, it feels like it could be true.

The engine revs and revs, most unlike a big muscle-car V8, and the car remains fantastically stable through all the track's trademark turns. You get a real sense, particularly in the Laguna spec car, that every component has been tuned to work harmoniously with every other, encouraging you to wring its neck for lap after lap. At times, with the 5.0-litre engine on full song, the red-and-white kerbs blurring past, a small but constant squeal from the tyres filling the cabin, you forget that you are driving a muscle car. It's so neutral and natural you can steer it almost as much on the throttle as you can with the wheel.

Even throwing the car off the blind cliff that is the entry to the Corkscrew, flat-out in third gear, doesn't really upset it. The steering gets light for a second, but then gets its composure back with plenty of time to really attack the technically more testing Turn Nine. This is the sort of behaviour you might expect of an M3 CSL, not a breathed-on muscle car. But as extraordinary as that is, the real shocker is what happens on the road.

With that live rear axle sitting out the back, you expect there to be some bumping and jumping as the car hits bumps mid-corner. And, sure enough, there is. But the key thing is that it happens in such a super-controlled way, and the steering is quick enough, that you can catch it before it becomes a problem. If anything, it makes driving it even more fun. Ford likes to say that a well-set-up live axle arrangement is better than a poor independent set-up, which is true. Particularly when the car costs just \$40,995 and goes as fast as the Boss.

The road we drove down is a *TopGear* favourite, all blind curves, adverse cambers and broken tarmac. Just like a gnarly British B-road. If a car has any faults, they are not going to be able to hide for long here. We've driven all of Europe's finest supersaloons – M5, C63 AMG, XFR – down the same stretch and all of them had problems at some point. The 440bhp Boss driver would have to work harder, for sure, but it's unlikely he'd get left far behind those costing between two and three times as much.

And it's that value proposition that keeps mugging you every time you think about criticising the 302. Yeah, the steering isn't reach-adjustable, and some of the interior plastics are a little too hard in places. But it's got huge Brembo brakes, Recaro seats, adjustable suspension, super-cool twin-mode engine-mapping, a mad V8, will do 100-metre burnouts all day, and it's a Mustang, damn it.

Only 4,000 Boss 302s will be built, with around 700 of those being the Laguna Seca edition. The original '69 car is now a very collectible – and drivable – classic. This one, the most sorted Mustang built to date, is heading straight into the same category. But don't take my word for it. Check out YouTube soon, and you're bound to see plenty of illegal reasons why. □

Mustang Boss 302

