

Exhaustive Choices

Installing and Hearing Hooker's BlackHeart Cat-Back Options for 2005-2009 Mustang GT



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Ford's S197-chassis Mustang has been around for over a decade, earning it prime project car credentials: fun, affordable, and plentiful. 2005-2009 Mustang GTs can be found for under 10-grand! While the 4.6L Three-Valve V-8 won't vault it into the Horsepower Hall of Fame, it makes the right rumble and is only a supercharger away from serious horsepower.

In a nod to the 2005-2009 Mustang's increasing popularity, the engineers at Hooker's BlackHeart Speed Exhaust developed a series of exhaust products for the S197 platform, including complete cat-back exhausts. Hooker offers two systems: PN 70503338-RHKR features a pair of straight-through mufflers, while PN 70503337-RHKR replaces the mufflers with straight tubing for an ultra-aggressive sound.

The BlackHeart cat-back systems

feature 3-inch, 18-gauge 304 stainless steel tubing for maximum flow and minimum weight. The front connector pipes adapt to the OEM H-pipe with a slip-fit connections and high-quality band clamps. All the tubing is carefully mandrel bent to utilize all the factory hangers while offering maximum clearance around the suspension and chassis. Both systems feature a 4-inch slash-cut, double-wall, polished exhaust tips laser etched with the Hooker BlackHeart logo.

Hooker's system featuring the company's straight-through muffler shaves over 8 pounds off the relatively portly S197 chassis, while the "mufflerless" system reduces exhaust weight a total of 14 pounds.

We traveled to Hooker's Bowling Green, Kentucky, facility to sample the two BlackHeart cat-back options on a 2009 Mustang GT/CS. Technician Walker Weathers helped us with the install and testing.

When compared to the stock

exhaust, the Hooker BlackHeart cat-back with mufflers added a much deeper, more authoritative tone to our test subject. The hearty baritone could be heard both inside and outside the GT/CS convertible.

The mufflerless cat-back replaced the baritone opera singer with a rowdy punk rocker. Not only was the Hooker BlackHeart cat-back without mufflers louder overall, but the tone was raspier and more aggressive too.

When used with the stock mani-

folds and H-pipe, we concluded that system choice is a matter of personal preference. However, with more advanced modifications ahead of the cat-back, we suspect the mufflerless cat-back would be too loud. So if your only planned exhaust modifications are a cat-back, we'd say choose the Hooker BlackHeart system without mufflers—but if more exhaust modifications are planned, the Hooker BlackHeart system with mufflers is the wise choice.



1 The Hooker BlackHeart cat-back exhaust for 2005-2009 Mustang GTs features 304 stainless steel construction, straight-through mufflers and is 8 pounds lighter than the factory system.



2 The 3-inch tubing of the cat-back system connects to the factory H-pipe with a slip fit joint and a stainless steel band clamp.



3 The Hooker BlackHeart cat-back includes polished mufflers and double-wall, 4-inch stainless steel tips laser etched with the Hooker logo.



To ease installation and clearance adjustment, the cat-back features leak-free slip fit joints and high-quality band clamps.



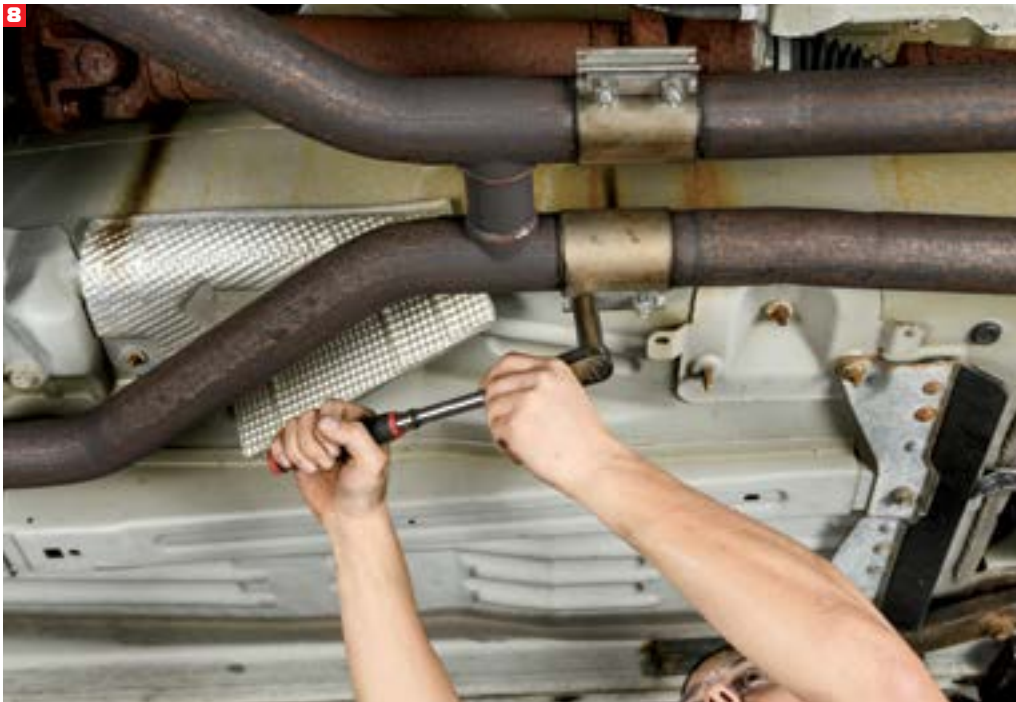
Then he loosened the OEM muffler's clamp from the over-axle pipe.



Hooker technician Walker Weathers began our installation by disconnecting the OEM muffler hanger brackets from the chassis.



After a little wiggling (some spray lube helps), we removed the OEM mufflers.



Moving forward, Weathers loosened the clamps behind the OEM H-pipe.



With the clamps loose, Weathers slid the OEM over-axle pipes backwards and removed the pipes from the chassis.



Then he snaked the 3-inch over-axle pipes into position.



Using the supplied clamps, Weathers loosely installed the Hooker BlackHeart connector pipes over the OEM H-pipe.



Weathers tightened the clamps slightly to keep all the tubing in place but still allow for adjustment.



With the 3-inch exhaust tubing in place, Weathers installed the polished, straight-through Hooker mufflers.



14 He reused the OEM hanger brackets and isolators with the Hooker cat-back system.



15 Since the Hooker mufflers are considerably smaller than their OEM counterparts, accessing the hanger bracket fasteners was much easier.



16 With the mufflers in place, Weathers loosely installed the clamps.



He took his time when aligning and tightening the exhaust system to ensure maximum clearance around the chassis and suspension components.



The completed Hooker Black-Heart cat-back exhaust carries a limited lifetime warranty, so its 304 stainless steel construction may resist road salt better than some of the other undercarriage components on this much-driven Mustang.

Besides a cat-back with mufflers, Hooker also offers a cat-back without mufflers. It drops an additional 6 pounds of weight over the OEM exhaust, bringing total weight savings to 14 pounds.



After testing the sound of the “muffled” cat-back, we swapped out the axle-back portion of the system with that of the “mufflerless” version. Not surprisingly, the unmuffled version sounded much more aggressive.



Both systems added some much-needed sound to the 2009 Mustang GT/CS. The muffled system sounded deep and sophisticated, while the mufflerless system was loud and rowdy.



21 The 4-inch polished stainless steel tips fit perfectly with the aesthetics of the 2009 Mustang GT/CS.



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•Hooker BlackHeart
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