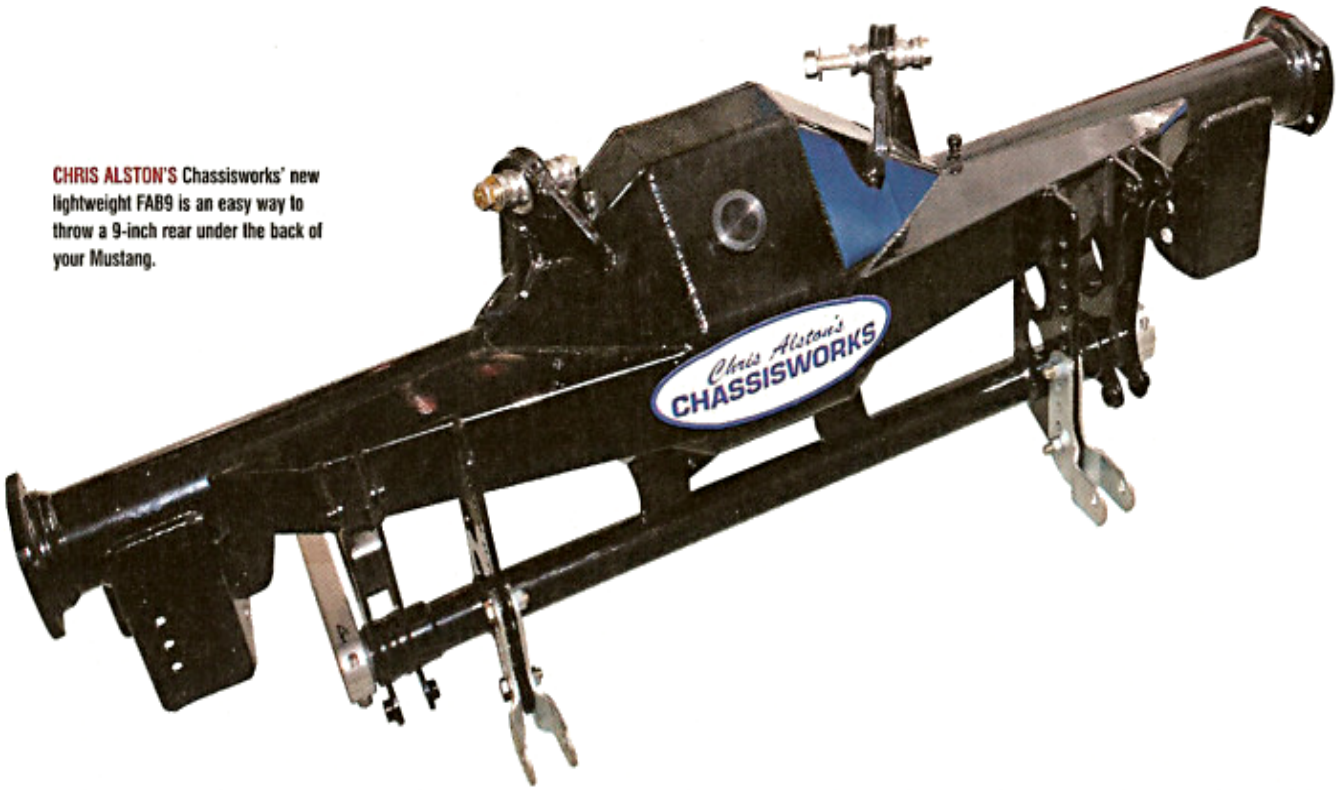


CHRIS ALSTON'S Chassisworks' new lightweight FAB9 is an easy way to throw a 9-inch rear under the back of your Mustang.

THE FAB9

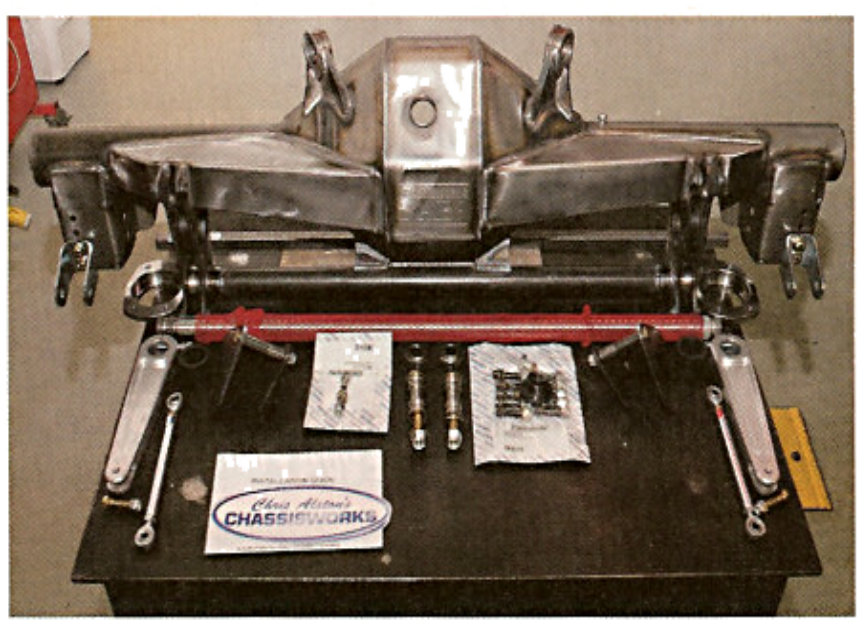
FORGET THE BEATLES—CHRIS ALSTON'S CHASSISWORKS HAS ONE **ROCKING REAR** FOR '79-'04 MUSTANGS.

WHEN THE Beatles stepped off of the airplane and onto the tarmac at Kennedy Airport on February 7, 1964, the world of rock 'n' roll was changed forever by their lyrics, music, and style. They were known as the Fab Four, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Fast forward 44 years, and you can say the same thing about the way Fox-body owners will look at the rearend of their cars when the time comes to rework things back there. Thanks to Chris Alston's Chassisworks, installing a 9-inch-style rear has never been easier.

We say 9-inch-style because Alston's new deal is called the FAB9. Best of all, it's a direct replacement for the 8.8, yet it's a custom-fabricated 9-inch rearend housing. This new piece is pretty trick and easy to install. It's virtually unbreakable, and there are a ton of options depending on your application.

For starters, the housing itself is fabricated of either mild steel or optional chromoly, and has been engineered to accept both aftermarket as well as OEM control arms. The shock mounts have numerous mounting positions, which allow for a ride-height adjustment range of more than 2 inches. There's also a choice of either spherical



RIGHT: The FAB9 we installed came with the whole kit and caboodle. The housing was accompanied by all of the hardware to mount it, as well as the antiroll bar kit, housing ends, and upper and lower ProPower control arms (not pictured). The housing seen here is how it comes straight from Alston's. The one we put in the car was powdercoated black.

bearings or urethane upper control arm mounts.

Additionally, the housings are available in factory as well as narrowed widths, with the shortest side-to-side length being 54½ inches wheel to wheel. This allows for the use of any assortment of wider wheel and tire combinations. The best thing is that the housing can be narrowed in ¼-inch increments, meaning custom lengths can be made to work for your particular application. Alston's can also supply an axle and third-member package that would work with the narrowed rear, so you don't have to worry about trying to locate hard-to-find custom stuff.

The FAB9 replaces the venerable 8.8-inch rear with a stronger, yet lighter, package. The axle tubes are 3 inches in diameter and are welded along the internal tube gusset. This is one area that greatly adds to the rear's strength, as the axle tubes will not want to flex and/or break away from the centersection of the housing under extreme forces, such as those experienced when launching the car.

Many will contest that the 8.8 causes less parasitic drag, and this may be true when spinning the rear by hand. However, if the 8.8 is flexing under a load, there is guaranteed bind—and that costs power.

Alston's further strengthens the FAB9 housing by adding an optional back brace, which are fixed boxed structures that span from the outer edge of the back panel to the inside edge of the axle mounts. A rear antiroll bar can also be included as part of the package.

The housing is equipped with billet, late-Ford-style housing ends. Using these housing ends wipes out excess material for the seal seat, which results in less weight and the ability to use stronger, larger-diameter axleshafts. Alston's can also ship out a complete brake kit, depending on which application the car is being built for (street or strip).

While the FAB9 is also made to accept wheelie bars for those who want (or need) them, it can also be equipped with a host of other options straight from Alston's.

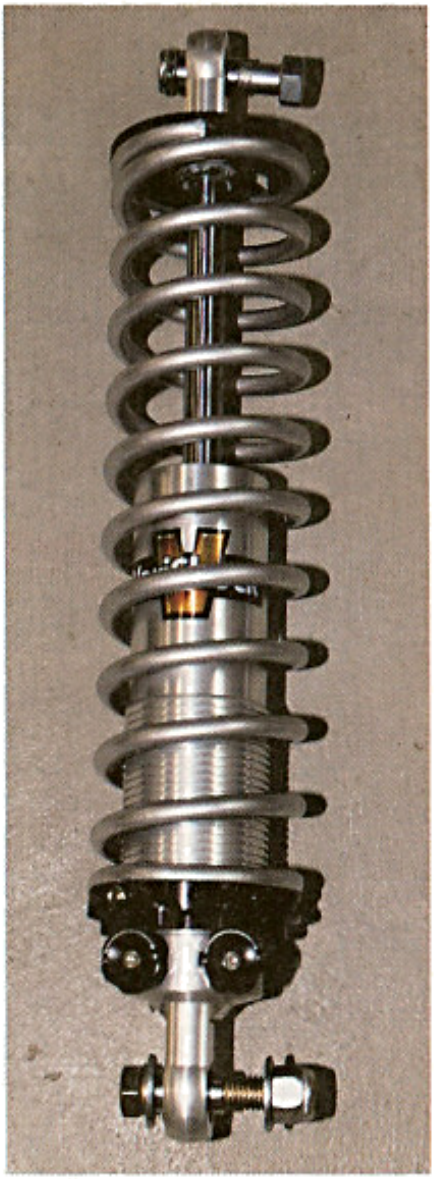
THE WILLING transplant patient was a soon-to-be completed SN-95 Drag Radial–category car being built by Tony Parsons and the crew of Tony's Metal Craft. The tubing for the frame was already constructed, and the car was waiting for its pair of hind legs. We were more than willing to oblige.

TO MAKE room for larger meats, the mounts for the shocks were moved inboard in relation to the factory shock mounts. The mounts for the coilovers are seen here with the supplied aluminum bracket already attached.

SINCE THIS car would see race duty only, we went with the ProPower upper and lower control arms. These sturdy pieces are designed for professional drag race applications. For those cars that will see street and strip action, a set of competition moly uppers and lowers are offered in addition to the ProPower pieces.

RIGHT: We used Varishock double-adjustable coilover shocks to grace the rear of this car. The shocks can either be mounted in the factory location or in the manner in which we installed them.

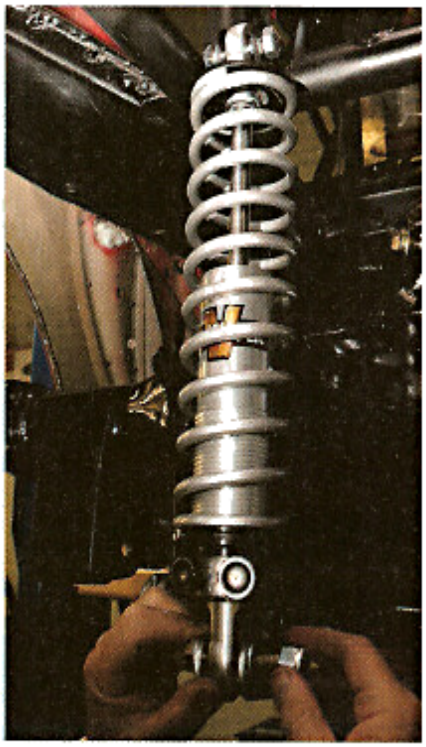
WE STARTED the FAB9 installation by installing both of the upper control arms onto the frame. Once they were on, we snugged them down but kept them movable to obviously link up with the housing later on.



We could go on and on about what can be ordered with the FAB9, but as they say, pictures are worth a thousand words. We drove to Tony's Metal Craft in Vineland, New Jersey, where Tony Parsons allowed us to watch as he installed a FAB9 in an SN-95 drag radial-category car he's building.

AFTER INSTALLING the upper control arms, we put in the shocks, mounting the tops of them to the proper point on the frame. As we did with the upper control arms, we left the shocks movable to link them up with the housing.

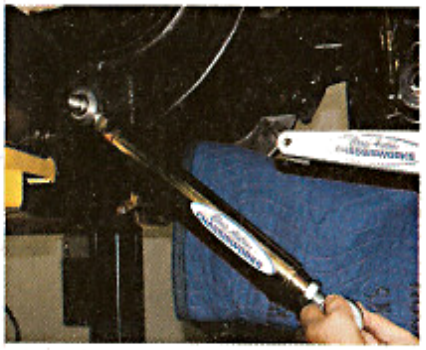
WE USED a transmission jack to raise the housing into the proper spot. Once the housing was in the car, we linked it to the upper control arms and tightened them down.



WE HOOKED up the shocks up to the housing, still leaving them slightly loose.

HERE'S A look at the back of the housing that shows the different position of the shocks due to the four-link design. You can see how the shocks are moved closer inboard, as opposed to the OEM mount position, which is further out on the axle tubes.

ONCE THE shocks were hooked up, they were tightened.



TO INSTALL the lower control arms, we began by hooking them to the frame mounts.

THE LOWER control arms were adjusted and hooked up to the housing. Once mated, the lowers were tightened, securing the car's rearend. Note: The control arm bushings are offset to allow for tire clearance.

THE FAB9 rear we installed came with provisions to put in an antisway bar. We began by putting the sway bar mounts onto the housing. We had previously installed the sway bar, but we'll get into details of that a bit later. Keep in mind that each sway bar mount has to be indexed from side to side.

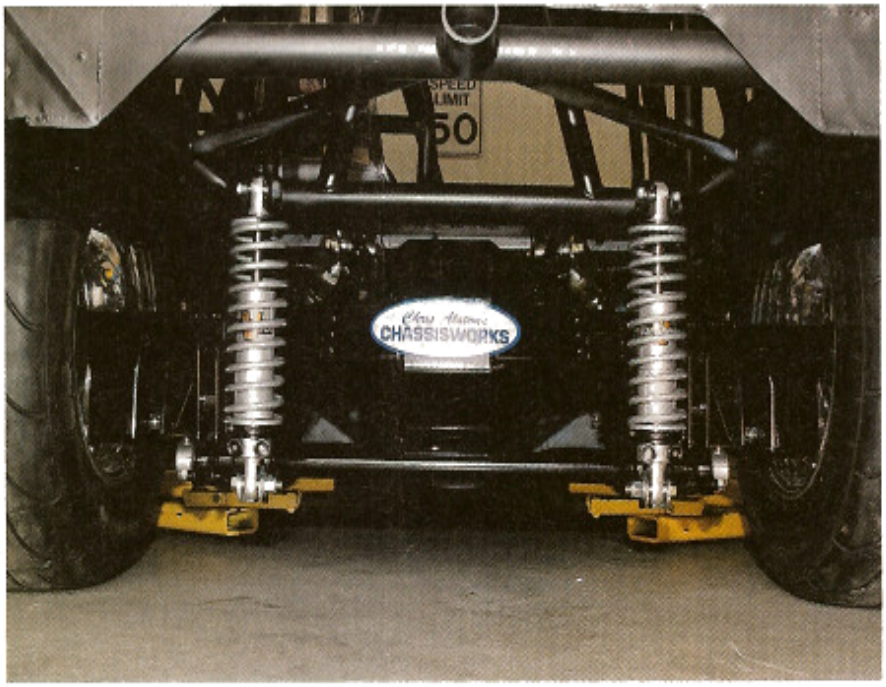
BEFORE ANY work on installing the rear was done, these nifty sway bar frame mounts were welded to the frame. Tony Parsons did this by measuring twice, welding once, and being good at what he does.

THIS IS the installed sway bar frame mount. Parsons welded the mount in the proper spot, then painted it black to match the rest of the underbody components.

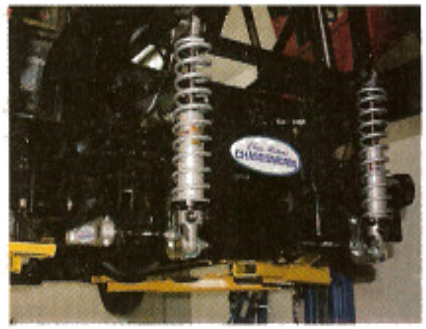
WE INSTALLED the sway bar links to the upper frame mounts.

SHOWN HERE is the upper control arm mount and bushing on the FAB9 housing. The housing can be ordered with either a urethane or a spherical bushing. We used spherical bushings on this install.

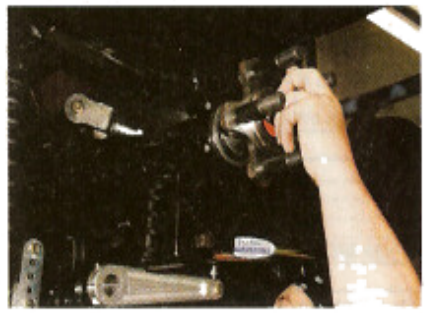
BEFORE PUTTING the housing into the car, we had the sway bar installed in the sway bar mount on the housing. This is a two-person job that is much easier to do on a bench than in the car. You slide the tube in from one end and finagle it to the other side.



ONCE THE axles were in, the wheel and tire combo was bolted on, and the car was lowered to the ground. With no tinwork or anything else in the way, you can see just how good the FAB9 looks. We're sure it will perform well, too.



THIS IS what the FAB9 looked like after we got done bolting on all the parts and pieces. With all of the components on, it was time to button it up and put the car back on the ground.



OUR VEHICLE still has a long way to go before a set of gears and a spool make their way into the housing. In order to move the car around, a set of axles were installed. Alston's offers numerous different options when it comes to a complete third-member package. Trust us when we say it will take you a good bit of time running through said options in the catalog.

WITH ITS hind legs back under it, this Pony is ready to be finished and do battle at the track. Thanks to Alston's FAB9 rear, there will be no worries when it comes to the rearend of this Mustang.