

>> CHRIS ALSTON'S CHASSISWORKS DIRECT FIT FAB9

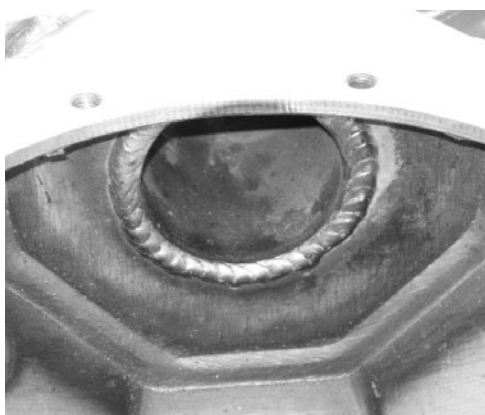
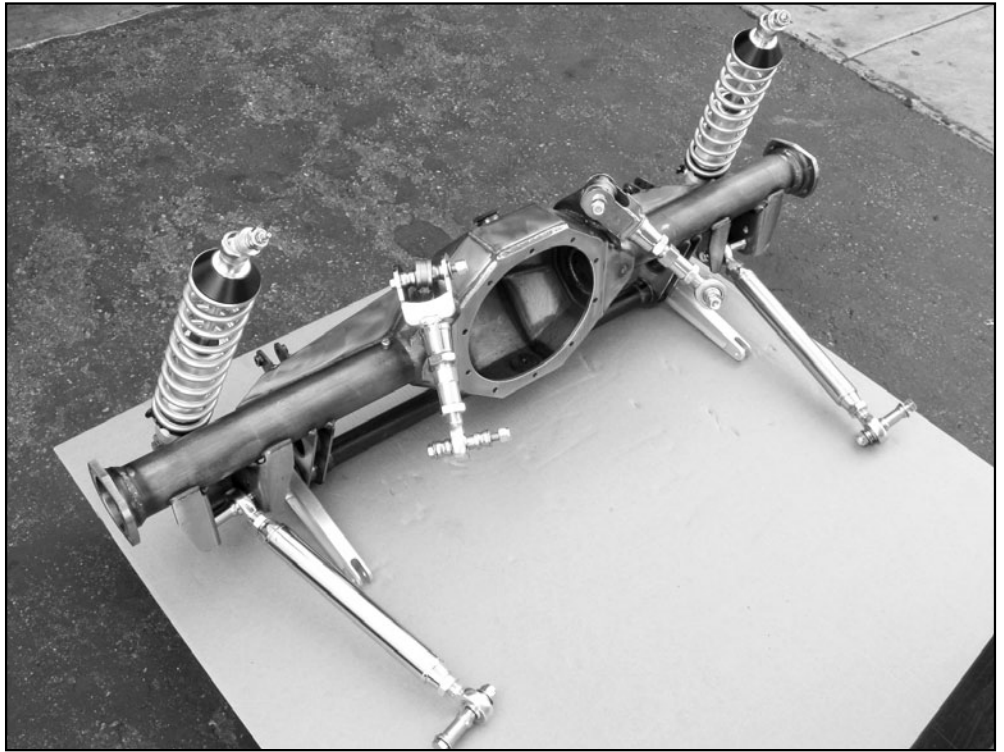
If there's a downside to owning a Fox-body Mustang, it might be too much choice. Because of the platform's popularity, literally any chassis or engine part you can imagine is available over the counter, and in most cases, from a half-dozen or more suppliers. While the competition is good for consumers because it keeps prices down and weeds out the shady players pretty quickly, it also means that you really have to do your homework when it comes to deciding what to buy for your project. There aren't a lot of bad choices out there, per se, but getting the biggest bang for your buck means making sure that everything is designed to work together from the beginning. When it came to putting together a race-spec rear end for the Killer Panda, our '86 GT Project car, we didn't fool around – we went with Chris Alston's Chassisworks for everything between the torque boxes and the axle bearings, to ensure we had a package that would work together like it was designed that way (because it was!). The full install and test article will be coming at you in the new year, but we wanted to give you an inside look at the hardware we'll be bolting on.

EYE OF THE STORM

The heart of the setup is the FAB9 9-inch center section. The basic fabricated axle housing itself is available in either mild steel or 4130 chrome-moly, and can be had in overall widths ranging from stock all the way down to 54.5 inches flange-to-flange, in quarter-inch increments. For applications that will see most of their time on the street, the FAB9 is available set up for urethane bushings in the upper control arm mounts, but since we're not planning on taking the Panda out on Date Night, we went for the spherical bearing setup for increased precision. Beyond the choice of width and upper control arm mounting, you can also specify additional back bracing, an integrated anti-roll bar mount, built-in wheelie bar mounting points, and inboard coilover mounts. With the exception of the latter option, we checked all the boxes and ended up with the gorgeous piece you see here.

OPTIONED-UP

While the FAB9 will bolt directly to any suspension designed for a stock Mustang axle, in keeping with our 'made for each other' philosophy we added Chassisworks' Pro Power lower and adjustable upper control arms, VariShock Rear Coilover conversions with adjustable lower mounts, and their drag race anti-roll bar. The end result is a package that offers the best in a "stock suspension" setup without any guesswork or mix-and-match head scratching. ■



^ The strength of our FAB9 is obvious from the first glance, but one thing you won't see when it's all bolted up is the fact that the 3-inch axle tubes are welded both externally where they meet the fabricated steel center section, but internally as well at the center bulkhead, giving two widely-spaced points of support for each tube. It's details like this that make the FAB9 a standout.



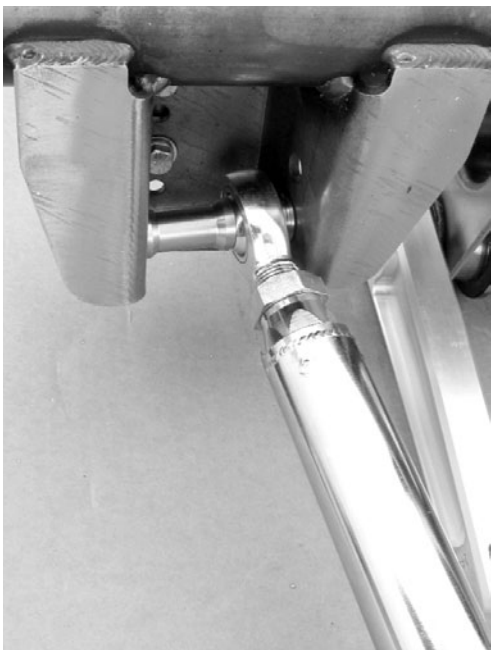
^ It's possible to order a FAB9 with bare ends, or with the ends unattached to allow you to trim the tubes yourself, but Chassisworks does a very, very nice job putting them on if you let them. The FAB9 comes with Torino-style housing ends to allow for large-diameter axle shafts, and brake systems designed for "Late Ford" ends are a direct bolt-on to the billet flanges.



^ The FAB9 is available with provisions for polyurethane bushings at the upper control arm mount, or spherical bearings like our axle housing. The bearings are replaceable, and are retained with a spiral wire lock.



^ Stock-style shock mounts are standard, but the flanges on the FAB9 are drilled with four holes to allow a 1.75-inch range of ride height adjustment. If you need even more, Chassisworks' adjustable coilover mounts add another four holes, plus the side brackets can be flipped as well to allow up to 2 5/8-inch adjustment in 7/16-inch increments.



^ The FAB9 is designed to accommodate any stock-style lower control arm, and has two sets of mounting holes, with one in the stock position and one relocated down by 1.125-inches to allow adjustment of the suspension geometry. When combined with the offset spacers on the Pro Power lower control arms, you end up with a ton of extra inboard tire clearance.



^ Everybody and their brother makes adjustable upper control arms; what sets Chassisworks apart is that they offer both a "competition" version rated up to 800 horsepower, with the beefier Pro Power units like ours made of even stouter materials and components for pro-level drag race applications.



^ The VariShock Rear Coilover conversions feature billet aluminum bodies, greasable spherical stem mounts at the top, and adjustment collars with ball-detent retention, so no jam nuts are required in order to lock in the preload adjustment. The kit is available with spring rates ranging from 80 pounds per inch up to 450, with 175-200 the typical range for regular street use. The dampers are double-adjustable for independent compression and rebound control, with 16 detents from full soft to full firm.



Like the uppers, the Pro Power lower control arms are double-adjustable for length without having to remove an end, to make squaring the axle to the chassis a simple process.



^ The drag anti-roll bar mounts directly through an integrated tube attached to the underside of the FAB9, and rotates in low-friction bushings (inset). The bar itself is 1.25-inch diameter steel, while the end links are billet aluminum, and the two are joined via a 48-spline connection on the ends. Adjustable end links tie into weld-on mounts on the frame via spherical bearings on each end. You'll also note that the anti-roll bar mount is equipped with the optional wheelie bar mounting points.

>> WHAT WE LIKED

- + Wide range of options allows you to get exactly what you need
- + Bulletproof construction on every piece
- + Clear, easy to follow instructions and schematic drawings, and they're all available online too

>> WOULD BE NICE IF...

- Multiple anti-roll bar spring rates were available to assist in tuning