STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY TOM SHAW

DRUM BRAKE UPGRADE

YOU DON'T HAVE TO CONVERT TO DISC BRAKES TO GET SUPERIOR STOPPING POWER

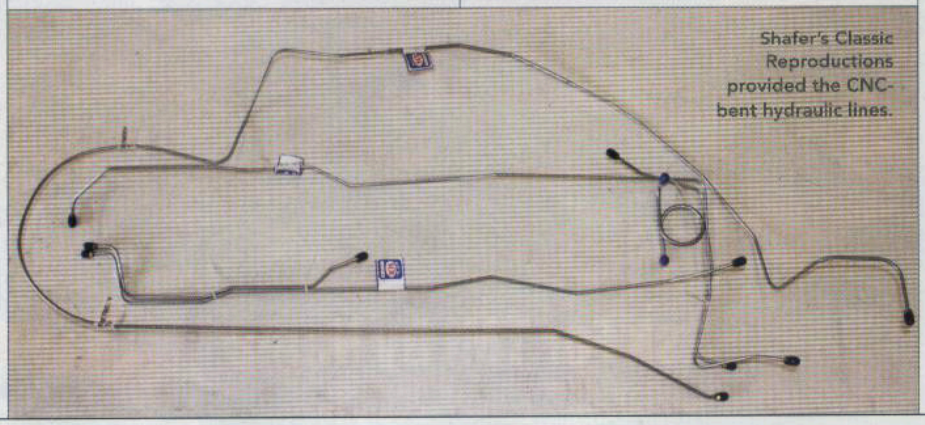
Stop it. And the sooner the better. That's what the little pedal to the left of the accelerator is for. But brakes, being a serviceable system, wear out, and when they go, the results can be spectacular.

Take what was left of the brakes on our "Collateral Damage" '66 coupe. The pedal went to the floor. That's all we knew until we dove into the system. Then we discovered that while the fronts had been serviced recently, the rears were left to dissolve into fine granules. All the friction material was long gone, and the grinding metal had ground the drums down to the point that the wheel cylinder pistons finally blew right out, emptying the hydraulic lines and bringing on total, catastrophic brake failure.

The fix was a Stage III Brake system from Muscle Car Brakes (877-606-7867; www.musclecarbrakes.com). The system uses premium-quality components throughout, including drums made from virgin-ore metal, not the grab bag of alloys in offshore parts made of recycled material. Drums are treated at minus 300 degrees Fahrenheit, which changes the metal's grain and gives them much greater stopping power. Wheel cylinders are larger than stock, providing improved stopping power and easier pedal effort, and brake shoes have a semi-ceramic material bonded — not riveted — to them for high friction, fade resistance, and long life. Muscle Car Brakes is the only manufacturer in North America to use ceramic friction material on drum brake shoes. The point is that you're getting disc brake performance without the high cost and loss of originality.

Muscle Car Brakes' Stage III system is a total package that provides all-new drums, shoes, wheel cylinders, master cylinder, hoses, and hardware. Kits we've used in the past almost always leave something out. This one was complete.

We're working on our humble six-cylinder driver, but the work we're doing applies to V8 cars, too. Our Mustang's small 9-inch drums use bonded friction material, increasing the surface area of each shoe by 28 percent compared to riveted shoes. Some Mustangs, such as big-block cars with larger brakes, may use riveted shoes.



Shafer's Classic Reproductions provided the CNC-bent hydraulic lines.