Binder Betterer

Steeda has a handy update for Mustang front brakes

text and photos by Tom Wilson

Don't you just love a cheap fix? I mean, how often have you paid big bucks for gadgets that didn't work, or broke a week after you put them on your car? It's about as much fun as sitting in traffic. Well, here's an inexpensive, easy to install cure for a common Ford problem that works great and never needs service.

The problem is uneven braking and brake pad wear on late-model Mustangs. The harder you use Mustang brakes, the worse this problem gets. For gently driven street cars the uneven braking is not very noticeable, but who drives a Mustang gently, especially in the brake department? No, the usual scene is one of tapered, thick-and-thin pads requiring replacement long before all the pad material has been used. Also, for severe duty, Mustang braking could be improved slightly if more even pressure was brought to bear across the entire surface of the brake disc.

Where this problem starts is in the caliper to steering knuckle mounting. The sliding brake caliper moves over a pair of pins, which are in turn covered with rubber grommets. It's the rubber grommets which allow the caliper to flex relative to the disc, causing the uneven braking.

The cure is to remove the rubber grommets and substitute harder sleeves which allow minimal side movement. Dario Orlando at Steeda Autosports (2241 Hammondville Rd., Pompano Beach, FL 33069, (305) 960-0774) markets such sleeves made from stainless steel. Originally Steeda tried mild steel sleeves, but rust and corrosion concerns prompted the move to stainless. Best of all, the Stain-

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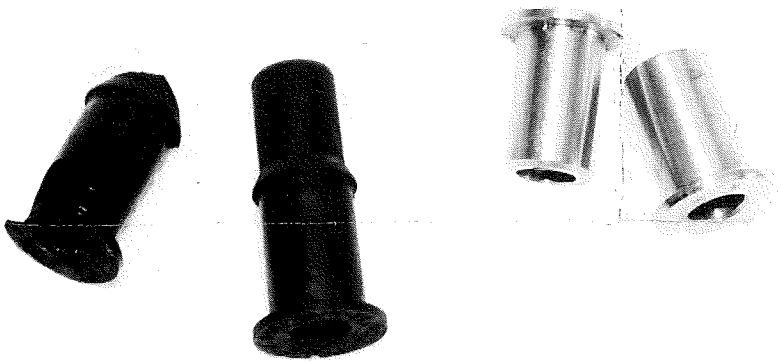
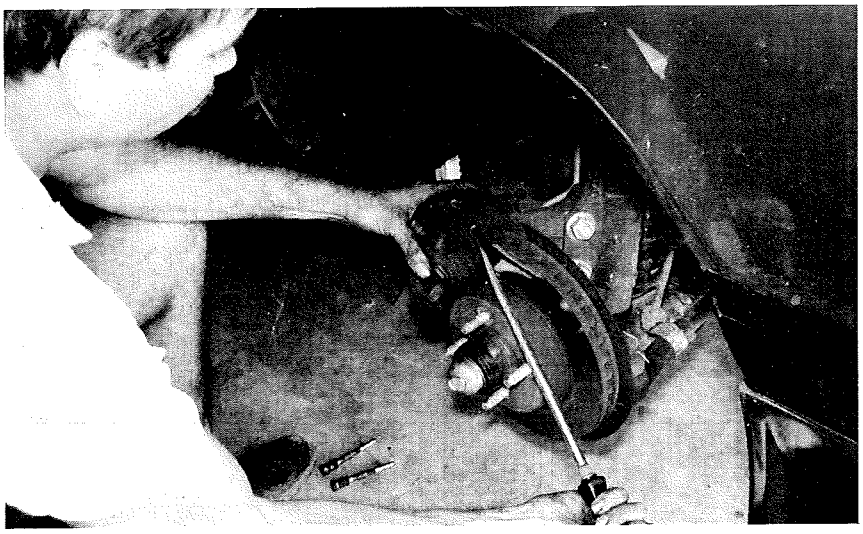
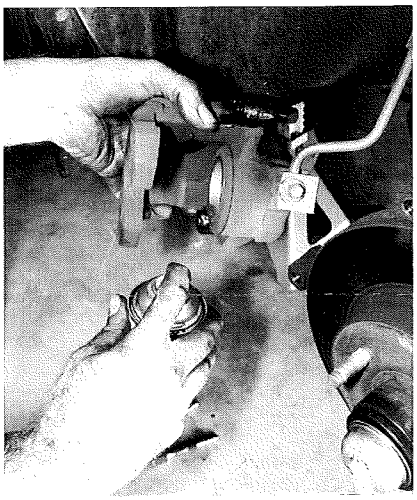


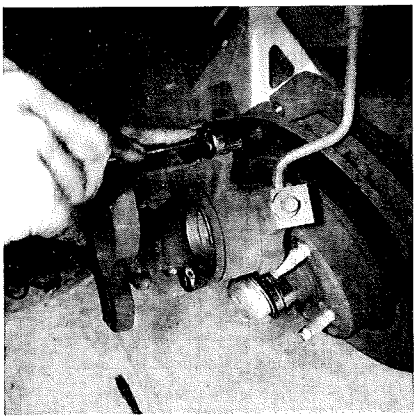
1 *There's no comparison between the stock rubber parts and the Steeda stainless steel sleeves. The left-hand rubber sleeve broke during removal, so it's shorter. The extra length of the stock rubber parts is mainly due to a dust shield built into the sleeve. The Steeda sleeves do not use a shield.*



2 *Begin by removing the brake caliper. On '83-'86 cars you'll need a #45 Torx driver to remove the caliper pins, which are seen laying next to Dario's left foot. Later pins have the Torx and a hex head so you can use a regular socket on them. Dario's levering the caliper piston back into it's bore here for a little extra clearance. Once the pins are out, the caliper lifts off.*



3 *Removing the old rubber sleeves is easier if you lube them first. Just about anything will do, WD-40, silicon spray, you name it. You'll note that Dario has removed the brake pads. That gives the necessary working room, and insures the pads won't get tainted with oil.*



4 *Next, pry out the rubber sleeves. A small screwdriver is the best tool. Use it to pry the thick rubber lip down and into the caliper. Then push the remainder of the sleeve through. It might help to re-lube the sleeve if it was sealed tightly to the caliper.*

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less Steel Sleeve Kit retails for only $39.95, and installation is easy. For '87-'90 Mustangs the Steeda part number is SS04. Earlier '83-'86 Mustangs use SS0485. Steeda also recommends using new caliper pins as the originals may be bent or slightly worn, which can cause hang-ups with the tighter-tolerance steel sleeves.

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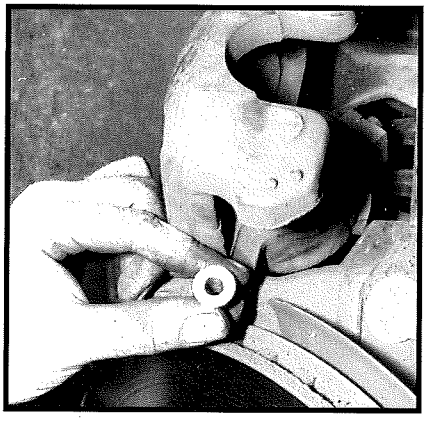
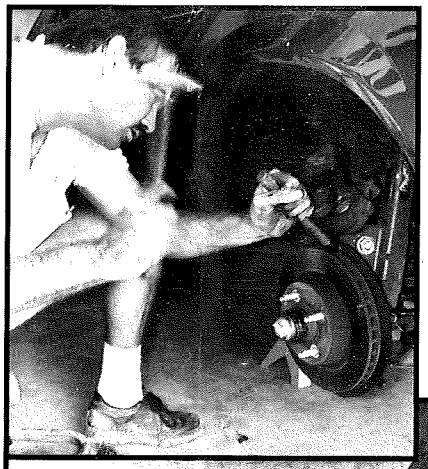
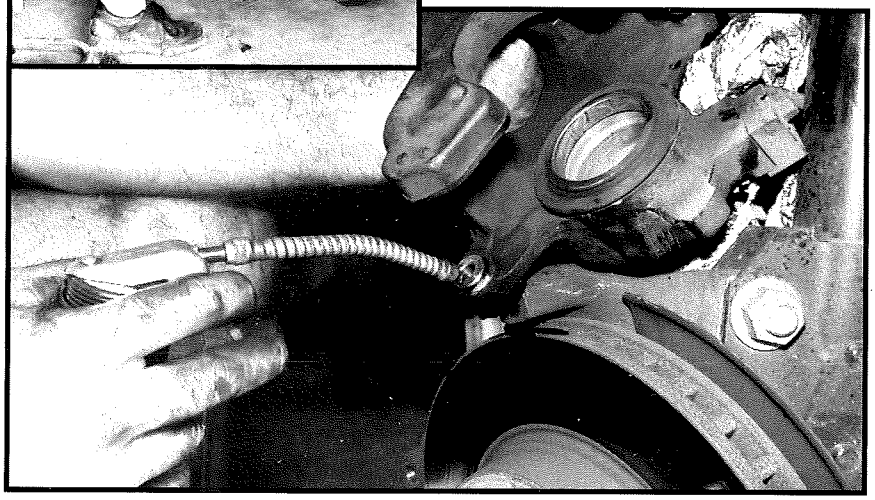


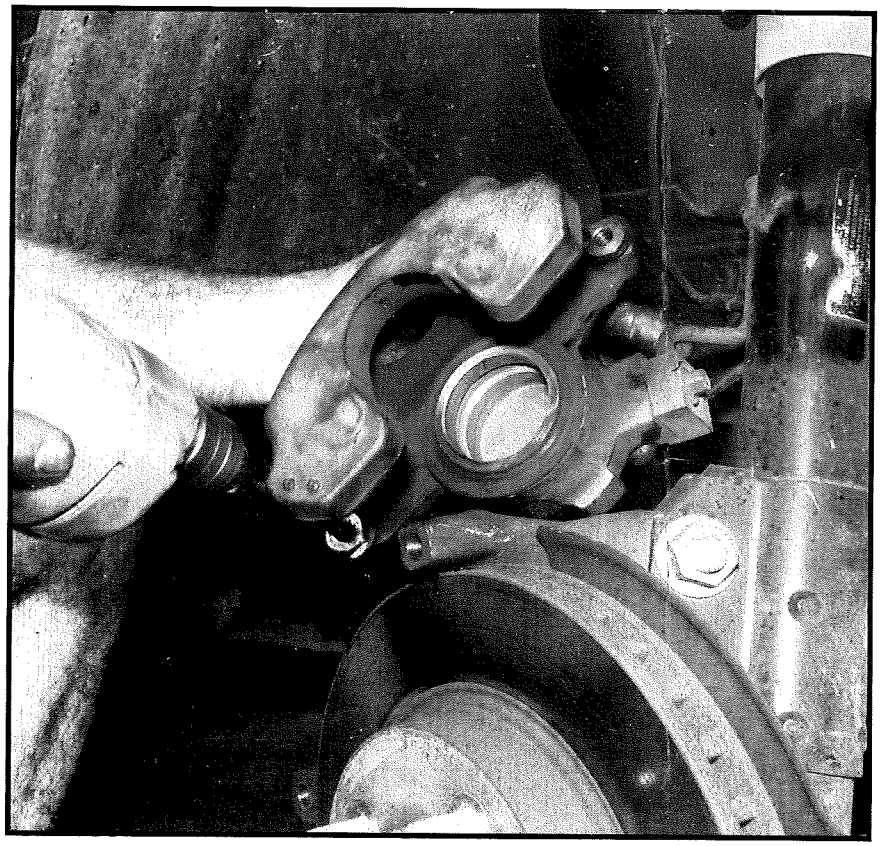
5 *Start the new stainless sleeve from the pad side of the caliper. Lightly lube the O.D. with high-temperature grease first to assist driving it into the bore. To get the sleeve started, give a few light hammer taps around its circumference. You want the sleeve to start straight.*



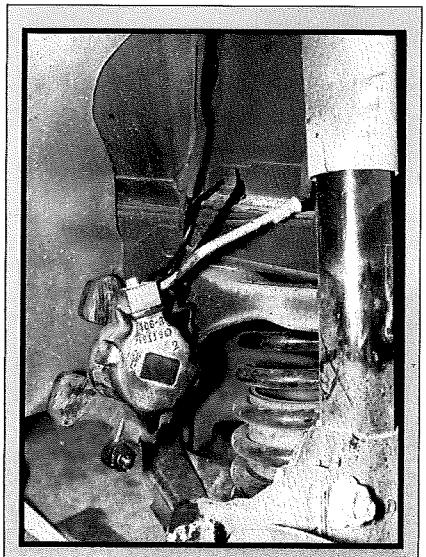
6 *Once the sleeve is started, drive it home with a hammer and drift. A soft drift, such as brass or even wood, is required. A steel drift can displace the steel sleeve, causing a ding which will need filing before the pins will pass through.*



7 *Dry fit the caliper pins. If they slide through, great. If not, you'll have to drill the sleeve I.D.s. What's happened is the sleeve has taken on the sometimes out-of-round shape of the caliper holes, pinching the sleeve I.D.s. Before drilling the sleeves, lube them with cutting oil.*



8 *If resizing is required, use an 11/32-inch drill bit. It won't take much cutting, so a quick pass through the steel sleeve should do the trick. Whatever you do, don't force the caliper pins through the sleeves and expect them to work. The caliper must slide on the pins! Once resized, the brake is ready for reassembly.*



Safety First

When working with brakes, it is critical you keep safety in mind. One of the most common brake mistakes is letting the caliper hang from the flexible brake hose. This is a bad move, as it stresses the critical hose. Instead, hang the caliper using a length of wire or a tie wrap as shown. Don't set the caliper on the steering knuckle and expect it to stay there without tying it on. Someone is sure to come along and knock it off by turning the steering wheel or hammering somewhere else on the car.

SPECIAL NOTE: *SS-04/85 Sleeves should not require any drilling. Should drilling be necessary, use a 7.25 mm bit. In both applications be sure to lubricate caliper pins with a quality high temperature grease.*