



CORVETTE STING RAY

You aren't suggesting that it's
one of the best GT cars
in the world. Or are you?

We know Americans can't build the best possible Grand Touring car. After all, that takes brilliant engineering and old-world craftsmanship of the kind only Europe can provide. It's heritage and breeding and all that sort of thing, old boy. Detroit is perfectly capable of producing blustering, big-engined buses that might pass as high-speed touring vehicles if they had proper brakes and handling. Yes, that's where they fall down. Squishy suspensions and incendiary brakes certainly make American machines intolerable for the connoisseur.

There is the Corvette, but it's hardly in the running when you consider absolute pinnacles of accomplish-

ment in the field, such as the Aston Martin DB-5 or the Ferrari 250/GT.

It bears superficial resemblance to the authentic thing; the bucket seats are remarkably well-formed and comfortable, and the instrumentation is what you might expect on a GT car—with a large, clearly-numbered speedometer and tachometer placed right in front of the driver. But after all, there are dozens of cars with that kind of equipment that miss being GT cars by a mile.

Size is the standard that immediately comes to mind. The Corvette is simply too big.

Wait a minute. You say the Corvette is only one inch longer than the Ferrari and five inches shorter than the Aston Martin? But it has that enormous wheelbase...

Only 98 inches? The same as the Aston and only 3.5 inches longer than the Ferrari?

But wheelbase and overall length are only part of it. The Corvette is heavy like a truck.

Its curb weight is only 3180 lbs? The Aston Martin weighs 3450 in the same trim? But Ferrari claims only 2540 lbs for the 250/GT. Bulk and size are silly parameters in such a discussion anyway. The real question is engineering sophistication. That is the heart of any automobile of this sort. After all, the Ferrari and the Aston Martin cost over \$12,000, and it's ridiculous to expect that a car less than half as expensive could compete. Take the suspension, for example.

The Corvette has a fully independent suspension system fore and aft? Yes, we know. The Ferrari and the Aston use live rear axles? Now what can that all mean?

Then there is the gearbox. The Aston Martin features an optional ZF five-speed unit that is unparalleled, and then, of course, the Ferrari's, though only four-speed, has a tremendous reputation. Muncie? You don't mean Muncie, Indiana? That may be where they make the

new General Motors four-speed, but who ever heard of a true Grand Touring car with a gearbox made in Muncie, Indiana? It's utterly barbaric. Maybe it does have one of the lightest, most positive linkages ever designed and near-perfect ratios, but it's nonetheless downright silly for any transmission to be built in Muncie, Indiana.

When it comes to powerplants, the question is academic. Corvette engines simply can't compete with the modern, overhead camshaft units of the Ferrari and the Aston Martin. Yes, yes, we know all about the Ferrari V-12 dating back to the 1940s, but it is one of the greatest designs of all time. And the Aston Martin engine is a lovely double-overhead-cam straight-six. Of course we know the big 365-hp and 375-hp Corvettes have a considerable edge in sheer power, but they're harsh, solid-lifter, semi-racing engines that hardly fit the mold of a smooth, silent GT powerplant.

A new engine for the Corvette? With hydraulic lifters? Three hundred-and-fifty horsepower at 5800 rpm? Silky-smooth? No rough idle? No pushrod clatter? One hundred more horsepower than the 250/GT? Sixty-eight more than the Aston-Martin? That all may be true, but consider the vast advantage the Corvette has in cubic inches. Let's talk in terms of engine efficiency. The Ferrari produces 1.36 horsepower per cubic inch, the Aston Martin gives 1.16 hp per cubic inch and the Corvette 1.072 horsepower per cubic inch. See what we told you? And let's not hear any nonsense about reliability and lack of temperament. When we're discussing pure machinery, mundane things of that nature have no bearing whatsoever. Speed in excess of 125 mph is essential for a car of this sort and on that count we'll have to give the Corvette a passing grade. With a 3.31 rear axle ratio, it will easily exceed that mark and, equipped with the optional 3.01 ratio, we grudgingly admit that the machine will top 150 mph without effort.

Anything that goes that fast must certainly be able to stop properly and we all know about those Detroit brakes, don't we?

Disc brakes? On the Corvette? On all four wheels? As a matter of fact, we do recall reading some press release about Corvette discs, but surely they can't compare...

Vented discs, 11 3/4 inches in diameter? Great resistance to fade? An absolute revelation when compared to the old Corvette brakes?

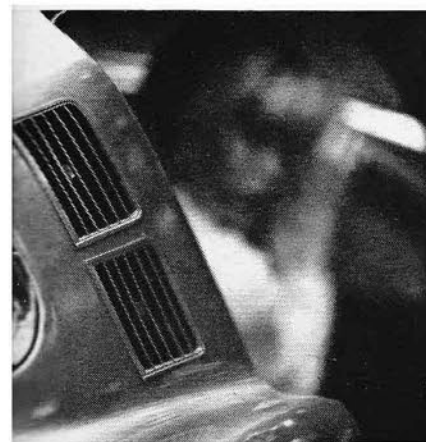
That may be, but comparing old and new Corvettes is one thing; comparing the new Corvette with the Ferrari and the Aston is another. The Ferrari, for example, has an enormous 573 square inches of swept braking area and the Aston Martin has 468 square inches... which is by no means a meager quantity. By contrast the old Corvettes had a paltry 321 square inches.

The new Corvette disc brakes have 461.2 square inches of swept lining? You have the effrontery to suggest that they form one of the really outstanding braking systems available on a production car today? The entire question isn't worth arguing about. The Ferrari and the Aston Martin and other similarly pedigreed European cars are simply not in a class with the Corvette. They have what you might call "breeding."

Stop all that nonsense about the Corvette being as fast and as silent, as stable and as much in keeping with the grand touring concept as the other two. We don't want to hear how it might be argued that the Corvette is equally sophisticated from an engineering standpoint or that it might even be as well made. More reliable than an Aston or a Ferrari? Is nothing sacred?

There is more to an automobile than dull, simple economic value or its performance capability. There's tradition and there's... tradition... and then there's...

Anyway, you know what we're trying to say. **c/d**



PHOTOGRAPHY: TOM BUENOSIDE

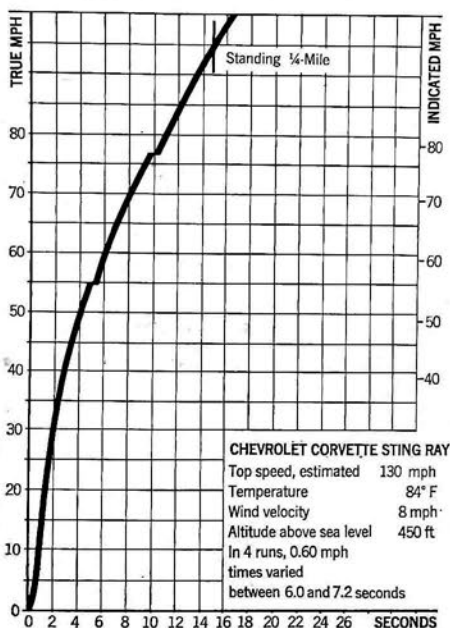
CHEVROLET CORVETTE

Manufacturer: Chevrolet Motor Division,
General Motors Corporation
Detroit 2, Michigan

Price as tested: 5276.30 FOB, St. Louis

ACCELERATION

Zero to	Seconds
30 mph.....	2.1
40 mph.....	3.0
50 mph.....	4.3
60 mph.....	6.2
70 mph.....	8.3
80 mph.....	11.1
90 mph.....	13.7
100 mph.....	16.9
Standing 1/4-mile.....	9.4 mph in 14.9



ENGINE

Water-cooled V-8, cast iron block, 5 main bearings
Bore x stroke..... 4.00 x 3.25 in, 102 x 83 mm
Displacement..... 327 cu in, 5359 cc
Compression ratio..... 11.0-to-one
Carburetion..... Single four-throat Holley
Valve gear..... Pushrod-operated overhead valves (hydraulic lifters)
Power (SAE)..... 350 bhp @ 5500 rpm
Torque..... 360 lbs-ft @ 3600 rpm
Specific power output..... 1.07 bhp per cu in, 65.3 bhp per liter
Usable range of engine speeds, 600-5600 rpm
Electrical system..... 12-volt, 61 amp-hr battery
Fuel recommended..... Premium
Mileage..... 10-18 mpg
Range on 20-gallon tank..... 200-360 miles

DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch..... 10-inch single dry plate
Transmission..... 4-speed all-synchro (Muncie)
Gear Ratio Over-all rpm Max
Rev 2.27 7.52 10.5 59
1st 2.20 7.40 10.7 60
2nd 1.64 5.51 14.4 77
3rd 1.28 4.30 18.4 102
4th 1.00 3.36 23.5 130
Final drive ratio..... 3.36 to one

CHASSIS

Channel-section steel frame, fiberglass body.
Wheelbase..... 98 in
Track..... F 56.8 R 57.6 in
Length..... 175 in
Width..... 69.6 in
Height..... 49.8 in
Ground clearance..... 7.0 in
Dry weight..... 2975 lbs
Curb weight..... 3180 lbs
Test weight..... 3500 lbs
Weight distribution front/rear..... 47/53%
Pounds per bhp (test weight)..... 10.0
Suspension F Ind., unequal-length wishbones and coil springs, stabilizer bar.
R Ind., radius arms and lower transverse rods, half-shafts acting as upper locating members, transverse leaf spring.
Brakes..... 11.75-in discs front and rear, 461.2 sq in swept area
Steering..... Recirculating ball
Turns, lock to lock..... 3
Turning circle..... 36 ft
Tires..... 7.75-15
Revs per mile..... 760

CHECK LIST

ENGINE

Starting..... Good
Response..... Excellent
Noise..... Good
Vibration..... Good

DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch action..... Good
Transmission linkage..... Excellent
Synchromesh action..... Excellent
Power-to-ground transmission..... Excellent

BRAKES

Response..... Excellent
Pedal pressure..... Excellent
Fade resistance..... Excellent
Smoothness..... Excellent
Directional stability..... Excellent

STEERING

Response..... Good
Accuracy..... Good
Feedback..... Good
Road feel..... Good

SUSPENSION

Harshness control..... Good
Roll stiffness..... Good
Tracking..... Good
Pitch control..... Good
Shock damping..... Good

CONTROLS

Location..... Good
Relationship..... Good
Small controls..... Good

INTERIOR

Visibility..... Fair
Instrumentation..... Excellent
Lighting..... Good
Entry/exit..... Fair
Front seating comfort..... Good
Front seating room..... Good
Rear seating comfort..... —
Rear seating room..... —
Storage space..... Fair
Wind noise..... Fair
Road noise..... Good

WEATHER PROTECTION

Heater..... Excellent
Defroster..... Excellent
Ventilation..... Good
Weather sealing..... Good
Windshield wiper action..... Good

QUALITY CONTROL

Materials, exterior..... Good
Materials, interior..... Good
Exterior finish..... Good
Interior finish..... Good
Hardware and trim..... Good

GENERAL

Service accessibility..... Fair
Luggage space..... Fair
Bumper protection..... Good
Exterior lighting..... Good
Resistance to crosswinds..... Good

