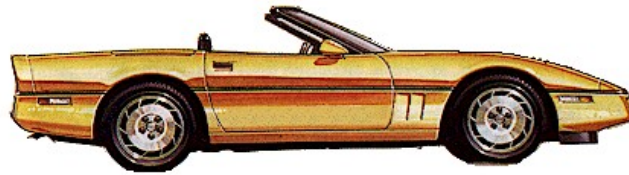


1990

Anticipation became "King of the Hill" had



realization -- the arrived.

In the mid-80's, and its Corvette approached Group

General Motors Division Lotus in Great

Britain with the idea of developing the world's fastest production car. From that collaboration came the LT5 engine, an aluminum-block V-8 with the same bore as the standard (L98) 350ci displacement unit, but with 375 horsepower. To accomplish this power boost, the new block featured four overhead camshafts and 32 valves. The LT5s were built by Mercury Marine in Oklahoma and assembled into the ZR-1 vehicle at Bowling Green.

A unique computerized engine control module provided "bi-modal" characteristics. This dual personality was a logical outgrowth of the appeal of the twin-turbo Callaway conversions. The ZR-1 could be used for routine street driving or convert to a race car with speed and handling available on demand. The computer system directed fuel mixtures through an upgraded injection system that allowed for low-, half- and full-throttle modes and kicked the engine up to 350hp. And, a key-operated "valet" switch locked out the upper speed ranges, limiting power to a normal 250 horses to prevent inexperienced hands from taking advantage of the car's outstanding power.

Available only in coupe configuration, the ZR-1 was distinguishable from other Corvette coupes by its wider tail section, its now convex rear fascia and four "square" taillights. Of the total production run of 23,646 vehicles that year, 7,630 convertibles were turned out as well as 16,016 coupes; of which 3,049 were ZR-1s.

The "King of the Hill" did not come cheap, however. The price of the basic coupe was \$31,979, but with the addition of the ZR-1's special performance package listed at \$27,016, the car was not meant for the faint-hearted or bargain-conscious. It's reported that some dealers asked and were paid \$100,000 for the then ultimate in American sports cars. Meanwhile, the basic rag-top retailed for \$37,264.

The L98 engine's rating also was kicked up 5 horsepower to 245hp thanks to an air intake speed density control system, camshaft revision and increased compression ratio in convertibles. An additional five horsepower (250hp) was attained in the coupes because of their less restrictive exhaust systems.

All 1990 models, whether ZR-1 or standard, were given redesigned "hybrid" instrument panels combining a digital speedometer with analog tach, as well as secondary gauges and a display that alerted the driver when an oil change was needed based and an engine oil life monitor that calculated useful oil life based on temperatures and revolutions. A driver's side air-bag was added and a 200-watt stereo system was available (one unit offering a theft-proof compact disc player).

For the racing circuit, 23 Corvettes with special options were produced for the SCCA World Challenge series. Owners could purchase race engines from Chevrolet or build their own, but all racing modifications became the owner's responsibility.