

Chevrolet The All- Sports Car



Corvette: American

The dictionary
corvette as a
warship,
a frigate,

with one tier of guns" and a later variant, prominent in World War II as a "fast, lightly armed warship," used primarily in convoy escort and antisubmarine operations.

describes a
"sailing
smaller than
usually armed

General Motors is reported to have had these images in mind when they declared war on the stodgy, sexless designs produced by America's domestic post-war automotive industry. The result was the Corvette --sleek, fast and maneuverable. Introduced in 1953, it was the first American sports car.

Unique in concept and design, it combined the best features of classic, low-slung European sports models like the Jaguar, Bentley and MG, with significantly upgraded horsepower. It intimated youth, class, power and success.

The breakthrough styling of the Corvette also utilized emerging plastics technology. Its fiberglass body, which considerably reduced power-draining body weight, has remained one of its salient features (as is the two-seat cockpit) through more than four decades of production and five generations of design modifications.

Its introduction also inspired GM's American competitors to rush to their respective drawing boards to develop glamour models of their own. Ford's 1955 Thunderbird, and the later Mustang (1964), were brought to market to compete with the instantaneous popularity of the Corvette.

That first year of the Corvette, a mere 300 were produced. By 1992, however, the company had recorded its millionth sale. While others attempted to copy original concept of the Corvette, they soon discarded the sports car image for more mass-market appeal. "Sporting" pretensions were dropped in favor of more bells and whistles; heavier, super-torqued "muscle" cars; flashy, chrome-laden convertibles, and old reliable family-oriented sedans and station wagons.

Corvette owners, however, realize that their choice has never sold its birthright and it has remained true to its origins as America's answer to foreign sport and touring cars.

Hopefully this chronology will provide owners, enthusiasts and the casually-interested with a nostalgic trip over the several Corvette eras; offer them a chance to meet some of the individuals who had a hand in making Corvette part of the American psyche, and afford them an opportunity to compare their "favorite" with other models/years of what is certifiably America's true classic sports car.