

1963

Photo #1 1973 XP-882

Arguably more stunning than the Two-Rotor XP-897GT was the so-called "Four-Rotor Car" that appeared a bit later in 1973. Built on the first XP-882 chassis under the aegis of company design chief Bill Mitchell, it carried a pair of GM's experimental two-rotor engines bolted together into a 420 horsepower "super Wankel." A Corvette-like face and obvious high performance potential were taken as strong suggestions that GM was brewing a radical new Corvette for the late Seventies or early Eighties.

Photo #2 1976 XP-882

The Four-Rotor Car got a transplanted V-8 in 1976 to become the Aerovette, which came close to production four years later. GM design chief Bill Mitchell kept its original lines intact, however – not that there was reason to fiddle. A good-looker even now, it's a dynamic design even when viewed from overhead. In profile, it displays a strongly triangulated "mound" shape, deftly balanced proportions, and artful surface detailing. "Gullwing" doors barked back to the original Mercedes 300SL coupe, but were articulated for easier operation in tight parking spots. Interior was more fully engineered than the show-car norm, another indication that the Aerovette was indeed a serious production prospect.

Photo #3 1968 Corvette Astro-Vette

The Astro-Vette was Chevy's other big auto-show star in 1968, but it was merely an exaggerated version of that year's all-new "Shark" production design. Allegedly good aerodynamics were never proven.

Photo #4 Corvette Indy and CERV III

The CERV III made its debut at the Detroit International Auto Show. The car's mid-engine V8 is a 5.7 liter 32 valve, dual overhead cam LT5 Engine with the addition of twin turbos and internal modifications. Speed 225 MPH, horsepower is rated at 650.

Photo #5 Corvette XP700

A 1958 Corvette which was modified to be the personal car of William L. "Bill" Mitchell. First, in 1958, it received a special rear end of duck-tail type, which was incorporated in the regular '61 Corvette, and the front end was redesigned to look almost like the one of the Oldsmobile F88 '54 show car. In 1959, the car was modified again to become a real show car (pictured): longer rear end, new front end with smaller air intake, new transparent roof with a periscope in the middle of the two bubbles.

Photo #6 1968 Astro II-XP-880

Though not called Corvette, the curvy one-off Astro II of 1968 fueled rumors that a mid-engine Chevy sports car was near. Developed as GM project XP-880, it was a follow-up to the previous year's Corvair-based Astro I, but carried a Corvette V-8 and conventional doors. The entire rear half of the body was hinged to tilt up for engine access.

Photo #7 1970 Corvette XP-882

Shot in the GM Design Staff viewing court just before its public debut in early 1970, the experimental XP-882 looked production-ready, thus fueling hopes that the next new Corvette would have a similar mid-engine design. It definitely looked like a Corvette, with overtones of the 1968-vintage "Shark" model in its low vee'd nose and four-lamp tail treatment. The car would have stayed under wraps, but was shown to counter Ford's announced sale of Italian-built DeTomaso Panteras. GM built two XP-882 chassis for evaluation, but only the first one had the bodywork shown here.

Photo #8 1973 XP-897 GT

Built by Pininfarina to a GM design, the XP-897GT "Two-Rotor Car" appeared in 1973 as a showcase for GM's then-imminent Wankel-type rotary engine. Like the original XP-882, it was widely believed to be a precursor of the next generation Corvette.

Photo #9 1973 XP-898

It looks a bit like the post-1982 Corvette, but the one-off XP-898 of 1973 was actually built on the chassis of Chevy's small four-cylinder Vega. Its mission was to test feasibility of a new "sandwich" fiberglass body construction using a foam filler that could be varied in thickness to provide desired strength in specific areas. Though it looks a bit dated now, XP-898 would have been a great replacement for the '68-vintage "Shark" Corvette in, say, 1975.