

# '84 Corvette

## The American love affair begins anew

By Burge Hulett

There will be no 1983 Corvette. That's right, the 1983 Chevrolet sports car is the one you've been looking at for the twelve months preceeding your last New Year's Eve party. So what about all those spy pictures of the "new" Corvette, the one with the long nose and all-glass hatchback? It's here, and Chevrolet calls it the 1984 Corvette.

Don't despair if one of your New Year's resolutions was to be the first in your condo complex to have a new Vette. You won't have to wait until 1984 for your new car, it'll be here on schedule, which is to say in 1983.

If all of this seems confusing, and it is, it's because the Chevrolet guys decided they didn't want their all-new Corvette to be the last '83 out. The solution? Slap an '84 label on it so it'll be the first 1984 model to hit the streets.

It really doesn't matter what date is stamped on the new Corvette. Few people care about the year of a Ferrari 308, 512 Boxer or a Porsche 928. These cars are what they are, and their production dates are less important than the birth of another nearly perfect high-performance two-seater.

If you're wondering what these exotics have to do with the 1984 Corvette, you should know the new Corvette is in the same class as the best from Ferrari and Porsche. Moreover, it will lead this high-flying group into the next ultimate sports car decade.

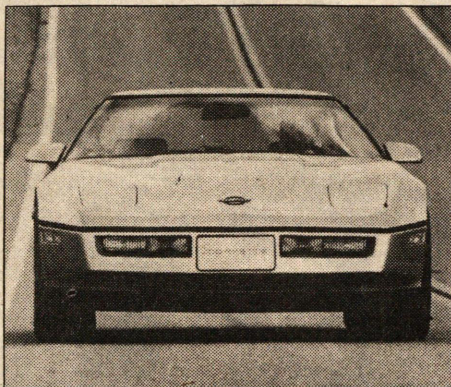
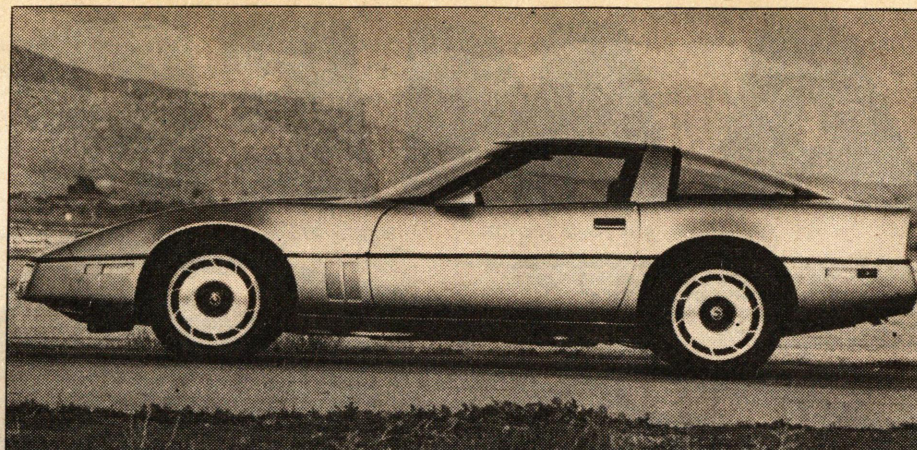
You should know now the new Corvette, produced on an assembly line in Bowling Green, Ky., is probably a better car than any other series-produced high-performance two-seater in the world. It's better engineered, is as well built and outperforms anything currently available. The new Corvette is the Charles Lindbergh and John Glenn of U.S. automobiles, an authentic American hero, arriving just when we desperately need one.

When the smoke, dust and hype of its introduction clear and its nit-picking detractors are silenced, the fourth-generation Corvette will mark what appears as a renaissance for America's car industry. It's the perfect star-spangled banner to announce that Detroit is capable of building the best cars in the world.

Estimates place the Corvette's base cost at around \$25,000. If that's correct, it's probable that one fully decked out with every available option will be no more than \$30,000, including taxes and license plates.

Before you snort about dollars, consider the Corvette's value against the competition. A Porsche 928 lists for \$43,000, a Ferrari 308, \$58,000 and a federalized 512 BBi around \$80,000. If you're thinking, "Sure, but those are three of the finest and most exciting cars in the world and no American plastic car can run with them," you are flat wrong.

Once the Corvette has humbled some of these dwelling-priced Eurocars, it will be easier to accept as part of the group. The step after that is trying to figure why the competition charges two, three or



four times the Corvette's cost for less of a product.

The new Corvette is a bride: A combination of something old, something new and something borrowed. The old is the powertrain and layout. What's new is everything else, starting with styling.

People approaching the new Corvette for the first time will immediately see its genesis, a line stretching three years back to the first Corvette, the six-cylinder Blue Flame-powered 1953 sports car. (See story on Page 20.)

The Corvette's shape is the work of individuals—led by a Chevrolet man named Jerry Palmer—using the resources of one of America's most resourceful corporations. Says Palmer, "People are going to be amazed when they see this car for the first time. But they'll be even more amazed when they see it next to an '82 Corvette. The new car's massive surfaces, such as the hood, are deceiving. On first glance, you probably wouldn't believe it is smaller than the previous year's model in every dimension except width."

Compared to last year's model, the new Corvette is 1.1 inches lower, 8.8 inches shorter overall, two inches shorter in wheelbase and two inches wider in overall width. Curb weight has been reduced by 250 pounds to 3,117 pounds, and the passenger compartment has increased head, leg and shoulder room.

Only a Ferrari Boxer 512 BBi has a windshield with a steeper angle than the Corvette's 64 degrees. This angle, plus flush-mounted glass and hours of wind tunnel testing, has produced a car with a drag coefficient of 0.34, a reduction of 23.7 percent over the 1982 model.

The '84 Vette's shape is 100 percent new, yet subtle enough to give it potential as a classic. Subtlety comes from old Corvette clues, like vents behind the front wheel openings, foldaway head-

lamps, arched front fenders, inset round rear taillights and a rear spoiler. It also comes from new treatment of old styling decisions, items like the two large side windows that bend in two planes to fit into the reshaped door, and the foldaway halogen headlights that rotate 167 degrees and are sculpted so the car doesn't look like a slope-nosed Bug Eye when they're raised.

The Corvette's clamshell hood swings open from the front to reveal an old friend, a 350-CID fuel-injected 205bhp iron-block V-8 dressed with some new clothing, like the single serpentine accessory drive belt with its tensioner, along with lots of aluminum and magnesium bits and pieces. The hood, the largest part ever made for a car, is two pieces bonded together weighing only 57.6 pounds.

When the Corvette's hood opens a light shines on America's first factory-produced *haute couture* engine. Says stylist Palmer, "We wanted people to see some of the great hardware—the cross-fire injection, magnesium air cleaner and valve covers, serpentine belt system, electric cooling fan and the beautiful new aluminum suspension work—all under the hood of the car. We designed the air cleaner, the valve covers and the fan shroud with both aesthetics and function in mind. And on this car, stylists had input on areas formerly closed to us. The dipsticks have sculptured T-handles. We helped locate every hose and wire in the engine compartment. I remember lengthy discussions concerning the eventual color of the high-tension cable

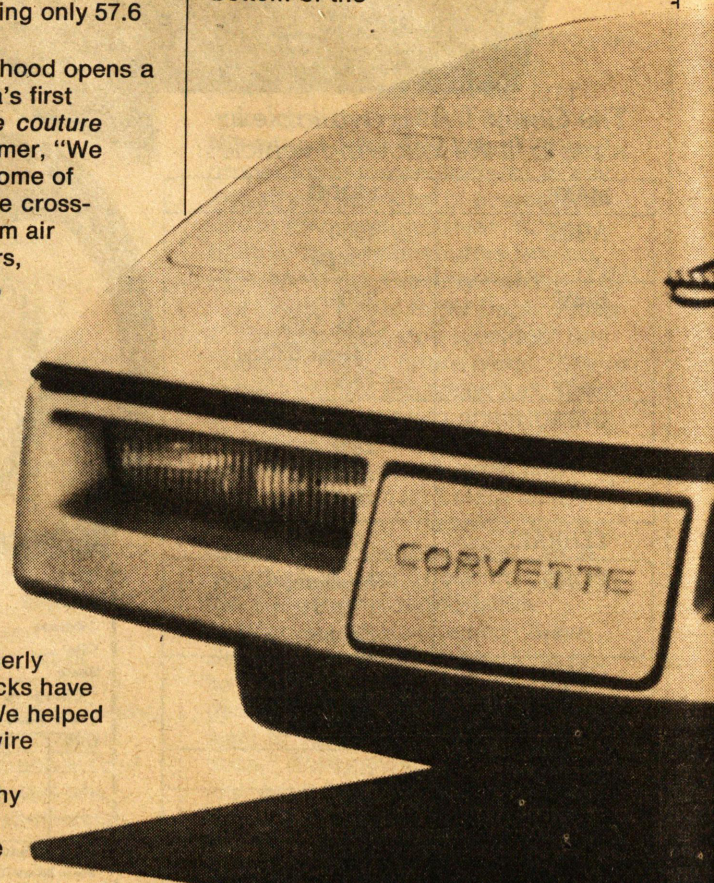
leading to the spark plugs. We even asked Delco for a new black-and-grey battery, so it would go with the rest of the hardware."

The overall result of the new Corvette's styling is a sports car that could only come from America's industrial ambition and automotive technology. As pretty as Pininfarina's Ferrari designs are, it's doubtful their wind tunnel can measure and dictate shapes as minutely as those found on the new Corvette.

According to Palmer, Chevrolet aerodynamic experts used smoke, ink droplets and yarn tufts in addition to more conventional tools to determine the Corvette's final shape. A scale model was tested in an aircraft wind tunnel by passing a sensor repeatedly through the wake of the car to record differences between wake pressures and the pressure of the tunnel's atmosphere. The result is a detailed picture of actual pressure variants and vortices created by the movement of the Corvette through the air, a view far more useful, says Chevrolet, than the usual one of surface flow. According to Palmer, the Corvette is the first sports car designed by using this aerodynamic tool.

Another result of the Corvette's slippery shape will be felt by any driver who plants his foot on the floor and watches the digital speedometer's numbers climb. More than a few auto writers attending the press introduction attest to numbers in the 142- to 145-MPH range showing on the video dash before running out of road. The word is the digits read as high as 157 MPH. Equally impressive numbers came from the on-board computer measuring fuel consumption. It told us the Corvette was using gas at the rate of 20 MPG at 100 MPH with the engine turning 3,000 RPMs in fourth overdrive.

At the rear of the Corvette, at the bottom of the





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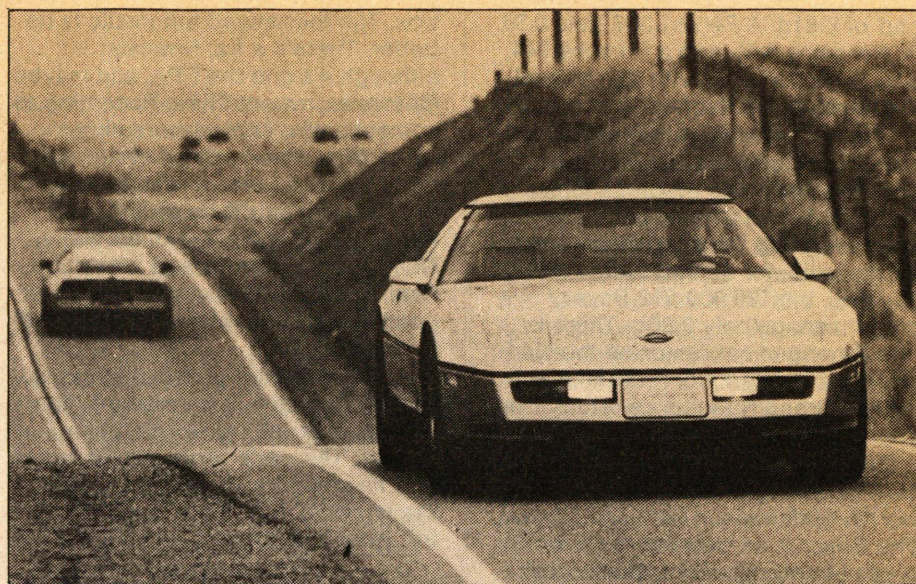
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## '84 Corvette

Continued from Page 13

would happen should one of Good-year's finest go flat, requiring use of the Corvette's slim spare which is tucked up under the car's rear. It's a lot more svelte than the rubber that usually paws the pavement.

The solution to this vexing problem is another Corvette detail, one of the little things that makes it the best of the best. You don't have to ask your date or friend to carry the flat on her or his lap; the spare compartment is hinged so that it drops lower to accept the wounded rubber. You'll lose a little of the 5.5-inches of ground clearance, but you'll gain a friend in the passenger's seat. Don't ask about the solution to the same problem in a Ferrari Boxer.

Another small item of complaint on Corvette prototypes is the shifter location. It's so far back on the console it's impossible to work without contorting your arm. Chevrolet engineers say it'll be moved forward before regular production begins.

At one time, European car buffs laughed at American performance cars, saying all they had was lots of horsepower and bad handling. It was interesting to listen to several respected European auto journalists complain about the new Corvette's horsepower and rave about its chassis and suspension.

Actually, the Corvette's not as

underpowered as it may appear. It's more a case of the chassis being so advanced it'll handle a lot more horsepower. That should give you a clue to this Corvette's evolution, one Chevrolet says will develop over at least 10 years.

Chevrolet General Manager Bob Stempel, a man committed to good cars, couldn't have been more enthusiastic when he spoke of the GM V-6 that, with a Chevrolet label and twin turbochargers, pumps out a reported 700 horsepower, enough to win the Daytona 24 Hours in the back of a Lola. We'd bet a couple of car payments that engine, or one almost like it, already has sniffed the air ducted through the Corvette's chambered hood.

An achievement as grand as the '84 Corvette requires more than a passing thought about the people and the environment that created it. The new Corvette is no overnight sensation. Work started on the car in 1978, even though Chevrolet engineers began thinking about it as early as 1972.

What allowed this car to be, is a new creative atmosphere at General Motors, particularly Chevrolet, previously found only at places like Mercedes, Porsche and Ferrari.

It's a "let's make it the best" approach, one that doesn't worry as much about cost as performance and quality. It's an atmosphere that lets

### 1984 Chevrolet Corvette

Wheelbase (in.):	96.2	II	1.91:1
Length (in.):	176.5	III	1.33:1
Width (in.):	71.0	IV	1:1
Height (in.):	46.9		
Track, F/R (in.):	59.6/60.4	Final drive ratio:	2.73:1/3.07:1/3.31:1
Curb weight (lbs.):	3,117		

#### ACCOMMODATIONS:

Head room (in.):	36.5
Shoulder room (in.):	54
Hip room, (in.):	49.3
Leg room (in.):	42.6
Cargo volume (cu. ft.):	17.9
Fuel capacity (gal.):	20

#### POWERTRAIN:

Layout:	Front-engine, rear-drive
Engine type:	Cast iron OHV V-8
Displacement (cu. in./liters):	5.7/350
Compression ratio:	9.0:1
Horsepower @ RPM:	205 @ 4,300
Torque @ RPM (lbs. ft.):	290 @ 2,800
Fuel delivery:	Electronic pulse-action fuel injection

Transmission type: Four-speed overdrive manual/4-speed automatic optional

3.06:1	
1.63:1	
1:1	
0.70:1 (od)	
Gear ratios:	
I	2.88:1

#### CHASSIS: Aluminum backbone C-section

Suspension: Front: Ind. SLA/fiberglass transverse leaf spring, tubular shock absorbers.

Rear: Ind., five-link with fixed differential, upper and lower longitudinal control, lateral strut and tie rods, transverse leaf spring, tubular shocks.

Steering type: Power-assisted rack and pinion

Overall ratio: 15.5:1 std.; 13.01:1 optional

Turns, lock-to-lock: 2.36 std.; 1.96 Z51 optional

Turning circle (ft.): 40.1

Brake system: Power-assisted four-wheel disc

Wheels: Std. aluminum 15x7 F/15x7.5

Tires: Z51 (optional) 16x8 F/16x9.5 P215/65R15;

Z51 (optional) P255/50VR16

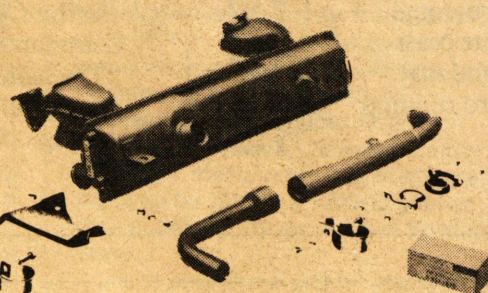
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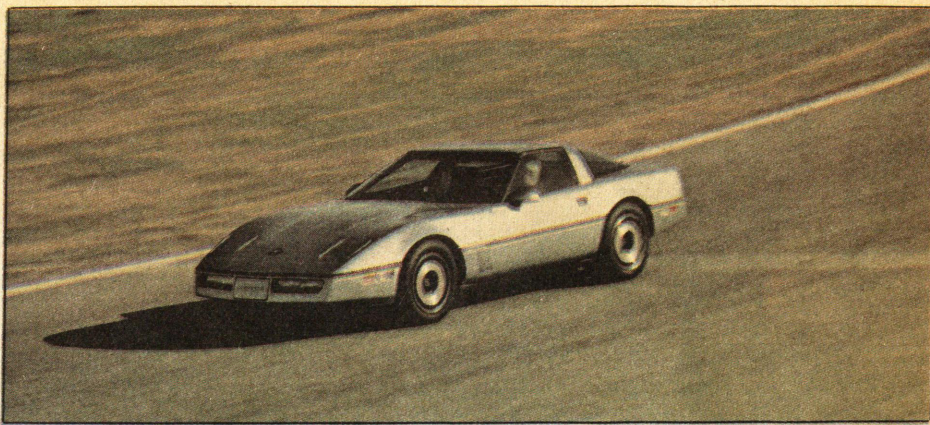
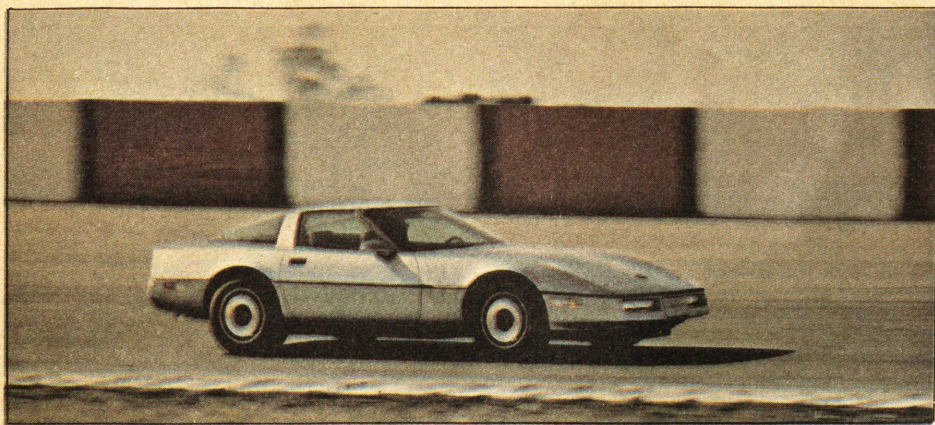
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For too long, Americans have had an unattractive automotive attitude. OPEC started, the Japanese, with their fine transportation pieces, fueled it, and high interest rates and a depressed economy capped it. It's an attitude that now is thankfully passe, because cars like the 1984 Corvette give new meaning to "Made in America," and no car person will ever again think we can't cut it in world competition.

If you're wondering if Chevrolet can actually produce big numbers of Corvettes, each with high quality, only time will tell, although we'd bet "yes."

There's a man named Joe Dell'Ario in Bowling Green who agrees. He's the manager of Chevrolet's Corvette plant. Some of his management techniques are as revolutionary for America as the car his workers will produce.

For example, each person working on the Corvette assembly line has at least 40 hours of special training. Daily group meetings are held so that Corvettes are viewed as finely crafted cars, rather than endless material moving down an assembly line. Bowling Green workers have taken trips to Chevrolet dealerships to see how customers and sales people see the result of their work, and randomly selected workers are given new Corvettes to take home for evaluation.

It's an approach developed largely in Japan, and we all know the product result. It's also one you'll not see in the production facilities of the new Corvette's competition.

Our feeling is the only people who can rightfully dislike this Corvette are those who have been making a good living selling aftermarket fixes for previous Corvette shortcomings—and car thieves.

Aside from some extra horsepower, there is little anyone can add to the new Corvette, and the aftermarket guys will have to scratch hard to make a Corvette buck. Car thieves will lapse into honesty when they discover the Corvette's alarm system, one that's consistent with the rest of the car.

At its projected price, the new Corvette is no longer everyperson's sports car—that's now American Rabbit GTI territory—nor is it perfect, only better than anything else currently available.

All we can tell you is if you're wondering what to do with your Ferrari 308, 512 BBi, Porsche 911 or 928, you might want to consider a trip to your Chevrolet dealer to Buy American. If you do, we promise you won't have to make a single excuse when you run into your pals from the Porsche or Ferrari club.



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