

■ This photo illustration combines the spy shots with information from design sources. The new car has a few more edges to it than does the C5, and what insiders call “Viper-like” headlights.



# CAUGHT!

## C6 PROTOTYPES SPIED TESTING

BY WES RAYNAL

**C**AN YOU FEEL IT? The buzz? It's building: In eight months Chevrolet will finally unveil the next-generation, 2005 Corvette at the 2004 North American International Auto Show in Detroit, before it is launched in fall 2004. Between now and then, the C6 rumors and hype and anticipation will no doubt reach feverish levels (in plenty of circles it already has).

And now we have the exclusive photos to go with it.

We've been chasing C6—the sixth-generation Corvette—information for months. Ace spy photographer Jim Dunne finally caught up with four “Beta” prototypes near Brighton, Michigan. Despite the camouflage on the nose, tail

and part of the front quarter-panel, the pictures are revealing, with the doors and its entire greenhouse in the clear.

This new Corvette's overall length is slightly shorter than the C5's 179.7 inches, and the C6 will share the Cadillac XLR's 105.7-inch wheelbase, 1.2 inches longer than that of the C5.

Though the look isn't a huge departure from the C5, the C6's overall shape is edgier, the nose more blunt and the windshield more upright. The C6's rear end is more tapered than the C5's—that should please most Corvette fans, though those who favor a radical restyle won't be too excited.

This new Corvette's headlights are fixed units, not hideaways, for the first time since the Sting Ray of 1963. The reason is for aerodynamic

advantages and to reduce wind noise. “Those [exposed headlights] will be debated 'til the cows come home,” a GM design source said.

C6 will share the XLR's hydroformed frame rails and its magnesium, aluminum and high-strength steel cockpit structure. The body panels are made of SMC, the same plastic as the current body.

We're told cutting weight was critical to GM engineers this time around, and the C6 should weigh in the 3100-pound range, about the same as a C5, and less than a Nissan 350Z, one of which was seen traveling with the group of prototypes Dunne photographed.

Most sources tell us the base model's 5.7-liter V8 will produce more than today's Z06, which makes 405 hp.

Call it 410 to 425 hp.

There's a next-generation Z06 engine under way as well. That engine's displacement and horsepower figures are still being determined, a source said, while powertrain engineers sort out compatibility with the transmission—expect more displacement, torque and power when the Z06 comes out a year after the first C6s are launched. Stronger brakes are expected as well.

The C6 also will share Magnasteer, StabiliTrak active handling and magnetic ride control with the XLR.

Software engineers will be just as important as mechanical engineers in the distinction between the XLR and C6: The Corvette's steering and suspension will be tuned much more toward performance than is the XLR's. ■



■ These spy photos show that the C6 will use an exhaust system (above) similar to the C5's. The rear glass (left and below left) is slightly longer and has an edge in it, extended from the rooftop shape. The taillights are hidden by the disguise, but we're told they are more circular than the oval ones found on C5.



■ New door handles (left) are similar to those on the Cadillac XLR, which is being built alongside Corvettes in the Bowling Green factory. Disguises cover the fender vents. The car's overall length should be slightly shorter than the C5's, though the wheelbase is just more than one inch longer. The coupe's rear glass is longer than the C5's, stretching almost all the way to the back of the car.



■ Headlights will not be hidden, the flaps seen here serve as camouflage and to expose the lights as necessary. A blue 350Z (in background) was being used for comparisons.



■ The fender tops have a sharper fold in them than in the rounded C5, but the shape is more evolutionary than revolutionary. This convertible was running with the coupes.

■ The windshield (right) is not as steeply raked as it is on the C5. Under the skin, the C6 shares a chassis and some electronics with the Cadillac XLR. Design sources said the C6's fixed headlamps (the first seen on a Corvette since the 1962 model) are intended to reduce wind noise and help lower the car's coefficient of drag.

