

C7 SWAN SONG

by Joe Sage



It was great having one more week with the C7 Corvette, as not only is the six-year run of this seventh generation coming to an end, but so is the 67-year run of front-engined 'Vettes. This is a remarkable point in the fabled American performance car's history, though maybe less remarkable after literally years of rumors, sketches, spy photos—and lately even official spy photos—a run of the next car through Manhattan in camo, and of course an official reveal date (which will roll around during the run of this issue; see sidebar).

We were also happy with having our last drive be in the Grand Sport, which offers a solid balance between price and performance, at near-base dollars (see full lineup at lower right), with a decent level of enhanced performance. Based on the third-up 3LT trim, the Grand Sport bears the same 460-horse 6.2-liter V8, but enhances everything else that matters—from suspension to shift points to brakes to exhaust and more.

Compare with the Z06, another favorite, with 650 hp from its supercharged version of the 6.2L V8, and compare with the ZR1, which uses a 52-percent-larger supercharger to deliver 755 hp. In the Z06, that's 41 percent more horses for 21 percent more cost, while in the ZR1, you're getting 64 percent more horses, but at 80 percent more cost. On a pro rata basis, it's easy to see the Grand Sport and Z06 give you a lot for your money.

There's a lot more to each model than just price and horsepower, of course, and each Corvette has a justifiable price-performance ratio, but if you still have to look at your wallet before buying, these model stairsteps are great news.

We found our C7 Grand Sport blessedly free of semi-autonomous features like lane-keeping or automatic braking and such. (We suspect they would say that's what their customers want—they just want to drive—though that in turn begs the question of what manufacturers think the buyers of so many other vehicles want.)

We had the GS for a wild weather week, with largely unforecast rain squalls intermingled with beautiful, sunny afternoons with temps in the 70s. The car handled perfectly in the rain, without having to fight painted lines during sporting two-lane curve-carving. During our pre-monsoon monsoons, the convertible top was snug and dry. And during the sunny stretches, we found convertible top operation—a really simple one-button affair—quick and easy. It's almost as quick as some two-seaters, at about 25 seconds up or down, and it can be accomplished at speeds up to 31 mph (50 km/h). If you prefer the coupe, you gain 50 percent more trunk space and can still remove the roof panel and enjoy the wind in your hair.

We suspect the lineup will be similar in the mid-engine C8. We can't wait to find out for sure. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.....LT1 6.2L V-VT w dir inj & cyl deactivation
DRIVETRAIN	.....RWD
HP/TORQUE	.....460 hp / 465 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....std: 7-spd manual, actv rev match opt (as on this sample): 8-spd paddle-shift auto
FINAL DRIVE RATIO	.....(man) 3.42 / (auto) 2.73
SUSPENSION	.....F/R: short/long arm (SLA) dbl wishbone, cast alum upper/lower control arms, transverse-mount composite spring, Magnetic Selective Ride Control w Grand Sport-specific spring rate & stblzr bar size
STEERING	.....var ratio rack & pinion w elec pwr assist
BRAKES	.....F/R: power-assist disc w 2-piece steel rotors, F: 14.6, fixed 6-piston alum calipers; R: 14.4, fixed 4-piston alum calipers;
WHEELS (F/R)	.....19x10 / 20x12 painted aluminum
TIRES (F/R)	.....P285/30ZR19 / P335/25ZR20
TRACK (F/R)	.....63.5 / 62.5 in
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....176.9 / 106.7 in
WIDTH / HEIGHT	.....77.4 / (convertible) 48.7 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....37.7 ft
HEADROOM / LEGROOM	.....38 / 43 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....(convertible) 10 cu.ft (coupe 15)
WEIGHT	.....(convertible) 3487 lb (coupe 3428)
FUEL CAPACITY	.....18.5 gal
MPG	.....15/25/18 (city/hwy/comb)

GRAND SPORT PERFORMANCE PACKAGE INCLUDES: Performance gear ratios, dry sump oil system, multi-mode performance exhaust, Magnetic Ride Control, Grand Sport performance suspension, slotted brake rotors, electronic limited slip differential, rear differential cooler, Grand Sport pearl nickel painted aluminum wheels (19" front, 20" rear) with summer-only run-flat tires.

BASE PRICE	.....\$70,400
3LT PREFERRED EQUIPMENT GROUP:	memory package, seat adjusters, power bolster & lumbar, power heated outside mirrors (drive side adjustable auto-dim), inside auto-dim rear mirror, sueded microfiber-wrapped upper interior trim package, Nappa leather inserts, custom leather wrapped wheel-doors-console, heated-vented seats, universal home remote, premium surround sound audio, performance data & video recorder w nav, advanced theft deterrent system, heads-up color display, curb view front cameras.....9745
8-SPD PADDLE SHIFT AUTO	.....1995
GRAND SPORT HERITAGE PKG:	Torch Red hash marks on fenders; interior aluminum hash marks, Grand Sport logo floor mats.....795
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1095
TOTAL	.....\$84,030

FULL LINEUP (2019)	(coupe / convertible)
Stingray 1LT	.....\$55,900 / 60,400
2LT	.....60,355 / 64,855
3LT	.....65,645 / 70,145
Grand Sport	.....66,995 / 70,400
Z06	.....80,900 / 85,400
ZR1	.....120,900 / 125,400

CORVETTE GOES MID-ENGINE

Years of rumors and sometimes poorly kept secrets (for the past few months intentionally poorly kept) are about to enter full daylight. Chevy calls the generation-eight (C8) Corvette "the most anticipated Corvette ever," and they just may be right.

Rumors of a change to mid-engine architecture—well-established supercar territory—have rolled around before, as prior new generations loomed, but this time they're destined to come true.

Little has been disclosed about engineering specifics—actually basically nothing—but it's a fair bet it will be a mix of the familiar and the revolutionary.

It will be expected to wow everyone with more than just engine placement and profile. Suspension, cooling, drivetrain and exhaust are sure to be new. Engines may or may not be essentially the same. The way it all comes together will be the topic of lively discussion.

From a fan loyalty standpoint—and this is a brand whose customers and fans command loyalty in return from GM—the C8 will have to be readily seen as 100 percent Corvette, which is in fact surely a big reason they've been easing the transition recently, releasing their own camo spy photos and even taking the car out in public (in New York City, where it takes a lot to turn heads).

The wait is almost over, as all will be revealed on Thursday, July 18. We expect good things, and we look forward to getting behind the wheel. ■

