editorial

MR. SPORT MINDED MOTORIST has finally decided to build his own sport car. For years he has patiently awaited the arrival of a mass-produced model. One look at the creations presented by Detroit in last year's auto shows was enough to discourage almost any enthusiast.

After reading all the ballyhoo in company-released circulars and advertisements, he was all primed to see sleek, low, practical designs with improved power to weight ratio, safer suspensions and better weight distribution. Instead, he found huge masses of iron designed by the manufacturer's sales departments with the idea of selling the public more chrome and useless gadgets. How can an engineer refer to these clumsy mammoths as sports cars? As more befitting their elaborate appointments, enthusiasts have dubbed them "Sporty Cars."

Mr. Motorist went home with the feeling that if he wanted to drive a light, well-balanced sport car he was forced to either buy an expensive foreign make or build his own.

The great American motoring public has finally rebelled. The hundreds of metal and Fiberglas sport cars on the highways today prove that Mr. Motorist was not favorably impressed with the Detroit-built "Sporty Cars." Chassis assemblies of every description are being turned out in home garages.

Many small manufacturing shops are producing parts and supplies for these home-built cars. A multi-million dollar business thus has been snatched from under the noses of these same automobile manufacturers who have refused to produce the type of sports car the American motorist demands.

And—the Chevrolet Corvette can hardly be rated as an exception. Much publicized as a low priced car, the future owner can plan on shelling out *at least* $3,800 for the auto and possibly as much as $4,000, not to mention interest if he must buy it on the time payment plan. This mass-produced car (Chevrolet plans 300 units this year) is being manufactured with Fiberglas body and fender panels and a slight boost in horsepower. However, I would like to see this car in action and, if possible, test drive it before calling it a true sports car. It is possible, though hardly feasible, that the sales department has allowed the engineers and designers to beef up the front end assembly and properly distribute the weight. Road tests and competition results as reported by future owners will prove interesting. If the chassis handles properly, I will be the very first to say, "Hurrah for G.M."

Still, the price of this car will not allow it to replace the home-built sport car. Many Americans have found the use of production parts and home-built plaster molds for the Fiberglas bodies an excellent way to keep the overall cost under $2,000. Many are constructed for much less. Others, searching through wrecking yards, have found for a small sum complete chassis needing replacement of a few parts and remodification requiring many hours labor. Labor and time are seldom figured or added to the price of any item built as a hobby. Usually, when asking an enthusiast the cost of his home-built sports car he will tell only the amount of actual cash paid out. Since he has realized so much enjoyment from the project, he never considers the number of hours spent in construction and planning as an expense.

I say, "Hats off to the American way of living, where the average man, with a little creative ability and a little ingenuity, can build any type automobile in his own garage and drive it on the open highways proving to the dictatorial sales departments in Detroit that he is still capable of supplying his own demands when they fail to build the type product he wants, needs, and is willing to pay for."