



Corvette V-8 makes a top-speed straightaway run. Driver found car exceptionally stable, without sacrifices in cornering.

The addition of two extra cylinders under the hood has made a big difference in the performance of this production American sports car

SPECULATION began immediately after the introduction of the Chevrolet V-8 as to whether or not it would be offered in the Corvette. It looked like a natural combination, so no one was greatly surprised when Chevrolet announced that the new engine *would* be available in the Corvette. There were a few raised eyebrows when it was reported it would be rated at 195 hp, however; this is 15 hp higher than the regular Chevrolet engine with power pack.

At the first opportunity arrangements were made with Chevrolet to use a Corvette for several days and report our impressions. I picked the car up in Detroit and drove it for four days, taking it up to Lansing one day where Roger Huntington and I put it thru a number of performance tests. My impression can be summed up like this:

The Corvette V-8 is an outstanding performer and is a lot of fun to drive. In this sense it's a real sports car, although the purists will argue this point. It is still not quite a serious competition car, although it probably could be modified to give some of the more expensive foreign iron a rough time in road races.

It has some flaws—it's not the ideal car for driving in a heavy rain, I found. However, for those interested in a car of this type, the virtues should make up for any minor shortcomings.

Now for the interesting part: the way it performs! To give you an idea, it turned 0-60 in an average of 8.5 seconds, with a couple of runs being even a couple

of tenths of a second less than that. It made it from 0 to 80 in less than 15 seconds. And these were actual speeds, not just indicated figures. Other acceleration figures were: 0 to 30, 3.4 seconds; standing quarter-mile, 16.9 seconds. The car was turning in the neighborhood of 85 at the end of the quarter-mile, incidentally.

On top speed runs the best we could get was 110. These runs were made with the top down and a relatively low tire pressure of 27 psi. If we had had time to experiment with different tire pressures, the top up and only the driver in the car, I feel we could have improved the top speed by about five mph, however.

One thing that surprised us was the very small speedometer error. Up to around 50, the error was almost negligible—amounting to only about one mile per hour or so. At an indicated 60 the error was about 2½ or three mph. This held true on up through 80. At the top end speed readings were about four mph more than actual speeds. This is excellent. The tach, however, didn't seem to be too accurate to us, although there was no way of checking it to be sure.

Mentioning the tachometer, by the way, brings up one of the flaws mentioned earlier. This very important instrument is small and is placed very poorly. It's mounted low and in the center of the instrument panel and it's next to impossible for the driver to see it easily. You have to take your eyes off the road for too long a period to get an rpm reading. Actually the person riding in the

passenger seat can see the tach much better than the driver. Otherwise, instrumentation is good, although spread out a shade too much for easy reference.

One of the things that contributes to the Corvette's excellent performance is its relatively light weight. The registration tag for the car we had listed the weight at 2715 lbs. As a check we put it on a scale. With two passengers (total weight about 325 lbs.), a half tank of gas and a few other odds and ends aboard, the car weighed 3075 lbs. This was the way we tested it. For competition this could be cut down by removing the top, radio and heater (the car we used was equipped with the latter accessories). With a standard transmission instead of Power-Glide the weight would be dropped still more—and be better for competition.

While talking about the transmission, perhaps I might pass along a few observations I made in this respect. First, the car we had did have the Power-Glide automatic, but standard and overdrive units are supposed to be available. Roger and I agreed that the ideal setup, other than a four-speed box, would be overdrive. However, the automatic drive was not at all bad.

Down-shifting into low range for corners helped slow the car down and made it easy to power out of bends in very fine style. You can kick-down for an extra burst of passing speed up to about 62 mph—and this kick-down gear really gives you a kick! Starting in low range offers little appreciable advantage over

DRIVER'S REPORT

THE CORVETTE V-8

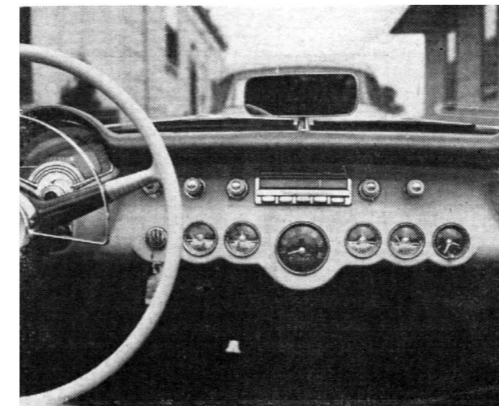
By KEN FERMOYLE

drive range, except that you can hold it in low a little longer. With wide-open throttle in drive range, you go into top gear at about 62; about the maximum you can run up to in low range is 68, so there isn't a tremendous amount of difference.

In handling and roadability the Corvette V-8 rates very high. Steering ratio is 16-to-1 and it's very light. In fact, it's hard to understand why it should require the ¾ turns lock-to-lock this car is set up for. However, the steering and feel of the car was one of its highlights and was a special joy in these days when power steering is coming to be regarded as almost a necessary accessory.

In corners the Corvette felt great. It can be whipped around with ease and remains remarkably flat in the tightest turns. I had a real ball bending it around corners at speed and, when I got back in my own passenger car later, I felt like I was wheeling a truck around by comparison.

Corvette instrument grouping places tach to the right of the driver's line of vision. Speedometer is very accurate.

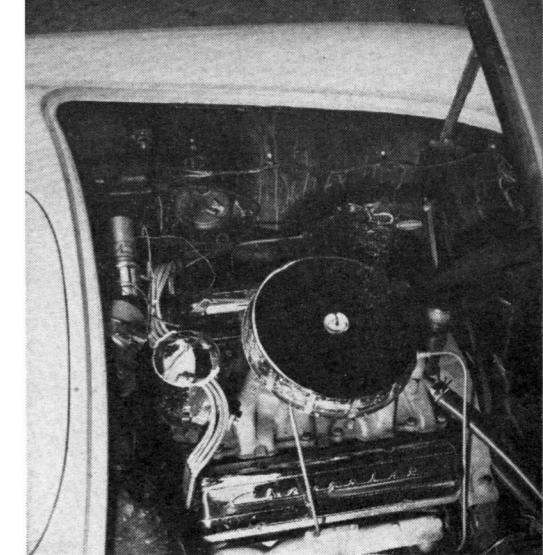
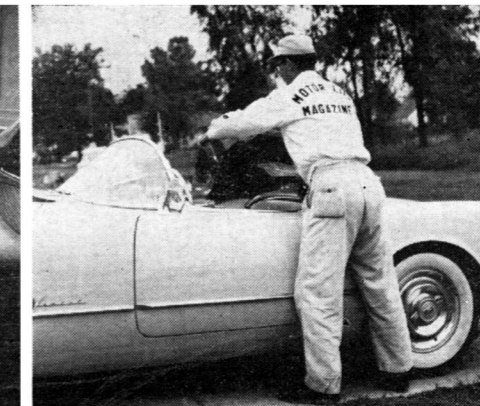


The ride is good by sports car standards, rather hard by normal passenger car standards. You bounce a bit more than you would in a stock Chevrolet sedan but this is more than compensated for by the security and stability you feel even at top speed. Roll and sway are practically non-existent. Even when going flat out there is no wander.

Visibility is, of course, terrific with the top down. Even with the top up it's not bad. The rear view mirror on the car I had vibrated a lot, making it difficult to use at high speed. However, there was a side mirror mounted, too, and this was very handy—particularly when driving with the top up.

The top can be put up by one person, but it's a lot quicker and easier with two working. There are no windows, of course; two plexi-glass side curtains lock securely into place on the doors. Frankly, I preferred not to use them unless necessary. Even with them on, the car does leak in a heavy rain. With the top down,

Fermoyle raises Corvette top singlehanded, a fairly easy job—this is not a common characteristic of most sports cars.



V-8 engine is 28 pounds lighter than the inline six it replaced. Abundance of chrome makes layout attractive.

however, you ride in comparative comfort as far as wind is concerned. The wrap-around windshield deflects the wind over the passenger compartment quite successfully.

The seats are comfortable and roomy. Although designed for only two, three people can ride in it for short distances without too much discomfort—if the two passengers aren't too big. The Corvette isn't meant to be a family car but I took my wife and two small daughters, one four, and the other eight months, for several rides. We even crowded in our full-grown Collie with us for one short hop!

The trunk is large compared to those in most sports cars, but naturally is not as roomy as our regular passenger cars. There seems to be ample space for luggage for two in it, however.

As mentioned earlier, the V-8 engine is basically the stock Chevrolet mill—with added goodies. Displacement is 265 cubic inches and compression is 8-to-1. It has

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Underhood accessibility of the Corvette engine is excellent, since the mechanical arrangement is more compact than most.



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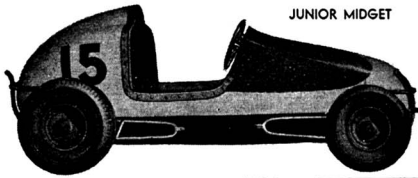
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CORVETTE V-8

(Continued from page 41)

the four-barrel carburetor and dual exhaust system that make up the optional power-pack, plus the special cam. Installation of the compact V-8 in the Corvette is very neat; the engine fits so nicely, in fact, that one suspects that the possibility of using a V-8 was considered when the Corvette was designed. Chrome has been used generously on some of the engine components, rocker covers, racing-type air cleaner, etc., adding to the attractiveness of the engine compartment.

Incidentally, after we finished our acceleration tests, Roger and I made some runs using a PerfOMeter to get an idea of what kind of horsepower was being delivered at the clutch. Roger took the figures home, worked for awhile with his slide rule and came up with a curve showing peak power to be 147 at 4600 rpm. He figured maximum torque to be 215-220 lb.-ft. at about 2800 rpm. These figures are not based on dynamometer tests, of course, but Roger has run many tests using a PerfOMeter and has found it to be a pretty reliable and useful tool for this type of work. At any rate, you can take these figures for what you will.

Appearancewise, how you react to the Corvette depends on your own personal tastes. I must confess that I wasn't too impressed by the lines of this car at first. I found that it grows on you, however, and now I like it very much. The one I had was yellow and I think this is the color that looks best on the car for some reason. The workmanship and finish of the fiberglass body was very good.

We weren't able to run fuel consumption tests, but the mileage seemed to be very good. Driven normally, the Corvette should deliver more than adequate fuel economy. I would estimate very roughly that a full tank of gas should give you a range of from 250 to almost 300 miles, depending on the way you drive.

Whether addition of the V-8 engine—which weighs 28 lbs. less than the inline 6—will hypo Corvette sales remains to be seen. After a fast initial start following introduction, sales of the car sagged. When Ford's Thunderbird appeared it diverted some of the potential market for this type of car. The blazing performance the Corvette now offers should attract more buyers. It will also be interesting to see how it fares in competition now. It could well be that enthusiasts will modify the chassis and brakes to a point where it will show up better in competition than it has in the past with the six-cylinder.

Whatever else happens, one thing is sure: the V-8 engine makes this a far more interesting automobile and has upped performance to a point at least as good as anything in its price class. I certainly enjoyed driving it and I'm sure that anyone else who has a chance to do so will feel the same way. ●

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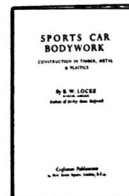
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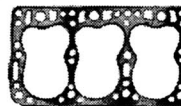
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