

LeaderBoard

LUXURY LINEAGE

The Corvette at 65

LIKE A LOT OF sexagenarians, the Chevrolet Corvette still looks youthful for one reason—it's had a lot of work done. Introduced by General Motors in 1953, the Corvette (named for a small, fast warship) was the first American sports car, and while its initial performance didn't live up to that of its European competitors, the Corvette eventually became one of the great muscle cars of all time. In April, Chevrolet debuted a 65th-anniversary edition, the Corvette Carbon 65—meaning retirement is not in its future.



1953: C1

Displayed as a concept car at a 1953 General Motors auto show, the C1 Corvette was sped into production in June 1953. Only 300 were built, with a sticker price of \$3,498—about \$32,000 today—and they now sell for more than 100 times that at auction. John Wayne was one of the first owners of the two-seat fiberglass convertible, which came with a 150-hp straight-six engine. It was available only in white with a red interior, and it had just two luxurious options: a heater and an AM radio.



Boss car: Bruce Springsteen bought himself a 1960 Corvette after the success of *Born to Run*.

1963: C2

Ten years after the Corvette's debut, Chevrolet rolled out a smaller, sleeker cousin, the Sting Ray. The second-generation Corvette, the C2, had a more powerful engine (250 hp) and a controversial split rear window, which lasted only a year but is prized by collectors today. The Sting Ray, which had a list price of \$4,252 for the coupe (roughly \$34,000 in today's dollars), was a smash—Corvette sales increased from a record 14,531 in 1962 to 21,513 the following year.



2013: C7

The Stingray returned after an absence of 38 years, featuring a carbon-fiber hood and aluminum panels to keep the body light. Selling for a list price of \$51,995, the Corvette continued to get more muscular, with a 455-hp engine.

2018: Carbon Fiber 65

For its 65th birthday, Chevrolet introduced the Carbon Fiber 65 in Grand Sport 3LT and Z06 3LZ models in April. But good luck getting one: Chevy will produce only 650 of each for all markets, with a price starting at \$81,490 for the Grand Sport and \$99,490 for the Z06. And say goodbye to the C7 next year—the eighth-generation Corvette is coming.





O-mobile: Jerry Seinfeld got coffee with Barack Obama in a 1963 Sting Ray.



1968: C3

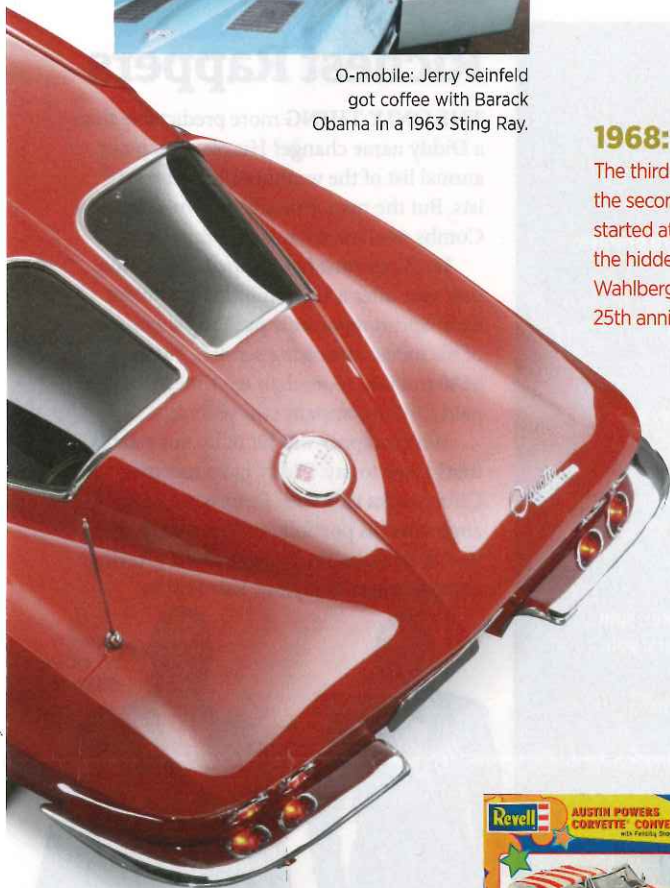
The third-generation Corvette, the C3, was produced from 1968 to 1982 and included the second-generation Stingray (rebranded as one word). The 1968 models, which started at \$4,320 (\$30,000 today), featured a redesigned body (but maintained the hidden headlights) and a more powerful engine, including a turbo option. Mark Wahlberg's Dirk Diggler drove a '77 Corvette in *Boogie Nights*, and in honor of its 25th anniversary, the Corvette was named the official pace car of the 1978 Indy 500.



Regal ride: Cleopatra Jones rolled in a 1973 Corvette with automatic weapons.

1984: C4

While the price continued to increase for the C4 Corvette (from \$21,800 in 1984 to \$37,225 in 1996), sales sharply declined during its 12-year production run (from 51,547 to 21,536). The car remained popular with collectors, though—a 1984 Corvette (*below*) driven by Dirk Benedict's character on *The A-Team* was listed for an ambitious \$40,000 several years ago.



Hot wheels: Austin Powers worked his mojo on Felicity Shagwell in a 1965 Corvette convertible.



1997: C5

As its 45th year approached, the Corvette had its most dramatic overhaul since 1953—it even finally got a large trunk. The fifth-generation C5 (which listed for \$37,495) also improved performance, with a top speed of 175 mph. In the 2002 movie *Mr. Deeds*, Adam Sandler gave an entire town little red Corvettes—2002 C5s—after listening to some Prince.



2005: C6

Produced between 2005 and 2013, the C6 Corvette got another new body and featured exposed headlights for the first time since 1962. The sticker price for that initial C6 was \$44,245, and the production run, which ended in 2013, included lots of racing variants. After all, the 6-liter V8 engine delivered 400 hp.



CORVETTE: NATIONAL MOTOR MUSEUM/HERITAGE IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; 1984 CORVETTE: RON TOM/NBCU PHOTO BANK/GETTY IMAGES; 1984 CORVETTE: RON TOM/NBCU PHOTO BANK/GETTY IMAGES; 1968 CORVETTE: MARVIN MCBEE/ALAMY; CORVETTE: OLEKSIY MAKSYMENKO/ALAMY; CLEOPATRA JONES: EVERETT COLLECTION/ALAMY

BY MICHAEL SOLOMON