



Matt White

# From Down Under

## Carousel's "Coke Bottle" Corvettes

**Based on the Mako Shark concept car, the Sting Ray took on an all-new body in 1968.**



In the 1960's, new-car buyers were lucky to be able to select from a bewildering number of options and accessories when ordering their new vehicles. Placing an order was simply a case of ticking the boxes and waiting for delivery of your shiny new, personalized car.

Want some red-wall tires for that '68 'Vette? Tick option code PT6 and \$31 later, there they are. More horsepower? Plenty of options were available here, too. The 427-cubic-inch V8 was available in four different stages of tune, and at the top of the tree was option code L-88 for \$948 — with a quoted 430horsepower. This made no sense because you could order another 427 V8 (option L71) with 435 horsepower for \$437. The reason? Chevrolet really didn't want to sell the L-88 because it was a race car.

Unlike most optimistic power figures quoted from the era, Chevy quoted the engine at 430 horsepower, although the true power output was closer to 550. The option pack was available from 1967 to 1969, and consisted of heavy-duty suspension and brakes, as well as the Muncie M-22 "Rock-Crusher" four-speed gearbox. This was a car capable of demolishing the standing quarter in 11 seconds.

The street legal version may have been amongst the most expensive Corvettes, but it was also one of the most basic, as even air-conditioning and a radio were not fitted as standard equipment.

The sales figures emphasize the point that General Motors really did not try to sell the L-88 to the general public. With only 216 units sold in three years, this is one of the rarest Corvettes ever.

Until now, Carousel 1 has only previously modeled racing versions of other Corvettes, so it is a refreshing change to see them offer a road-going version of this very special model.

The 1:18-scale replica is available in three authentic color options — Daytona Yellow, Le Mans Blue and Tuxedo Black, and the model really captures the overall shape of the bodywork incredibly well.

Externally, the L-88 differed somewhat from lesser C3 Corvettes as it featured wider bodywork at the front and rear fenders. This was to enable the fitment of larger, racing-specification tires.

Sitting proudly on the hood is the huge, cold-air intake scoop, which comes complete with its own photo-etched 427 emblem. Waiting to pounce from under the hood is the plumbed and wired 427 "Big Block."



The level of detail here is of a high standard, as can be witnessed by the brake booster and alternator. The presence of the headers and massive side exhaust pipes — often referred to as “Lakes Pipes” — running down the side of the vehicle, help to bring a high level of realism to the die-cast presentation.

The all-black interior is well molded with different patterns and finishes. It also features a hefty roll cage just behind the seats. A Corvette four-spoke steering wheel sits on the steering column, and is complete with stalks, while the center console is packed full of switches and is dominated by the “Rock Crusher” gear knob. The instruments themselves are clear, accurately rendered and easily read, all the way to the red-line on the tachometer.

Also released by Carousel 1 is a racing version from the Swiss team of Scuderia Filipinetti. Entered in the 1968 24 hour at Le Mans, this #3 Corvette was driven by Umberto Maglioli and Henri Greder. The team assault of the French circuit comprised of two L-88’s, although they unfortunately had little success as one vehicle was wrecked in the 14th hour and the second car, as modeled, blew a head gasket during the sixth hour.

As you look around the Carousel 1 replica, some of the first things to catch your attention are the racing colors of bright red, white stripes and orange nose cone. The



bodywork is well finished, and when combined with the full set of racing decals, the racing 'Vette looks like it is doing 100 miles per hour just sitting on the shelf.

This racing version means business — just look at the huge front spoiler. The standard Corvette was fitted with pop-up headlights, and these were replaced on the racing version with fixed lights and aerodynamic headlight covers, which Carousel 1 has modeled correctly. These are a great and accurate feature, as are the pair of spotlights, racing seat and harness.

The race replica also features the lighting system on the roof, used to communicate and identify the car to the pit crew. The huge gas filler cap takes center stage on the Corvette’s rump. The engine bay, exhaust and suspension system are all fully detailed, and the cross-drilled brake discs, which suffered from what the French call “ennui’s de freins,” or “troubles of brakes,” are visible through the five-spoke alloy wheels. Substantially larger at the rear, the treaded Firestone tire combination helps to capture the original’s squat racing stance.

This particular Corvette has a special place in Le Mans racing history, as it appeared in a total of six consecutive Le Mans races from 1968 through 1974, and just to prove there was life left in the old dog, in 1973 it achieved a speed of 213 miles per hour.

The model is supplied by Carousel 1 with a certificate of authenticity, and is fitted with a numbered build plate, but you had better order quickly. The earlier models in the Carousel 1 Corvette collection sold out very quickly, and this edition is likely to follow suit. **HM**

