



It is strange to think that America's most enduring sports car was very nearly finished within the first few years of life. In 1953 the Corvette was launched into a market where 2-seater sports cars accounted for less than 1% of total sales. The car was rather unkindly nicknamed '*the plastic bathtub*' due to its unconventional use of a fiberglass body shell.

The fitting of a V8 engine and an optional 3-speed manual gearbox, started to redefine the Corvette as a serious sports car by 1955. Over the next few years, an increase in engine capacity, fuel injection and updated suspension positioned the car for success at Daytona, Sebring and Pebble Beach races. It also ensured that the Corvette turned in a profit for GM.

The Sting Ray was launched in 1963. It featured a smaller wheelbase, reduced weight due to a ladder type frame and was the first US production car to use independent rear suspension. This led to dramatically improved handling and sales rose by 25% in a year.

The Corvette overcame build problems associated with the fifth-generation car of 1967, a two month lay off in 1970 due to an auto-workers strike, the early 70's oil crisis and increasing levels of emissions and safety regulation and yet still remained an attractive buy.

Sports cars are made in countries all around the world. Many boast fine quality engineering, sleek body design and high levels of reliability, but there is something special about an American sports car... a car like the Corvette.

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