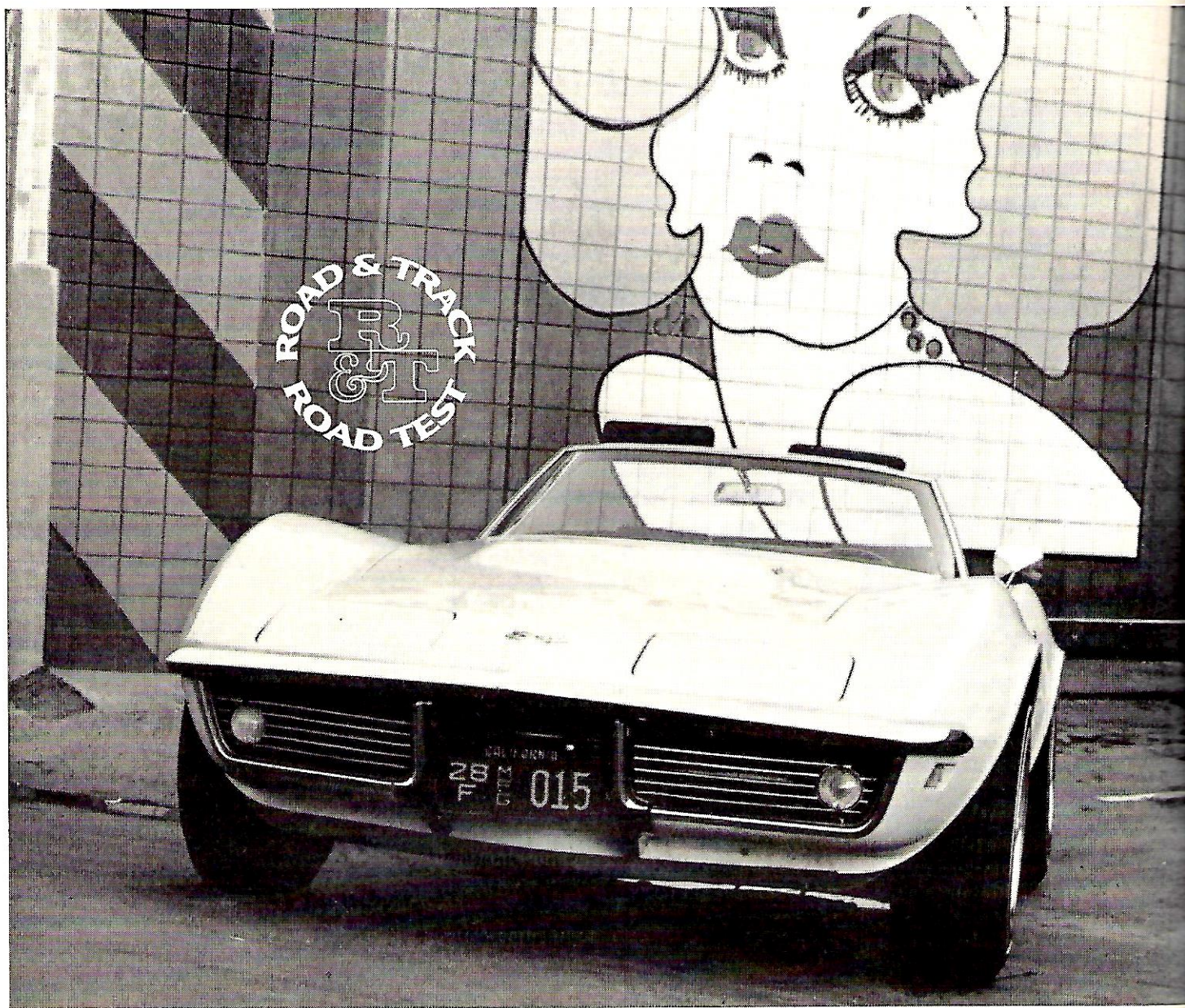




PHOTOS BY GORDON CHITTENDEN AT RUTH LEWIS' WEARHOUSE

435-HP CORVETTE

*More of a race car
than a road car*



THE "1968 SERIES" Corvette is now in its second year of production. For 1969 it has been updated by making the 350-cu-in. V-8 engine standard (in place of the 327), increasing the track by 0.4 in., fitting wider wheels (8 in. instead of 7), stiffening the frame, improving the flow-through ventilation and incorporating the door-latch function into the cavities that served as exterior door pulls last year. Except for these things, plus an extra 1.6 liters of engine and the stiffer suspension that comes with the hairy 427 engine, our road test car is identical to the Corvette 327 we tested last year. The engine of our test car, the hairiest of the "road" 427s, has aluminum heads, mechanical valve lifters, three carburetors and is rated at 435 bhp. There are two milder 427s, both of which use hydraulic lifters, one with a single 4-barrel carburetor developing 390 bhp and the other with

three 2-barrels putting out 400. There are 300 and a 350-bhp versions of the new 350-cu-in. V-8, just as there were with the previous 327s, and both engines are rated at 380 lb-ft of torque compared with 360 lb-ft for the 327s. And finally there is a new "high output" 350 engine developing 370 bhp.

The aluminum-headed 427 engine costs nearly \$400 more than its all-iron equivalent but is only 60 lb heavier than the 350. It is very flexible from 1000 rpm up and can actually be lugged smoothly from that speed in 4th gear. Its idle is another matter, being rough and noisy because of the big valve overlap and large displacement. There is a lot of tappet and fan noise under the hood and a throaty bellow through its twin exhaust pipes that builds to a marvellous peak at its redline of 6500 rpm, which we used in the acceleration runs. As the performance figures show, there's simply no production car available today that can top its acceleration—and if we had used rear tires designed for dragging (the standard F70-15 tires on 8-in. rims spun freely getting off the line) we surely could have cut nearly a second off the quarter-mile time. With the 4.11:1 final drive of the test car, top speed is just a matter of hitting the engine redline in 4th gear and backing off.

Performance like this doesn't come without cost. In our new fuel economy test over a standard city-suburban-highway course the car did only 10.0 mpg, and it's unlikely that most



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rear, and panic stops be damned. These are good brakes; they just need retrimming. We also found that by carefully modulating our pedal effort we could better that 75%g figure in hard braking.

Inside the Corvette, we are much more awed by the styling than by the ergonomics. The optional tilt-and-telescope steering column gives a good variety of positions, but the seatbacks are not adjustable and at high cornering loads the seats just don't keep the driver in place, even if he is belted in. Shoulder belts, by the way, are on inertia reels. Last year's lack of a glove box up front has been corrected by two nice little pouches on the right side of the dash. The speedometer and tachometer are huge and easily read, but their size has relegated all the other instruments to a rather faraway position in the center. Because Corvettes are popular cars for stealing, the test car had an optional theft alarm in addition to the new standard steering column lock.

Ventilation, despite claimed improvements, is still unsatisfactory. A lot of heat boils up from the 427's exhaust pipes, and the "Astro" ventilation just doesn't allow enough fresh air through the interior to carry it away; with the side windows closed we got practically no flow of air through the system at freeway speeds. We find the plethora of gadgets surrounding the headlights and windshield wipers amusing: the lights this year have built-in washers and the windshield washers have been built into the wiper arms; both lights and the vacuum-operated wiper cover panel have override switches so that they may be left up but not on, and the wipers have a further override that stops them so the blades can be changed. There must be a lot of production money in all this . . . production money that might better be spent on quality control, as our test car was plagued by many detail rattles, knobs falling off and the like. We had expected the assembly quality of this year's car to be a little better than last year's because the plant should have gained experience in building them by now; but it was actually worse this year.

The Corvette 427 is an entertainment machine, and compared to some of the more exotic entertainment machines we drive from time to time, it's a rather crude one. But it's cheap when you compare it to other sports cars that offer performance anywhere near its own, so we shouldn't expect a great deal of refinement. For motoring on the public roads, the lowest-powered Corvette makes a great deal more sense; too many of the qualities that make daily driving tolerable are sacrificed to all-out performance in the 427. The 427 should be construed as a racing machine instead.

435-HP CORVETTE ROAD TEST RESULTS

PRICE

List price.....	\$4562
Price as tested.....	\$6347

PERFORMANCE

Top speed, 4th gear, mph.....	122
Acceleration, time to distance, sec:	
0-100 ft.....	3.5
0-250 ft.....	5.7
0-500 ft.....	8.2
0-750 ft.....	10.3
0-1000 ft.....	12.1
0-1320 ft (1/4 mile).....	14.3
Speed at end, mph.....	98
Time to speed, sec:	
0-30 mph.....	2.5
0-40 mph.....	3.4
0-50 mph.....	4.5
0-60 mph.....	6.1
0-80 mph.....	9.2
0-100 mph.....	14.8
0-120 mph.....	21.4

ENGINE & DRIVE TRAIN

Engine.....	V-8, ohv
Bore x stroke, mm.....	108.0 x 95.2
Displacement, cc/cu in.....	6997/427
Compression ratio.....	11.0:1
Bhp @ rpm.....	435 @ 5800
Equivalent mph.....	109
Torque @ rpm, lb.-ft.....	460 @ 4000
Equivalent mph.....	76
Transmission type.....	4-speed manual
Gear ratios: 4th (1.00).....	4.11:1
3rd (1.27).....	5.22:1
2nd (1.64).....	6.73:1
1st (2.20).....	9.03:1
Final drive ratio.....	4.11:1

BRAKE TESTS

Panic stop from 80 mph:	
Deceleration rate, % g.....	74
Control.....	good
Fade test: percent of increase in pedal effort required to maintain 50%-g deceleration rate in six stops from 60 mph.....	nil
Overall brake rating.....	good

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph indicated.....	actual 28.7
40 mph.....	39.0
60 mph.....	59.2

CALCULATED DATA

Lb/hp (test weight).....	8.2
Cu ft/ton mi.....	219
Mph/1000 rpm (high gear).....	19.0
Engine revs/mi.....	3160
Engine speed @ 70 mph, rpm.....	3680
Piston travel, ft/mi.....	1830
R&T wear index.....	58
R&T steering index.....	1.11
Brake swept area, sq in/ton.....	259

FUEL

Type fuel required.....	super premium
Fuel tank size, gal.....	20.0
Normal consumption, mpg.....	10.0

GENERAL

Curb weight, lb.....	3262
Weight distribution (with driver), front/rear, %.....	50/50
Wheelbase, in.....	98.0
Track, front/rear.....	58.7/59.4
Overall length.....	182.5
Width.....	69.0
Height.....	47.9
Steering type.....	recirculating ball, power assisted
Turns, lock-to-lock.....	17.6:1
Brakes: vented disc, 11.75-in. dia front & rear; 461 sq in. swept area	

ACCOMMODATION

Seating capacity, persons.....	2
Seat width.....	2 x 19.0
Head room.....	35.5
Seat back adjustment, degrees.....	0
Driver comfort rating (scale of 100):	
For driver 69 in. tall.....	95
For driver 72 in. tall.....	85
For driver 75 in. tall.....	75

ACCELERATION & COASTING

