



1962 Chevrolet Corvair



1971 Chevrolet Vega

A Long and Winding Road, All the Way to the Cruze

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

came out with the Corvair in 1959, McElroy said. It met with limited success. Not a failure, but it also didn't light the auto world on fire.

"With that information in mind, Detroit's reaction to the VW Beetle was to laugh," McElroy said. "That is until they saw that people were buying them. Ford came out with the Falcon, which was small for the standards of the time. Today, it would be mid-sized. Chrysler came out with the Dodge Dart."

Basically, everyone was trying to get a piece of the small car pie, McElroy said. GM even came out with the Chevy II in 1962. He said it was more like the Dart and the Falcon than the Beetle, but it "sold quite well."

But something happened that happens with every small car made – it got bigger.

"This is something I've seen with every small car, both foreign and domestic," McElroy said. "The small car gets bigger with every redesign. That's because when the manufacturer does market research, customers are asked what they want. The reply is invariably, 'I love the car, but it could use a little more leg room,' or 'it's a great car, but I could use just a little bit more trunk room.'"

The result is that the next iteration of that small car model is a little bigger. He said the classic example of that size creep is the Honda Accord. When it started, it was as small as today's Honda Civic. By 1970, the Corvair was gone, McElroy said – though Ralph Nader had something to

do with that. But even the Chevy II was dropped, McElroy said, "because Americans seemed to have lost their taste for small cars." But GM didn't give up on that market niche. The company developed the Vega.

"The problem was that the Vega was a disaster," McElroy said. "It had all kinds of overheating problems and quality issues. As long as a Vega ran, it wasn't a bad car, but too many of them became unreliable."

Part of the problem, McElroy said, was that GM, in responding to the Ford Pinto, tried to do a lot with the Vega. It had an aluminum engine block that was lighter and was bolted to a cast iron head. The two metals cool at different rates, which caused a lot of problems and "GM didn't catch on until it was too late," McElroy said.

"GM was already phasing the Vega out at the time of the first oil crisis back in 1973. GM recognized that the company needed to do something to plug the gap left by the Vega, so they looked around at what they had and saw the Chevette, which at the time was being built in Brazil and was designed in Europe."

What people have to remember, he added, was that business models and business technology were very different in 1973. Just making an international phone call was a bit of a task. There was no email, no faxes, no Internet. The Chevette was related to the Opel Kadette, which used GM's T-Car platform. It was the last Opel to feature rear-wheel drive.

"I remember when Ford wanted to combine its various individ-

ual European country operations into Ford of Europe," McElroy said. "People from Ford of Britain, Ford of Germany, Ford of Italy were very critical. They said things like, 'Don't you know we have our own special culture that requires cars designed to meet those cultural needs?'"

So in 1973, when the Vega was "going south fast," said McElroy, GM had to come out with something and so it brought out the Chevette. It got great mileage, but was a cheap car.

"It was perfectly good for what it was, a car designed to be driven in Brazil," McElroy said. "That meant it had to be affordable for most Brazilians."

GM realized as time went on that there was a need for a vehicle with good mileage, but also with better technology, McElroy said, adding that GM also needed a front-wheel-drive car, so they rushed the Chevy Cavalier, built on the company's J platform, to the market and it was designed in the U.S. The Chevette got its start as an Opel design.

"So in the 1980s, GM went through a couple of generations of the Cavalier, but then it ceased to be competitive," McElroy said. "Time marches on. And foreign producers were really putting out great small cars. The Cavalier became the Cobalt in 2005. GM had to sell Cavaliers using incentives and to fleets. So they changed the name."

The Cobalt ceased production in the U.S. in 2010, and its replacement was the Cruze, McElroy said. Chevy recently came out with a new iteration of the Cruze, based on GM's Delta II

platform, and McElroy calls it a "great car."

"The Cruze was designed in South Korea and I just drove one with a diesel engine and I found it to be a very good car," McElroy said.

But today's modern cars aren't designed in just one place, McElroy said. A vehicle might have engineers and designers from three different continents work on it before it reaches production.

And a vehicle like the Cruze reflects a new attitude by GM. The company is much more willing to take what it has learned from other markets and apply it to North America.

"A lot of companies made a lot of money selling not-so-great cars," McElroy said. "OEMs can't do that today. Competition is too fierce and the companies that survive will be truly international."

Fiat 500L on List Of '10 Best Back To School Cars'

Keeping the GPA up in school is challenging enough, so the last concern students want to think about is the MPG efficiency of their ride.

To make it easier, the editors of KBB.com have developed a list of the "10 Best Back-to-School Cars" and the new Fiat 500L delivers high marks in fuel economy, style, versatility and affordability.

"With a loft-like interior, Italian style and innovative technology, our all-new Fiat 500L will strongly appeal to the back-to-school crowd," said Jason Stoicevich, head of FIAT Brand for North America, Chrysler Group.

"Expanding on the charm of the iconic 500, the Fiat 500L adds two more doors and 42 percent more interior space with comfortable accommodations for five passengers, plus numerous personalization options – all for under \$20,000."

With summer coming to a close and a new school year rapidly approaching, editors of Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com put the Fiat on their list for the 2013-14 school year, Stoicevich said.

"Parents and students alike will be surprised at the variety of amenity-laden, affordable new cars available on our '10 Best Back-to-School Cars' list for 2013," said Jack R. Nerad, executive editorial director for Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com.

Stingray's Onboard Display Offers 69 Information Sources

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

interactive performance timer to a tire tread temperature display, said Monte Doran, Camaro and Corvette spokesperson. He said the "crisp and bright" display features make this information easily accessible via three configurable modes that prioritize information for daily commuting, weekend canyon carving and track events.

Flanked by three analog gauges for speed, fuel level, and engine-coolant temperature, the eight-inch liquid-crystal display screen in the center of the cluster is organized into sport, tour and track themes that change with the Driver Mode Selector, Doran said. Each display theme is designed for a specific driving scenario and can be configured through applications found in the "app tray."

There are, Doran said, 10 configurable display features that will help drivers realize the Stingray's capabilities:

- Tour theme – Displayed when the Stingray is in Weather, Eco, or Tour drive mode, this

provides vehicle information to drivers for commuting or long-distance driving and includes key vehicle information and multimedia displays;

- Sport theme – Displayed when the Stingray is in Sport mode, this theme uses a single, radial tachometer;

- Track theme – Inspired by the cluster of the Corvette Racing C6.R, this theme prioritizes the information vital for a successful track outing, said Doran, including a "hockey stick" style tachometer, large gear indicator and shift lights;

- Adjustable redline – All themes feature an adjustable redline that shows the suggested maximum engine speed as low as 3,500 rpm when the engine is cold;

- Tachometer 'halo' – The Sport theme features a ring around the tachometer that glows from yellow to amber to red as engine rpms increase;

- Shift lights – The track theme features shift lights influenced by the C6.R, which illuminate from green to yellow to blue

and flash at redline providing an easy-to-see shift notification at high speeds;

- Friction-bubble/cornering force – The friction bubble that displays lateral and longitudinal G-forces allows drivers to measure how close they are to the Stingray's limits;

- Tire temperature gauge – Leveraging the existing Tire Pressure Monitoring System, this patented system informs the driver as the tires warm up from cold to warm to hot, with hot being the optimal temperature for peak grip and track performance;

- Acceleration timer – The interactive timer features programmable start/end speeds, which enable drivers to measure any acceleration run, from a traditional 0-60 mph to acceleration from 70 to 100 mph in top gear;

- Lap timer – This timer shows current, previous and best lap times, enabling drivers to measure their consistency while lapping a road course.

The 2014 Corvette Stingray coupe is scheduled to go on sale in Chevrolet dealerships in the third quarter of 2013.

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