

“PEAKING” IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR

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What’s in a Name?: “Sting Ray” or “Stingray”?

Stingray: “...an instantly recognizable fish that glides gracefully through the water.

Most species sport dull colors, though some do have more lively colors. As those creatures move through the water, they generate a(n) electrical signature of sorts.

– LiveScience



1968 Corvette. Photo credit: Corvsport

Brain teaser: the above is a 1968 Corvette. Is it a Sting Ray or a Stingray? Or neither? If you’re a serious Corvette history buff, you likely know the answer. However, many Corvette lovers who own one now or in the past – or perhaps love the brand but have never had one in their driveway - may not have a clue. This article will remedy that confusion.

Genesis of the Name and the Concept Cars that Influenced It

The 1959 Corvette XP-87 Stingray, often termed the Stingray Racer (interestingly, this car was originally titled as one word, but later it was split into two words, with upper-case “S” and lower-case “r”, see photo), was a one-off production/concept vehicle designed by GM’s VP of Styling, Bill Mitchell. The racer won the 1960 Sports Car Club of America’s C Modified National Championship. Its design would later directly influence the style of the now famous Corvette Sting Ray of 1963 and later, in what is termed the C2 generation of Corvettes.



The 1959 XP87 Corvette Stingray Racer; later its name was curiously split, possibly by someone in Graphics, into two words. Photo credits: Motor Trend

That 1959 Stingray Racer would, in turn, influence the styling of the 1961 XP-755 Mako Shark concept car – which also influenced the design of the 1963 C2 Corvette Sting Ray.



The 1961 XP-755 Mako Shark. Photo credit: Corvsport

The resulting iconic, split-window 1963 Corvette Sting Ray (designed under the direction of Bill Mitchell, but credit must also be given to Zora Arkus Duntov AND Larry Shinoda) represented a striking change from the C1 (1953-1962) Corvettes and also marked the first time a hardtop coupe Corvette was offered (the models of the previous ten years all being convertibles); in fact, 10,594 coupes were built in 1963, nearly equaling convertibles, at 10,919.



1963 Corvette Sting Ray (emblem at rear-right). Photo credit: FineartAmerica



Sales brochure for the 1963 Corvette Sting Ray. Photo credit: Corvsport

The Sting Ray name and emblem would remain unchanged throughout the C2 generation (through 1967); however, the script would be altered: “Corvette” slanted for the 1963-1965 models and upright for 1966 and 1967, and changes in “Sting Ray.”

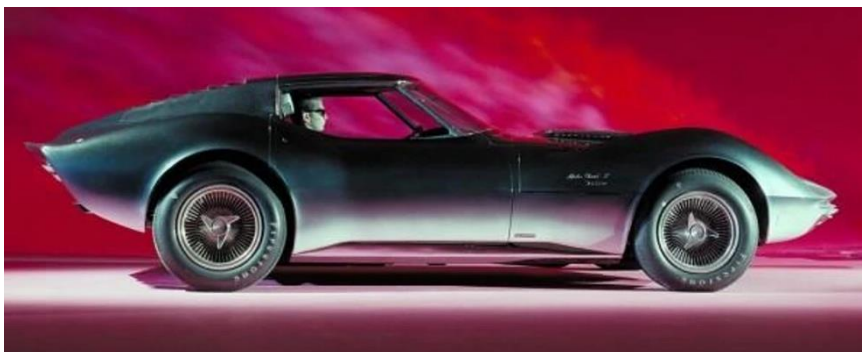


Script for the 1963-1965 Corvettes. Photo credit: Eckler's

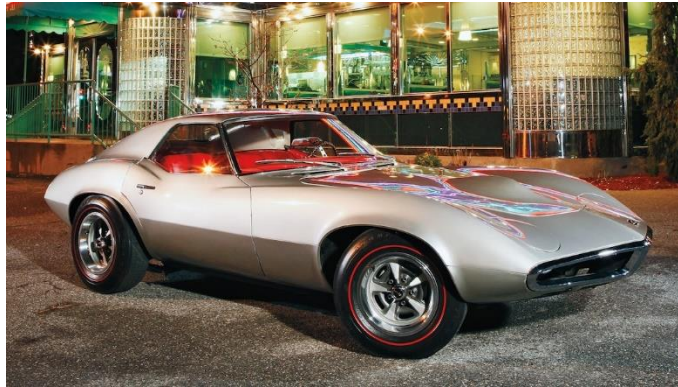


Script for the 1966-1967 Corvettes. Photo credit: Eckler's

The C3 (1968-1982) Corvette had lines that evolved from both the 1965 XP-830 Mako Shark II concept car and Pontiac's XP-833 from 1966. The latter (Pontiac) concept car was never put into production. Many people believe that GM feared a Banshee on the market would eat into Corvette's sales – which were already being threatened by Ford's Mustang and other Detroit models.



The 1965 XP-830 Mako Shark II influenced the C3. Photo credits: Corvsport and Remarkable Corvettes



GM's 1966 Pontiac XP-833 (known as the Banshee), which also influenced C3 Corvette styling. Photo credit: Motor Trend

The 1968 Corvette, the C3's initial year, bore *no* Sting Ray emblems, leading many people to justifiably assume that the Sting Ray signature was dead. However, they *were* Sting Rays; sales brochures identified the 1968 model as a Sting Ray - just as they had with the previous C2 models. Of course, this occurrence confused people a bit, as many viewed the Sting Ray badge as applying only to C2 Corvettes, so this remains a one-year-only oddity that seems to defy explanation.



1968 Corvette sales brochures identified the first-year C3 car as a Sting Ray, even though no such emblem appeared on its exterior. Photo credit: Corvsport



1968 Corvette; note the absence of Sting Ray emblems. Photo credits: Corvsport

However, the following year's 1969 model had the "Stingray" emblem proudly sported on each fender—but this time with a significant change: Stingray was *one word*.



The 1969 Corvette Stingray with one word emblem. Photo credit: Hobby Car Corvettes

The Stingray signature would remain on Corvettes built through 1976; in 1977, however, the emblem was removed from both the car and sales brochures – but it would return with the C7 Corvette in 2014.

And when the Stingray reappeared in 2014, it did so with a vengeance – a total of 26,565 coupes and 10,723 convertibles were built, for a total of 37,288 units. In fact, the Stingray was the only Corvette model built in 2014 - to be joined by the Z06 in 2015. Further demonstrating its nostalgic appeal, the Stingray signature has continued to be used through 2024, with 240,121 total Stingray units built from 1963 through 2023.



C8 (2020-2024) Stingray emblem. Photo credit: Top Flight Automotive

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