

CLASSIC DRIVER



Classic Driver Marketplace Essentials: Born in the USA

02 December 2011 | Classic Driver



One of the joys of classic cars is that they were built before market globalisation and thus embody the 'personality' of their country of origin. American cars are a perfect example, built to suit the landscape and cultural habits of a country that, barely one hundred years older than motorised vehicles, literally grew up with the automobile.

The 1950s and 1960s represent America's boldest and most adventuresome stage of automotive growth. Below are some limited-edition models that represent how far the edges of that growth extended.

1967 Nickey Chevrolet Camaro SS 427

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Billing itself as the 'Original Super Car Headquarters', Chicago's Nickey Chevrolet was the first to install the 427-cubic-inch Corvette engine into the new Camaro, which was limited by the factory to the 396-cubic-inch V8. The goal was to provide new car customers with the ultimate Camaro to humble the Ford Mustang at the drag strip. Racing exhaust, Hurst 4-speed shifters, and engine tuning of 450HP or more were part of the specially converted Camaros. Nickey, by the way, was spelled with a backward-facing K... [more >>](#)

1967 Chevrolet Camaro Z/28

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Like the Z06 Corvette, the Z/28 was a racing package for the Camaro that Chevrolet race engineer and product performance manager Vince Piggins convinced Chevrolet management to offer in order to homologate the Camaro for racing in the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) Trans-Am sedan series. The package featured a 302-cubic-inch V8 with aluminum intake manifold conservatively rated at 290HP. Also included were a close-ratio 4-speed, special suspension, heavy-duty radiator, 15x6in wheels and heavy-duty front disc/rear drum brakes. The dominance of the Penske/Donohue

Z/28 in the 1967/68 Trans-Am series sealed the Z/28's legendary status... [more >>](#)

1970 Dodge Challenger R/T

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Dodge's late entry into the 'pony car' market was intended to be an upscale version of the Plymouth Barracuda, aimed at the more luxurious so-called 'personal cars' like the Mercury Cougar. The 1970 cult classic movie *Vanishing Point* changed all that as actor Barry Newman raced an R/T across the Southwest, battling time and the cops. Legendary muscle car status was also enhanced by the availability of the triple-carburettored 440-cubic-inch 'Six-Pack' V8... [more >>](#)

1954 'Bubbletop' Chevrolet Corvette

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In an effort to pump up the sales of its slow-selling 1953 Corvette, Chevrolet expanded the colour palette in 1954 by adding Pennant Blue and Sportsman Red in addition to the original Polo White. Only 300 of the 3,640 built were blue. Even rarer is the aftermarket green-tinted 'bubbletop' hardtop. It was, however, the arrival of Zora-Arkus Duntov and V8 power in 1955 that would save the Corvette from extinction... [more >>](#)

Willys Jeep M38

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The Jeep could be argued as the most iconic American vehicle of all. The first post-War military edition of the World War II model, the M38, was based on the 1949 civilian CJ3A but with a more rugged frame and suspension with full floating rear axle. Over 45,000 were produced between 1950 and 1952. The quarter-ton, 4x4 truck was powered by a 60HP four-cylinder engine that made 105lb ft of torque at 2,000rpm... [more >>](#)

Shelby GT500

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Offered as a 'bigger must be better' package of the GT350, the 355HP, 428-cubic-inch V8 GT500 of 1967/68 was more of a luxury muscle car than the road-race-oriented GT350. Dual Holley four-barrel carburetors and unique front and rear styling set the GT500 apart from other Mustangs. A respectable-for-the-time 0-60mph figure of 6.2 seconds set it apart from most other cars... [more >>](#)

Studebaker Avanti R2

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With cutting-edge styling by Raymond Loewy and powered by a 289-cubic-inch V8 force-fed by a Paxton supercharger, the glassfibre-bodied 1963 Avanti R2 definitely had the 'space age' cred of the 'halo' sports car sought by Studebaker to save the brand. Unfortunately, Studebaker stopped production of the slow-selling Avanti in 1964 and all automobiles in 1966. The Avanti, however, more

than fulfilled its futuristic promise. Under various private owners building mechanical variations of the same styling theme, the Avanti was produced until 2004... [more >>](#)

1958-60 Chevrolet Corvette

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For 1958, GM stylist Harley Earl updated the 'face' of the Corvette by simplifying the grille and adding a pair of the dual headlamps that were in vogue that year. Only minor trim modifications would separate the 1959 and 1960 models from the 1958. Engine options included a pair of dual carburettored 283-cubic-inch V8s as well as a pair of fuel-injected versions with the most powerful rated at 290HP. .. [more >>](#)

1956 Cadillac Eldorado Brougham Town Car Prototype

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Strictly a concept car for the 1956 GM Motorama 'Highway of Tomorrow' tour that visited major cities across the U.S., the Town Car prototype was the ultimate extension of its four-door hardtop sibling. The Eldorado Brougham hardtop was destined for production but not this glassfibre-bodied, 55.5-inch-tall concept that featured a leather covered half-top for the rear passengers and an open front seat for the chauffeur. Gold plated interior appointments included a phone to communicate with the driver... [more >>](#)

1962 Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz

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Cadillac celebrated its 60th anniversary in 1962. Only 1,450 examples of the top of the convertible line Eldorado Biarritz were produced. The drivetrain featured a 390-cubic-inch 325HP V8 mated to a four-speed Hydramatic automatic transmission... [more >>](#)

1955 Chrysler Imperial Newport

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Chrysler Corporation introduced Forward Look styling, influenced by designer Virgil Exner's show cars, in 1955. This was best embodied by the luxury-oriented Imperial Newport hardtop coupe that featured a twin grille arrangement up front and gunsight tail lamps mounted atop the rear fenders. The handsome, 223-inch-long land yachts were powered by a 250HP, 331-cubic-inch V8 with a four-barrel carburettor. About a third of the roughly 11,000 Imperials produced in 1955 were Newport coupes... [more >>](#)

1959 Chevrolet Impala Convertible

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Nothing says 'doo-wop' rock and roll music and ducktail haircuts better than a 1959 Impala convertible. Despite the urban myth about the enormous rear tail fins causing the rear end to lift at

speed, recent wind tunnel tests have proved otherwise. The exaggerated rear styling was a last minute adjustment following a GM stylist's sneak peak at what Chrysler designers had in store for 1959. Top of the line power choice was the three two-barrel carburettor version of the 348-cubic-inch 'big block' V8... [more >>](#)

1969 Ford Boss 429 Mustang

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The Boss 429 Mustang best represents the wretched excess of the muscle car era. Surprisingly, the car's roots are not in drag racing, but NASCAR. In order to homologate its Boss 429 for use in stock car racing to battle Chrysler's all-conquering 426 Hemi, Ford hired speciality builder Kar Kraft to refabricate the shock towers, suspension mounts, and inner fenders of a 428 Cobra Jet Mustang to accommodate the wider Boss 429. Conservatively rated at 375HP, actual output exceeded 500HP. 859 were built in 1969 and another 499 for the 1970 model year... [more >>](#)

1963 Corvette Split-Window Z06

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At the urging of Corvette engineering head Zora Arkus-Duntov, Chevrolet introduced a Regular Production Option (RPO) road-racing package aimed at making the newly introduced Sting Ray competitive with Ford's Shelby Cobra. Codenamed Z06, this package included stiffer suspension and dampers, sintered metallic brake linings with Al-Fin brake drums, power-assisted, dual-master brakes, thicker front sway bar and a 360HP, fuel-injected 327-cubic-inch V8. Part of the original package was a 36.5-gallon fuel tank for endurance racing that led to the nickname of 'Big Tankers'. There were 199 Z06s ordered but only 63 had the larger fuel tanks... [more >>](#)

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