



STREET RACER

Wouldn't it be cool to have a car with the looks and power of an early C3 racer, and be able to drive it on the road? One East Coast restorer thought so—he's built three.

Words by Jeff Glenn. Photos by Stan Chorianopoulos.

Is that the George Filipinetti-owned, Henri Greder and Umberto Maglioli-driven L88 Le Mans car? Can't be, that one was all red. Sylvain Garant and Jean-Michel Giorgi were in the second car, but that was blue and white with Esso sponsorship. It couldn't be a

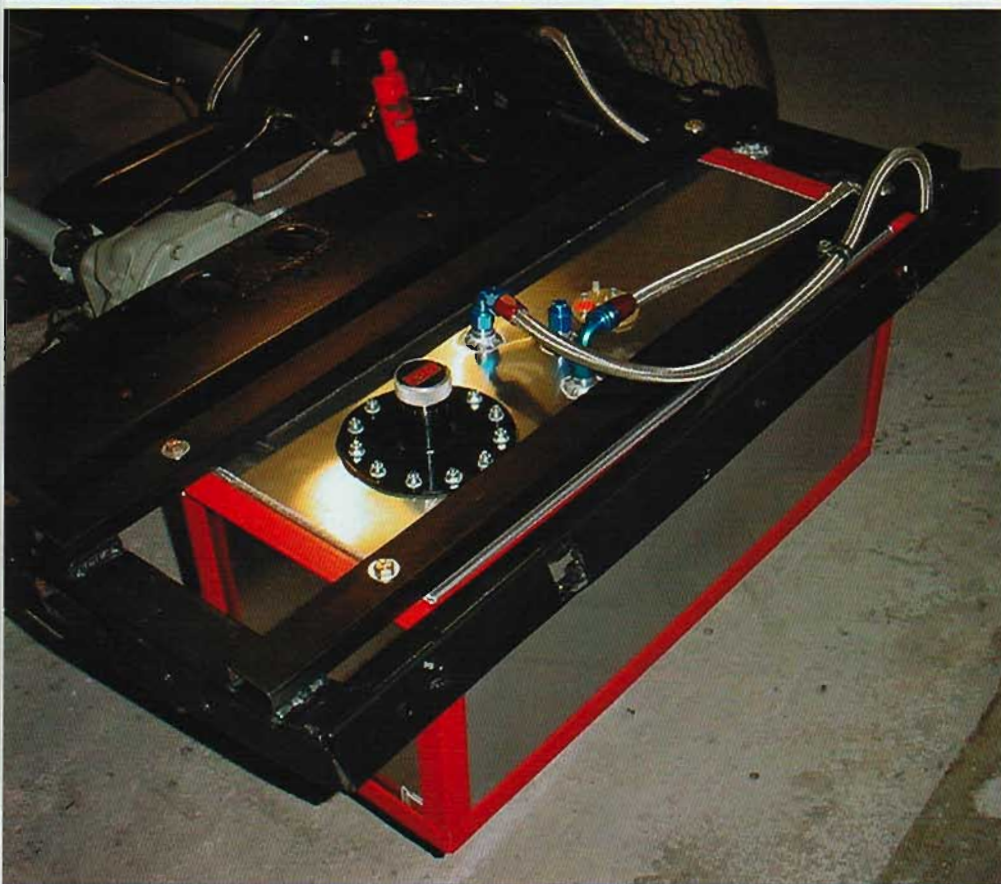
Guldstrand-prepared American International Racing James Garner-driven car, those didn't have flares.

This is exactly the internal dialogue that Stan Chorianopoulos wants you to have after seeing his 1968 road racing-inspired creation.

"I was always fascinated by the original race cars from the late '60s and early '70s," says Chorianopoulos. "You don't see them, maybe once in a while at a vintage race, but not out on the road." So he took that idea and built his racer specifically for street duty.

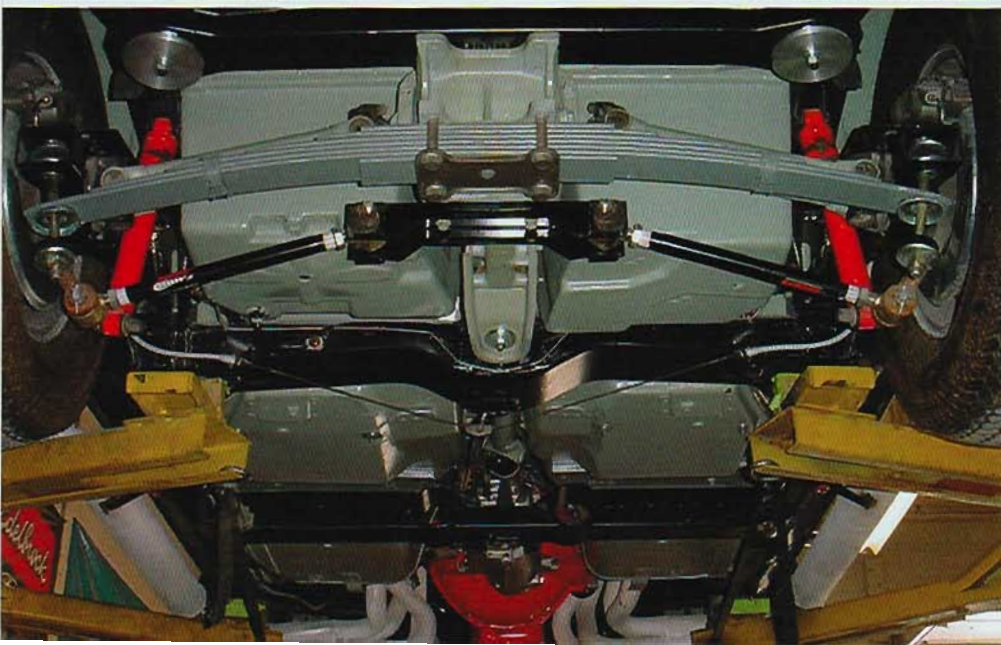


It wasn't his first Corvette project; Chorianopoulos owns 2nd Generation Automotive Restorations in Walpole, Massachusetts. How did he get started in the business? "I was just a car guy into muscle cars. I was always tinkering around with cars, and at some point I decided to do it for a living. In 1995, I opened up a shop. It was small, just me and another guy doing work, but one thing led to another. Now there are five of us and we specialize in muscle cars and Corvettes." Early C3s are Chorianopoulos' favorites. "I've had four '68s and a '73," he says. "I also had a 2003 Z06, but I decided I like the older cars better."



Chorianopoulos found our featured '68 Corvette on eBay. "It was relisted a couple of times and it didn't sell," he explains. "The car was rough to begin with. It started life as a 350 horsepower/327 cubic-inch convertible, and it needed a nose, a tail pan and the top

Left, top to bottom: With the body off, the hulking size of the big-block V8 is there for all to see; fuel cell mounts lower and further back in the chassis, improving both the center of gravity and weight distribution; race-spec rear leaf spring. Below: Lowered stance, graphics and side pipes provide ready-to-race looks.



deck. The only things we saved were the doors and the quarter panels.”

What ensued was a complete frame-off restoration. The bodywork sucked up a lot more time than the mechanicals. Just six months later, the car emerged from the shop looking like it was ready to roll out of the Le Mans pit lane and onto the Mulsanne straight.

The underpinnings are new, but not modern. “I looked at what they were doing back in the late '60s and kept it old school,” says Chorianopoulos. He went with upgraded urethane suspension bushings, a “Daytona” five-leaf road-race rear spring and 550 pound/inch front springs. Koni adjustable shocks damp each corner, and all of the suspension pieces are new or refurbished.

The stance and look of Chorianopoulos' road racer are spot-on, and like all cars that have that certain look, the credibility is in the detailing. “I met Frank Griegorian while I was researching my first car,” says the restorer. “Frank raced as a privateer in Europe and at some point hooked up with Henry Greder for a year or so back in the early '70s. After that, he campaigned his own car here in the States well into the '80s. As a racer himself, he had

a lot of knowledge that helped me with the cosmetic touches and general technical information on the racers of the day.”

Griegorian's company, F. Gregg Racing, makes the headlight covers, lightweight bucket seats, flares and the James Garner cowl cover, all helping to replicate the original endurance racing look superbly. Long racing wheel studs attach the 10 x 15-inch Minilite reproduction wheels from PS Engineering wrapped in Mickey Thompson MS0-15s at the rear and MT G-60-15s up front. This retro rubber sacrifices modern tire technology for period-correct looks.

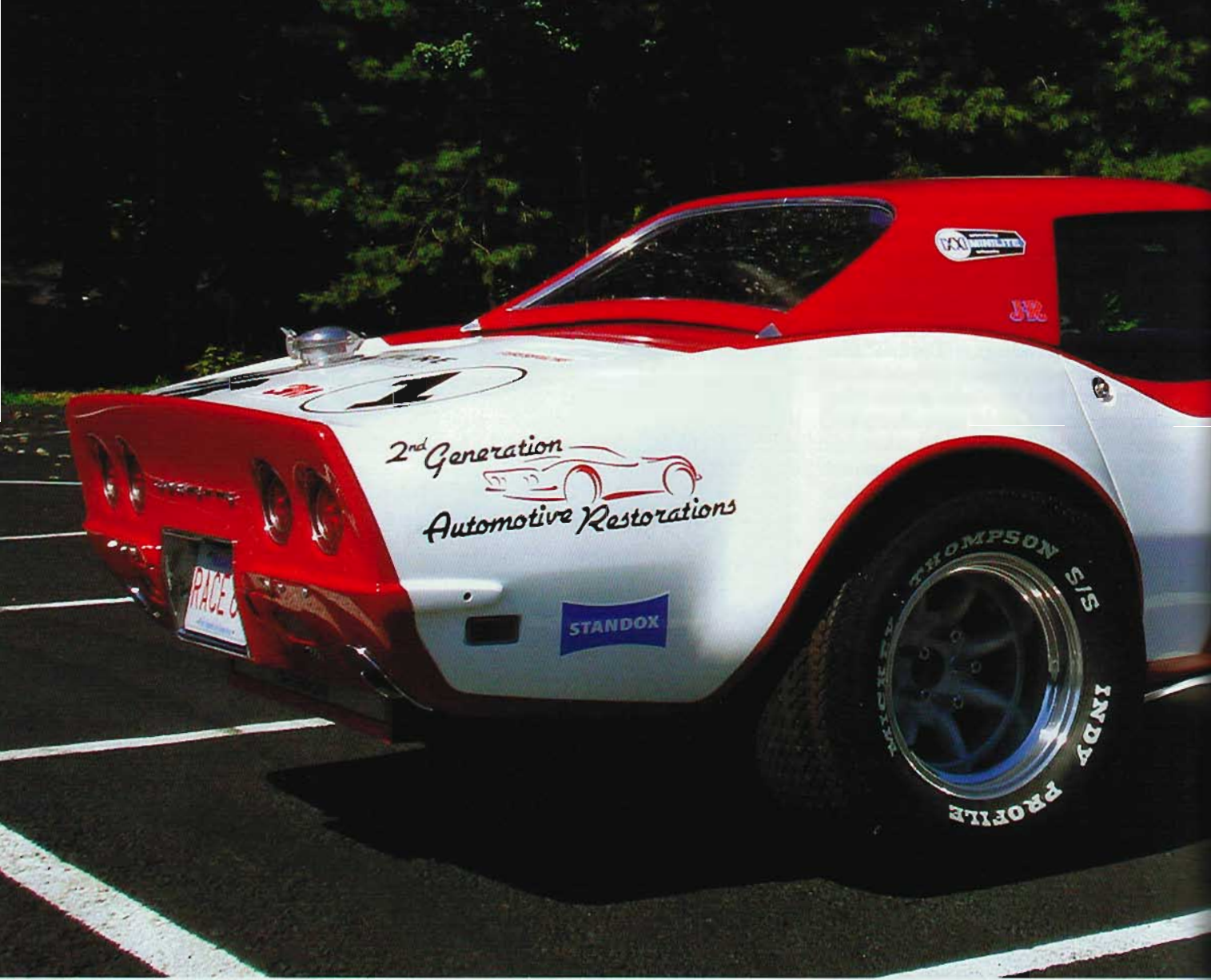
Adding to the car's race-ready appearance is Chorianopoulos' custom fuel system with a relocated filler and a fuel cell that's visible from the rear. “Back then, these cars had a big 40-gallon fuel cell,” he explains, “and you could see it sticking out the bottom of the car from the rear. You aren't going to need 40 gallons of fuel on the street and I didn't want to cut up the body, so I researched fuel cells until I found one that fits in the space between the body and the frame perfectly. It has a 19-gallon capacity, and it drops down just enough so you can see it from the back. The cell also

allowed me to relocate the fuel filler off to the side [on the rear deck] which is my own little personal touch on the car.”

The interior reflects a time when it was common to track a car with the majority of the standard equipment in place. A six-point cage and low-back racing buckets are the only deviations from stock aside from a custom panel on the shifter console where Chorianopoulos mounted switches for an electric fan, driving lights and the fuel pump.

Of course, looking right is only part of the package. Chorianopoulos wanted the Corvette to go like a late '60s race car, as well. “I went with a Skoggin Dickie crate motor—a 502/502,” he declares. That's cubic inches and horsepower. The big-block V8 has a forged crank, forged pistons and GM aluminum rectangle-port heads. Chorianopoulos wanted more than just a crate engine, however, so he had an aftermarket hydraulic roller camshaft fitted to free up considerably more horsepower and torque. The exhaust gases flow through Stahl headers and side pipes with Hooker MaxFlow inserts. As Chorianopoulos admits, “It's very loud with the pipes.” Complementing







the exhaust wail is the gear whine from the M22 Rock Crusher transmission. This C3 is certainly loud enough to convince you that you're in a race car.

It's fast enough, too. "With 575 horsepower and 600 lbs-ft of torque, you do the math," boasts Chorianopoulos. "It hooks up dead and takes off like you just got shot out of a slingshot." He reckons the relocated fuel cell, with the weight lower and further back, helps the launch, though he adds, "It will spin the tires if you dump the clutch from a standstill, anything with over 500 horsepower will."

According to Chorianopoulos, the car causes more than a little commotion on the street: "As I was taking the photos, four different people stopped in the first 15 minutes to ask about it. It's kind of funny, because a lot of Corvette guys who aren't really familiar with older ones don't know what to make of it. They ask if it's some kind of custom, and ask about the headlights. Others who do know are impressed, and it brings them back to another time. I've had a couple of people who have raced Corvettes—including one vintage racer a '69—admit this car felt just like their period racers."

So far, Chorianopoulos hasn't been afraid to put miles on his '68. He's done a few shows, and drives it back and forth to work frequently. "I get it out as often as I can when the weather is decent," he says. "I run it with the hardtop about 80 percent of the time because I love the look."

Will he and his crew at 2nd Generation build others? You bet they will. Chorianopoulos has already sold one, and he's working on a third right now. "This is my answer to the



Opposite bottom: As if a 502-bhp crate engine wasn't enough, 2nd Generation had this big block hot-rodded to 575 horsepower. Middle: Interior sports just a handful of racing muds. Left, top to bottom: Headlight covers are one of the car's key styling cues; 15-inch Minilite replicas shod with period-correct rubber.

Cobra kit car," he explains, "except what you have here will always be a real car, and I think the Corvette is more beautiful than any Cobra. The car that we're building now for a gentleman in Virginia is going to be his own take on it. He's going to competitively race it, so we're doing some modernized suspension and a late-model wheel and tire combination. To make it look right, we're making our own L88 flares that will fit that combo better."

You can come to 2nd Generation with a donor car, or Chorianopoulos can find you one. Depending upon what you start with and how you decide to build it, the cost is highly variable, but budgeting about \$70 grand is a good place to start. ○