

It's Not the Years, Honey, It's the Mileage

Continue to enjoy your ZR-1 as long as you can, and when it finally gets too tired, find a buyer with stars in his eyes and good mechanical aptitude

My high-mileage ZR-1

Q I've had my 1991 ZR-1 for ten years, and the odometer shows 147k miles. It's been a terrific car and always garaged, looks great and has never been damaged. But I know values of these cars are pretty much in the tank and I'm wondering what it's going to cost to rebuild the engine. Do you have any idea how many miles these 4-cam engines are good for? Will it be really expensive to overhaul? Should I just wait for the first sunny days of spring and send it down the road? I know there are a lot of low-mileage examples around—should I just look for one, maybe a 1993–95 model?—**R.D., Denver, CO**



High mileage 1991 ZR-1

A A rebuild of your high-mileage LT5 engine would be costly, and likely represent a significant portion of your “fully depreciated” 147k-mile ZR-1. It'll be money you will not recoup come sale time. If the engine has been maintained well, and tended to as needed by a knowledgeable LT5 technician, I think you will be pleasantly surprised at how long it will keep going given continued care and feeding befitting a high-mileage unit.

If you go to sell the car as-is now, I suspect you won't get much, as buyers like low mileage and will automatically deduct the cost of an engine rebuild. My advice? Continue to enjoy your ZR-1 as long as you can, and when it finally gets too tired to enjoy, find a buyer with stars in his eyes and good mechanical aptitude. At that point, the car owes you nothing and will go on to be fixed up and live on as the new owner's pride and joy—a “win-win” in anybody's book.

Gingerbread will not offer a good return

Q I have been a subscriber for a while now and I love the magazine, even though my “collection” is limited to a few Austin-Healeys and Corvettes. I'm hoping to expand into Italians in the future. Anyway, I am hoping you can give me a bit of advice regarding my 1963 Corvette convertible. This car will never be anything but a driver due to previous body damage, incorrect color, etc. The car currently has an incorrect 283-ci motor that burns oil and, surprisingly, my wife doesn't like returning from a drive with her hair reeking of oily exhaust.

Do you have any thoughts as to what would be my best bet for a replacement motor? I'm not looking for a “pavement burner” with massive horsepower. Instead I'm trying to figure out which option would provide the best likelihood of

recouping the engine investment if and when I sell the car. My sense is that a period-correct, rebuilt 327 is not the best investment for this car. Will a basic crate engine (e.g., GM 350 ci with 250 hp) negatively impact the ability to sell this car? And, finally, if I am going to sell the car in the near future, am I better off leaving the current oil burner in the car? Appreciate any guidance you can provide.—**R.M. via email**

A I agree that spending \$15k or so under the hood making your car correct with a proper 327 and all the associated 1963 gingerbread will not offer a good return on the investment. Rather, I would suggest a good 350-ci crate motor as you mention, with cast iron heads that will accept original 327 valve covers. I'd dress it up to be period-correct, rather than NCRS or Bloomington Gold correct. If it suits the rest of the

car, even some mild period speed parts might be cool—headers, a vintage dual-plane aluminum intake manifold topped with a Holley and vintage air cleaner, and whatever else suits your fancy. Even the most basic crate motor with a decent cam, intake, carb, and exhaust—properly tuned—will be a lot of fun to drive, and easy on the wallet. Not to mention the money you'll save on flowers and dry cleaning bills because it won't make your wife and all of your clothes smell like oily exhaust. Let us know how it turns out.

Narrow your choice

Q I have a '66 coupe, a 350-hp, 4-speed, that we use for vintage rallies. It is reasonably stock, but with Bilstein shocks, some minor suspension upgrades, and a well sorted chassis. I like the stock look, and have kept the original knockoff wheels. To that end, I have also been running modern

radial tires in the 215/70/15 size. Unfortunately, the tires seem to be the weak link. They handle terribly, and the car gets very soft at speed. I don't want to lose the look of the car, but I also don't want to die for it. Does anybody make a modern radial tire in a 15" size that is speed rated above 118 mph, and actually has some performance capabilities? —*S.B., Bristol, VA*

A *Vintage size tires that work are becoming quite an issue, as you have experienced. I too use these cars for more than just cruising to Burger World on Saturday nights, and have spent a lot of time researching and testing tires.*

The best tire for high-speed use that I have found by far is the Avon CR6ZZ radial. They are a V-rated tire, so 149 mph can be sustained, and have both DOT and European approval for



Which tires for my 1966 coupe?

road use. They are available in 15" sizes appropriate for a stock C3 wheel; I think the 225/70/15 might be a good choice for you.

At the cost of a little ride quality you will gain a ton of grip and stability. They stick like glue and have a very vintage straight tread design with a

rounded sidewall, so they look like period-correct treaded race tires. The negatives? They only come in blackwall, the tread life is rated at 100, and they love to pick up sand and pebbles, so I suggest using mud flaps or 3M clear paint protection film on areas susceptible to road

rash. Avons can be a little tricky to source in the U.S., but try Roger Kraus Racing (www.rogerkrausracing.com), and check out the comprehensive size and spec chart for CR6ZZs while you are on their web site to help narrow down your choice (no pun intended). ■



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