C6 Corvette Supercar - Specter Werkes/Sports Corvette GTR

Starting-Grid Styling And Superior Performance Highlight This Next-Generation Supercar

Barry Kluczyk Feb 1, 2009 Share



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Messing with the Corvette is like defusing a bomb. Do it right, and they'll pin a medal on your chest. Do it wrong, and, well, it all blows up in your face. So it was with more than a little trepidation that Jeff Nowicki and his Troy, Michigan-based Specter Werkes/Sports decided to create a distinctive version of the C6-something for an exclusive group of customers whose combination of desire and means affords more than a basic exhaust-and-spoiler package.

But if there's one thing Nowicki didn't want to do, it was disrespect the C6.

"The Corvette has a very purposeful design and cues that have carried over through decades of evolution," he says. "We thought there was an opportunity to create a car with greater visual 'reach,' but didn't stray far from the intrinsic qualities that make the car a Corvette."



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It is territory Nowicki has visited in the past. A decade ago he launched a C5-based GTR. About 30 were built, including one each for Dale Earnhardt Sr. and Jr. They were almost too respectful of the Corvette's design, with fractionally widened bodywork that required a GTR be parked next to a stock C5 in order to appreciate the difference.

There's no mistaking the C6 GTR for something that slipped out of Bowling Green. The wide-body theme of the C5 GTR carries over, but with a considerably more aggressive, racing-inspired execution. Indeed, the GTR looks like it's ready for 12 hours at Sebring, or maybe even a full 24 at Daytona.

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"Our clientele told us that's what they wanted," says Nowicki. "They wanted a car that stood out from the rest, but was also tasteful and recognizable as a Corvette. I think that's exactly what we achieved."

Only the roof panel and rear hatch are left untouched from the original Corvette. Everything else-the front and rear fascias, rear quarter panels, rockers, front fenders, and hood-are replaced with Specter-designed-and-manufactured panels. We previewed them in our September issue, showing the design and prototype process, which involved slathering the first production model (the car seen on these pages and commissioned by Colorado Chevy dealer Rollie Purifoy) in clay and painstakingly carving it into the final form. Molds were taken of the clay, and the panels were formed with them.



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"We shaped the passenger side by hand, and that took months before we were satisfied with the final dimensions and details," says Nowicki. "Then, we scanned the car, turned it around on our surface plate, and let a computer-guided milling machine carve a mirror image. That took more than a week itself."

The flow and cohesiveness of the GTR's design is apparent from all angles. The front fascia and extractor-style hood combine to deliver the greatest visual impression, while the body sides and rear fascia convey a broad-shouldered stance. Indeed, the rear fenders are half an inch wider per side than the Z06, making the GTR an inch wider overall and 4.5 inches wider overall than a "base" Corvette.

The rear fascia is accented by carbon-fiber trim; a large, LED-lit center brake lamp (from the Cadillac CTS); revised taillamp lenses; and a Corsa stainless steel exhaust with

Specter's own outlets. Oh, and did we mention the carbon-fiber headlamp bezels, mirror covers, and splitter? The list of unique parts is comprehensive, to say the least.



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If we were forced to sum up the GTR in a word, it would be sharp-and we don't mean that in the colloquial sense of "good looking." We mean the GTR gives the C6 edges where there were none and a suggestion of speed. The jutting-jaw front fascia, for example, appears to be ingesting air (and maybe racetrack cones), even when the car is stationary. The widened fenders, meanwhile, complement the design by visually lowering the roofline, giving the car a sportier stance.

Matrix II

In short, the GTR looks like it's either going 200 mph or will be there very shortly-and with its modified LS3 V-8, rubbing up against the "double-hundy" mark is within the car's capabilities. The engine is one of Specter's Matrix II packages. On the LS3, that means a stroker displacement of 416 ci (6.8 liters), a new camshaft, and a replacement of the stock cast rotating parts with heavy-duty forged components. When finished, the engine is filled with Mobil 1 synthetic oil, just like all of Specter's engines from at least the past 10 years.



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A custom tune keeps the reconfigured LS3 cheerily ingesting a just-right ratio of air and fuel, breathing through the stock intake manifold and throttle body. Specter says the engine makes about 535 emissions-legal horsepower and about 530 lb-ft of torque. The suitably strong stock drivetrain allows Specter to use the original transmission and axle components without modification.

"The Corvette has very strong components right off the showroom floor," Nowicki says. "The transmission and rear axle are absolutely strong enough for the Matrix II engine."

And while C6 GTR No. 1 boasts a 100-horse gain over stock, the engine package is not standard. The underhood upgrade is an option, one of several offered. Nowicki says powertrain performance is very personal for Specter's customers, and because the GTR can be built on a base model, a Z06, or even a ZR1, leaving the horsepower options open makes the most sense from a business standpoint.



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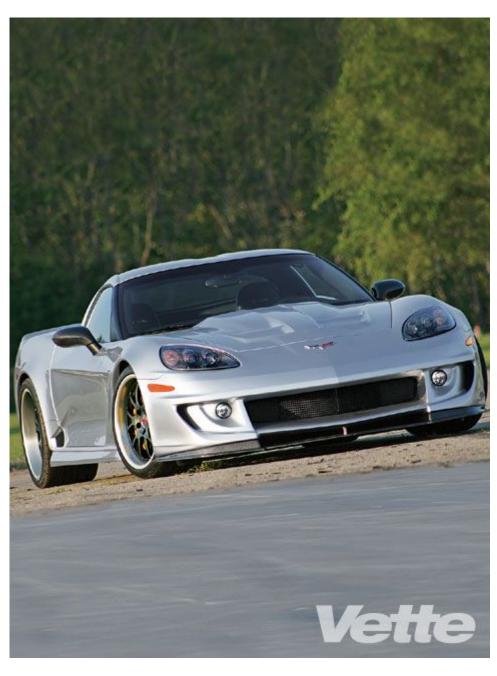
In fact, there's more power to be mined from the LS3. Nowicki told us the Matrix II in GTR No. 1 had a relatively mild camshaft, and that flywheel horsepower of 600 or more could easily be attained with a more radical grind.

"We anticipate that most people will want at least some type of performance increase, but it's best to let them decide," he says.

But while engine output is up for debate, the suspension and braking systems of the GTR are not. Each model receives a Hotchkis stabilizer bar kit to improve cornering reflexes, along with a quartet of StopTech brakes-15-inch slotted rotors with six-piston calipers in the front and a 14-inch/four-piston setup in the rear. Hanging from those beefy rotors is a set of Forgeline wheels (HREs are available, too) wrapped with Michelin's excellent Pilot Sport 2 Zero Pressure tires.

Those Forgeline wheels, by the way, are the first set manufactured with "blind" bolts. This means that the hardware usually seen around the perimeter of wheel center is moved to the inside of the rim for a cleaner look. It was a special request of Specter Werkes, and we think they're on to something. The wheels look great without the bolts. As for the PS2 tires, they're just about the grippiest set of rubber this side of racing slicks. And despite their super-low-profile aspect ratio, they're surprisingly compliant and quiet on the road.

On the GTR they measure 285/30ZR19 in the front and 335/25ZR20 in the rear, the same as the ZR1.



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Details, **Details**

Along with the hardware, the GTR also carries a level of detail not often seen in "tuner" cars. The paint, for example, is a factory color. It's a silver-metallic hue from BASF that previously has been used on a few cars in Europe. Our photos simply don't do justice to this deep, liquid-looking finish. It looks almost wet to the touch, and the metallic accents are so fine, they make most production metallic jobs look like the chunky-flaked stuff found on bass boats.

Inside are more fine details, including Spinneybeck leather inserts in the seats and wrapped around the shifter, parking brake, and center-console lid. They add a decidedly

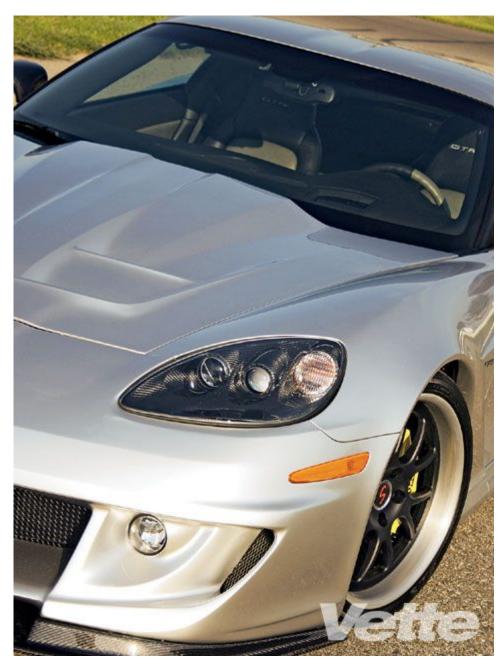
upscale aura to the cabin, something the customer base for this car will undoubtedly appreciate.



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So, how much should that customer base expect to spend for the privilege? Specter says the basic GTR package, including the full body treatment, suspension/brakes, and interior details, starts at \$34,995 (in addition to the cost of whatever Corvette model you choose). The engine upgrades and special paint treatment are extra-cost options.

For the money, you're guaranteed exclusivity and all the performance you want (or can afford). Each GTR is numbered, and a serial plaque is mounted on the interior center stack. Purifoy Chevrolet and Cauley Chevrolet in West Bloomfield, Michigan, traditionally have been the primary outlets for GTRs, but Specter can arrange construction with almost any dealer or individual who shows up with a new Corvette-and a sufficient checkbook balance.



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For more information about the Specter Werkes/Sports GTR, call (248) 583-9559, or visit www.spectergtr.com.

Coming Out Party

It was one of those evenings that could only happen in Detroit: A tuner Corvette debuts inside a Ferrari dealership and attracts a who's-who list of local enthusiasts, racers, and Corvette dignitaries. That was the scene last summer when more than 200 patrons gathered to watch as Specter Werkes/Sports unveiled the C6 GTR.

The event was held at Cauley Ferrari, adjacent to Cauley Chevrolet, one of the country's biggest Corvette stores and a primary outlet for the GTR. Among the attendees were Corvette Product Manager Harlan Charles and Vehicle Line Executive Tom Wallace, both of whom showed up driving preproduction ZR1s. There were other interesting cars in the

parking lot, too, including plenty of Corvettes, a rare '74 Super Duty Trans Am, a supercharged '32 Ford coupe, and a handful of Ferraris.

Paris and Milan may have their houses of couture, but Detroit has its houses of horsepower. The GTR's unveiling was the red-carpet treatment in Motown.

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