

Corvette Z06 Emerged from Wind Tunnel As High-Performance, ‘Street-Legal’ Car

by Jim Stickford

Getting the new 2015 Corvette Z06 ready for the 2014 NAIAS show meant finding out as much of what couldn't be done as what could be done.

Jose Gonzalez, lead designer for the Z06, said they only had a year to come up with the Z06 designs. He calls the vehicle “the next step up” from the Stingray, which had its debut at the 2013 NAIAS.

“We had to make it better,” Gonzalez said. “That meant discovering how much downforce we could generate with new designs, how much aggressive we could get with the design and how much faster we could make the vehicle.”

Part of what makes the Z06 special, Gonzalez said, is that the design team got ideas from the C5-R racing Corvette.

“When we were developing our design strategy, the C5-R gave us ideas on what the requirements and standards could be,” Gonzalez said. “The job became to get these standards from the C5-R racing Corvette to the production car Z06.”

Gonzalez has since moved on from Z06 to trucks. He said that the Corvette was his first time as

a designer on a high-performance vehicle.

“What surprised me,” Gonzalez said, “was how much time – and it was hours and hours – we spent with our models in the wind tunnels. Each new iteration meant making changes based on the data we got from putting that model in the wind tunnel. Each new iteration then had to be tested in the tunnels.”

And, Gonzalez said, GM has a lot of different teams making

changes to a lot of different models. That meant waiting in line for wind tunnel time.

“My personal goal was to make sure the Z06 performed as it should,” Gonzalez said. “I’m basically a truck guy, and what I want to hear from customers about the Z06 is that everything we did with it worked.”

The biggest change of the Z06 was how wide the car is compared to the Stingray, Gonzalez said.



2015 Corvette Z06

“We made a lot of changes to get this model ready,” Gonzalez said.

“About the only thing we didn’t change from the Stingray

is the front fascia, the doors and the upper canopy.”

The biggest pressure Gonzalez

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Lonnie G. Bunch III at Washington Auto Show

GM Gift to Help Museum Tell The African American Story

The General Motors Foundation will become a founding donor of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture through a \$1 million grant.

GM Foundation President Vivian Pickard presented the gift to Museum Founding Director Lonnie G. Bunch III at the Washington, D.C., Auto Show on Jan. 22.

“GM and the GM Foundation have a strong legacy of support for the African American community, and for the Smithsonian In-

stitution’s preservation of our nation’s history,” said Pickard.

“Through this grant, we continue our commitment by helping to bring to life the story of African Americans who have changed our nation in so many ways.”

Currently under construction on a five-acre site adjacent to the Washington Monument, the museum will open in 2015, displaying the richness and diversity of the African American experience

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Michigan Needs to Feed the Manufacturing Job Pipeline

by Jim Stickford

It’s the ultimate contradiction.

A recent survey by The Manufacturing Institute in Great Britain reported that 82 percent of Americans think the country should invest more in manufacturing, but only 35 percent would encourage their children to go into manufacturing as a career.

Chuck Hadden, president and CEO of the Michigan Manufacturer’s Association, related the survey results while speaking at the “Solving the Manufacturing Tal-

ent Shortage With Proven Training for the Workforce” seminar held at the M-TEC facility on Van Dyke in Warren Jan. 22.

The event was attended by local manufacturers who learned about how they could employ and sponsor training for graduates and students at M-TEC and other training centers in the state.

M-TEC is a joint effort between the state and Macomb Community College (MCC) to provide technical training in the manufacturing sector.

Hadden said his organization has 2,200 members, 85 percent of which employ fewer than 100 people.

Their products include automotive, medical devices, pharmaceuticals, furniture, electronics, food and beverages, metals, plastics and biochemicals. Overall, they employ more than 560,000 people.

“Right here in Michigan, we are manufacturing the best products in the world through an increasingly deep use of technology and advanced skills to create high-

quality, cost-competitive products,” Hadden said.

“Nationally, for every \$1 spent in manufacturing, another \$1.48 is added to the economy, the highest multiplier effect of any sector and nearly three times the rate of industries like retail and wholesale trade.”

Between December 2009 and November 2013, Michigan’s manufacturing sector created more than 100,000 new jobs, ranking first in the nation and outpacing

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Chuck Hadden

2014 Will be ‘The Year of the Lease Pull-Ahead, Led by Buick,’ Says Swapalease.com Vice President Hall

by Jim Stickford

There are a lot of advantages for manufacturers to offer lease pull-ahead programs and it looks like Buick is going to be the leader of the lease pack for 2014.

Or at least that’s the prediction of Swapalease.com.

Scot Hall, executive vice president, said his company creates an online lease transfer marketplace, so if someone has six months left on his or her car lease wants, for some reason, to get rid of it, he or she can go to the site and transfer the lease to someone who wants a short-term lease.

The reasons people do this are many, Hall said. Someone might move to another city where a car isn’t needed. Or someone might move to a city where a car is needed. Some people just like short-term leases. They don’t want to be locked in with the same car for three years.

Hall said Swapalease’s prediction that 2014 will be the “year of the lease pull-ahead” is based on a few factors.

First, he said, lease pull-ahead programs are used by manufacturers and dealers to entice lease drivers into turning in their leases early in order to “re-lease” another vehicle.

It’s a forgiveness opportunity on what’s remaining on the contract, usually offered to lessees with fewer than five months remaining on the contract.

Manufacturers such as BMW, Ford and Lincoln utilized lease pull-ahead programs in 2013, and several other manufacturers, such as GM, may be planning aggressive lease pull-ahead programs for 2014.

These programs are beneficial to the industry, Hall said, as they help turn new inventory and elevate brand retention among consumers. Hall added that Swapalease.com predicts there



2014 Buick LaCrosse

will be roughly 20 percent more lease pull-ahead program options in 2014, particularly as a result of an expected three million leases scheduled for return in the coming year.

“Swapalease.com is an advocate of lease pull-ahead programs, and the company’s ‘lease transfer’ marketplace pioneered the flexible lease contract option nearly 15 years ago,” said Hall. “Today, thousands of lease drivers use the service as a way to escape their current contract in

order to immediately turn around and shop for a different vehicle that meets their new automotive needs.”

Hall said Swapalease has put Buick at the top of lease pull-ahead programs for 2014, based on GM’s history with pull-ahead programs.

He said those programs are “great ways for OEMs to maintain market share or even grow it.” And, over the past couple of

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Patti to Upgrade Marlette Firm

Patti Engineering, a maker of control system integration, has released details of a control system upgrade project in progress.

Its team of Siemens engineers is providing services to Oetiker’s U.S.-based manufacturing facility in Marlette, Mich.

The project consists of upgrading equipment with the latest Siemens Simatic S7 control platform. This offers technological and economic advantages, said Patti Marketing Director Georgia Whalen.

Oetiker’s investment in migrating equipment controls to the S7 control platform will ultimately improve plant efficiency, said Whalen, adding that the machine downtime will be reduced and the machines’ functionality, maintainability, and scalability will be greatly improved.

“Oetiker is proactive in upgrading our equipment to best support our customers,” said Bruce Christensen, Oetiker U.S.’s production manager.