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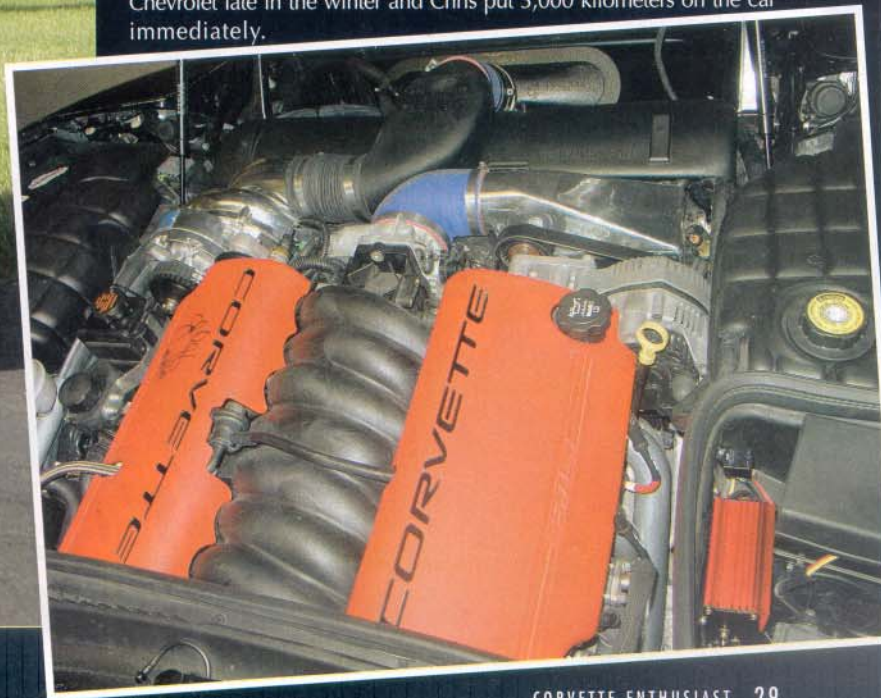
## CANADIAN CHRIS CHAMBERLAIN BUILDS HIS Z06 JUST THE WAY HE WANTS IT

BY WAYNE ELLWOOD

**GM has yet to build a Z06 Corvette in convertible form, but that doesn't mean that there aren't people out there who don't want one.**

Chris Chamberlain remembers that when GM released the new Z06 option, he knew he would like to move up from his 1997 Corvette. But he also wanted a convertible. Too bad. The Z06 was a coupe only, designed for the showroom stock and SCCA regional-level racing categories. Still, he knew that there were some very reputable shops, like Caravaggio Corvettes ([www.caravaggiocorvettes.com](http://www.caravaggiocorvettes.com)), that could take a showroom stocker and rebuild what he really wanted. The new C5 Corvette had been designed from the beginning to accommodate the stress of a roadster design, so the structure was already adequate and the parts were definitely available.

In 2003, Chris sold his 1997 to a friend and walked into his local Chevy dealer to order his new Z06. The car was delivered to Shaganappi Chevrolet late in the winter and Chris put 3,000 kilometers on the car immediately.



Then it was time to ship the car to John Caravaggio in Woodbridge (Toronto) for the convertible conversion. John had developed the conversion process using all new GM parts, plus a few proprietary metal parts, which are fabricated specially for the job. The job takes three to four weeks and only the decklid needs to be repainted. The "targa" conversion (for Z06 cars) involves a similar process. Having completed about 40 convertible and targa conversions to date, John says the job is pretty straightforward.

After Caravaggio completed his work, Chris flew to Toronto to drive the car back and dropped it with Steve Eisenberg at Davenport Motorsports. Steve installed headers, cat-back exhaust, and Baer brakes. The exhaust modifications freed up a bit more horsepower and the brake/pad combination added the extra confidence required to drive one of these cars to the limit.

Chris enjoyed the car for the rest of the Canadian driving season, even pushing the limits into what locals call the "winter"



PHOTO CHRIS CHAMBERLAIN

season. This car was really purchased to be used as a driver.

As winter set in, the car was sent back to Davenport Motorsports for the real killer option – a Vortech supercharger with intercooler. Now, these conversions are not exactly new. But as with anything else, there is a good installation and then there is a *really* good installation.

Steve Eisenberg had pitched a top-end tuning program, and Chris was ready for it. First, the shop ran a series of baseline runs on the dynamometer. This would support all subsequent dyno runs and permit the development of customized programming for the engine management system to make the most of the blower. Reliability was also a concern, so larger-diameter pulleys were used to reduce the boost, and tuning was set to match available premium

pump gas. Yes, a degree of "conservatism" was built into Eisenberg's development, including the low 7,200-rpm rev limiter.

More dyno runs helped to clean up the program for the fuel curve, even controlling the temperature at which the electric fan kicks in. Final dyno runs produced 536.2 horsepower to the rear wheels (at 6500 RPM) and 457 lb-ft of torque. Chris says that making this power takes over 625 at the flywheel, and it does all of this without affecting emissions or warranty. And the car still delivers 30 miles per (Canadian) gallon.

Chris reports that even the guys at Vortech were surprised at the results, especially considering Calgary's altitude – 3,500 feet above sea level. Eisenberg's tuning was the key. Steve's "pitch" includes the fact that in more than 100 installations, they have never had a failure. And the blower is on warranty for as long as Chris owns the car. ■

PHOTO CHRIS CHAMBERLAIN



ABOVE: The conversion takes three to four weeks. The only re-paint required is the rear decklid. LEFT: The Z06 during conversion. Among Caravaggio's many body options, the convertible conversion has proven most popular.

