

Championships in 1960, though it cost him a fortune. Afterward, he drove it around Detroit, where he felt like a movie star, beaming down Woodward in a spaceship while the hoi polloi gawked.

When the production Corvette debuted at the Los Angeles Times Grand Prix at Riverside Raceway on October 13, 1962—a race where Carroll Shelby also debuted his Cobra—it made an impression.

With this public success, GM was assured they could truly endorse the project. The first all-new Corvette featured

an entirely new ladder frame and stiffer construction, yet when coupled with fiberglass bodywork, it weighed less than the previous Corvette. It had an independent rear suspension, something Duntov fought tooth and nail for. It carried its 327 cubic-inch small-block V8 well with excellent weight distribution, though 425-horsepower big-block engines would soon follow, much to Duntov's chagrin. This was also the first Corvette to undergo wind tunnel testing, which helped refine the design before final production. In his spare time, Brock had brushed up on his aerodynamics,

Mitchell always suggested the Bugatti Type 57 Atlantic as inspiration for the split window. But he also could have copied Harley Earl (below).

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and tried to convince Mitchell to make some subtle aerodynamic changes, based on complex German experiments. “Look, kid,” Mitchell yelled. “I design the Corvettes around here, got that?”

Despite Mitchell's European aesthetic, he still couldn't help himself. Among nonfunctional vents and hood bulges (“styling entertainments,” dubbed Shinoda) the final design featured a famous split window flourish, a purely Mitchell creation. Mitchell attributed it to the Bugatti 57SC “Atlantique” coupe. Turns out, however, that Mitchell's predecessor Harley Earl had also incorporated a split window into his 1956 Motorama Oldsmobile “Golden Rocket” concept, as well as on his own second-generation Corvette proposals. Certainly, Mitchell, traipsing across Italy, had seen various

Alfa Romeos with a similar add-on. But only the Bugatti made for an appropriately extravagant and sophisticated homage. The second-generation Corvette was a hit. It beat sales records, won praise and awards from the press, and set a bold design template that would last through the decades, rendering Mitchell as a patron saint of sorts in the halls of General Motors. Plus, Duntov finally got to take it racing, just like he had always wanted.

“Every rare now and then,” wrote humorist Bruce McCall for the *New Yorker*, “a car comes along that so brilliantly intuits the zeitgeist that it becomes an instant classic. The new Corvette Sting Ray was such a miracle. It was a revelation approaching a revolution. It dared to be almost ...European.”

Mitchell won his SCCA class with the XP-87 Sting Ray concept: proof that the new Corvette could now handle a race track (above).