

# The Chevrolet Camaro ZL1 and the all Aluminum Monster Engine

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Friday, 08 February 2008

The ZL1 Engine was based on the regular Chevrolet 427 engine. However, instead of the regular iron-block and head L72 found in the regular 427 engine, the ZL1 sported aluminum heads and the first aluminum block ever made by Chevrolet. It shared the L88 aluminum head/iron block's engine rating of 430bhp but made closer to 500bhp -- making it probably the most powerful engine Chevrolet ever offered to the public. And the engine weighed just 500 pounds, the same as Chevy's 327 small block.

The ZL-1 was made available only for 1969 under COPO 9560 and Chevrolet needed to install 50 copies to qualify the ZL1 Camaro for racing. Chevrolet eventually built 69 Camaros and 2 Corvettes with the ZL1 engine. ZL1 cars were blessed with a 5 year/50,000 mile warranty and were fully street legal. With factory exhausts and tires, ZL1 Camaros could turn low 13s; with headers and slicks, they could turn 11.6s @ 122mph. This was the fastest car ever produced by Chevrolet.

Performance had its price - \$4,160us for the ZL1 engine alone pushing the price of the Camaro ZL1 to an unbelievable \$7,200 (about double the price of a SS Super Sport 396cid Camaro).

## Dick Harrell Badge

"Built by Dick Harrell" badge located in the glovebox of ZL1's. Denoting the Gibb-prepped and tuned by Dick Harrell who was known as "Mr. Chevrolet". The original ZL1 Camaro was brainstormed by Chevy dealer Fred Gibb. In 1969, Fred Gibb Chevrolet contacted the General Motors factory to produce the Camaro with the ZL1 all-aluminum 427 engine. The factory would agree to do it if Gibb placed a minimum order of 50 cars. Gibb initiated the order and this was the beginning of the COPO 9560 Camaro.

The first two ZL1 Camaros arrived at Gibb's dealership on a snowy evening in the last days of December 1968. The agreement GM made with Gibb was to have ZL1 cars available for sale prior to the end of 1968. The GM factory delivered as promised.

Unfortunately, Gibb had neglected to ask about the cost of these cars. The window sticker price was over \$7,200. Needless to say, not many Camaro enthusiasts were eager to step up and pay a price that was almost twice the cost of the COPO 9561 cast iron 427. Due to this "sticker shock", negotiations transpired between Fred Gibb and the Chevrolet factory managers. It was agreed that Gibb could return most of the cars. It was the first time in history that the factory took back cars from a dealership. The unsold cars were re-invoiced at the factory and redistributed to other high-performance Chevrolet dealerships.

In addition to the original 50 ZL1 Camaros shipped to Gibb Chevrolet, an additional 19 ZL1's were ordered through the 1969 production year by various other high-performance Chevrolet dealerships. This ended the 1969 ZL1 Camaro production run at a total of 69 cars. Fred Gibb Chevrolet did manage to sell 13 of the original 50 that he ordered.

## Ratings:

427 V8 430bhp@5200rpm, 450lb-ft@4400rpm

## Installation:

1969 Chevrolet Camaros: 69

1969 Chevrolet Corvettes: 2

Total Production: 71