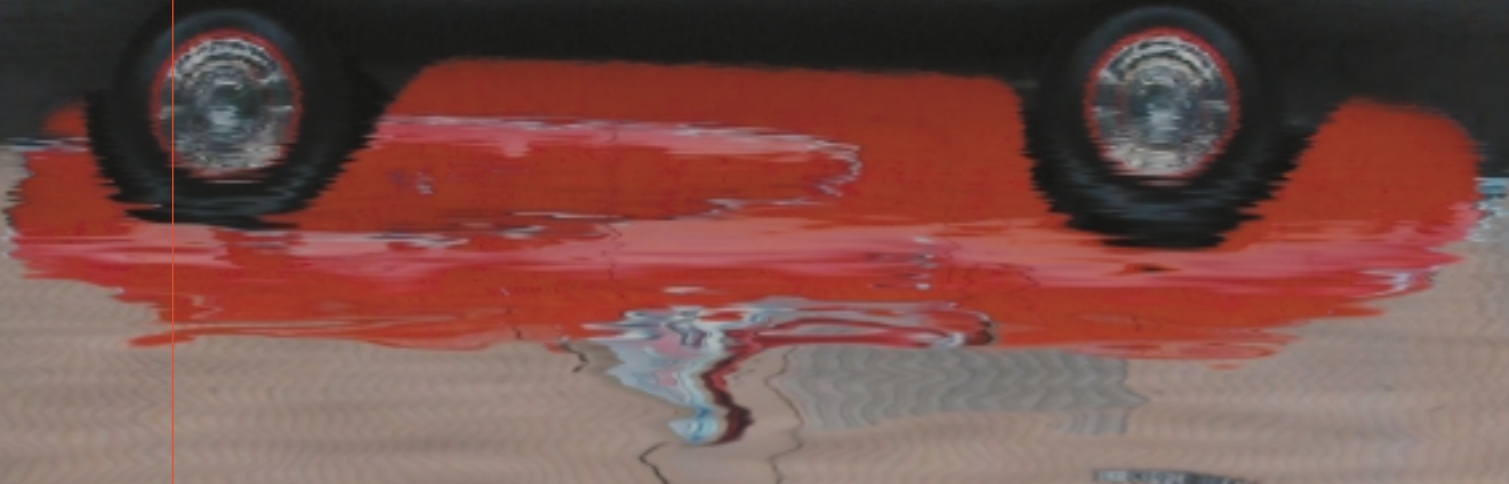
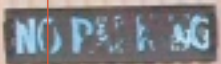




# FEATURE CAR



# LITTLE RED CORVETTE



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This Vette is proof positive that owning a classic vintage car doesn't mean having to settle for substandard sound.

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Story and Images: Richard Truesdell

The year 2004 marks the 50th Anniversary of a true American icon, Chevrolet's star-spangled Corvette. First-generation 1953–1962 Vettes, often referred to the C1 version, rarely, if ever are the home to much in the way of high performance car audio and mobile electronics. Here in the States one company, Custom Autosound, still sources and manufactures a wide selection of shaft-mount AM/FM/cassette receivers for vintage car owners and, in fact, claims to be the largest traditional shaft-mount manufacturer left in the world. Its units are typically the choice of owners who want modern sound but are loath to do anything that would require the cutting of their dashboard. Can't say that we blame them.

However, Dr Dennis Pagliano of the LA suburb of San Marino, California, is not just any Corvette enthusiast. He and his wife Connie own not one but two C1 Corvettes; his wife's stunning '62 roadster and his own radiant Venetian red '57 shown on these pages. What separates this duo from other

equally fine C1 Vettes is that both sport the rare fuel-injection set-up, the top of the Corvette performance pyramid at the time. Best of all, according to the good doctor, is that both are numbers matching installations, meaning that he's verified that both were authentic 'fuelies' when they rolled down the Vette production line in St Louis, Missouri. (The production code for fuel-injected, four-speed cars such as this is 579E.)

Pagliano and his wife are both music fans, having grown up at the dawn of the rock era and experienced the British Invasion of the swinging Sixties. Both wanted to enjoy their CD collection while cruising and knew that a typical low-powered audio system just wouldn't do. They figured out that there had to be a solution, one that would provide great sound and that could be fully integrated into the red Vette.

Pagliano purchased this Vette back in 1997. Before it became the recipient of this unique audio upgrade, it underwent a two-

year, frame-off, ground-up restoration performed by Corvette specialist Charlie Bacon of Running Springs, California. As the photos clearly illustrate, his talent speaks for itself.

### Cool Tunes

The stealth audio solution took a very unique form, building all of the electronic components into a modified Coca-Cola cooler, one that specialist shop Finish Line, in Monrovia, California, would restore, refinish and paint to match the exterior finish. The biggest difficulty encountered was that as the slots for the three components were cut into the case, its structural rigidity was reduced, necessitating the install team to reinforce the inside of the case.

As most current head-units feature infrared remote access, Finish Line installed a remote sensor behind the original speaker grille of the gun sight on the passenger side of the instrument panel. With this, Pagliano is able to access the



Alpine TDA-7563 cassette receiver—which in turn controls the matching AiNet CHA-S624 six-disc CD changer—with the head-unit's remote control.

The components, including an Alpine 80 watt MRV-T407 two/one-channel amplifier, are mounted to the backside of the cooler that faces the panel separating the convertible hood storage well from the trunk. For all intents and purposes the front side of the Cola-Cola cooler, which faces to the rear, looks like a traditional vintage Coca-Cola cooler except that its colour is not an exact match for its corporate colours; instead it matches the

Vette's flawless exterior. Aussies might say that this is one nice esky filled with ICE.

### Setting a Stealthy Stage

Since there's a lot of room up under the full metal dashboard, Pagliano discussed the options with Finish Line and, in keeping with the all-Alpine nature of the system, selected a set of Alpine SPS-4629 4 x 6-inch plate-style two-way separate speakers up front. Finish Line was able to fabricate two small fibreglass enclosures to fit under the dash, totally concealed, to house the speakers, which fire downward. These separates are an almost perfect match for





the 40-watt per channel output of the Alpine MRV-T407. While this is not the optimum arrangement as far as supreme sound quality is concerned, it is certainly better than any other non-invasive option, such as utilising two small speakers in the stock gun sight on the passenger side of the dash.

As we auditioned the sound of the system, it was apparent that some real bass below 100Hz would be a welcome addition. Adding a subwoofer, which would allow the filtering of low frequencies to the under-dash enclosed speakers certainly would open them up a bit, providing cleaner sound throughout their audible range.

### Top Less Bass

Over a couple of beers I discussed with Pagliano ways that the system could be taken to the next level. One option would be something like a powered Bazooka tube mounted in the convertible well—space permitting. Another option could be something removable, like a passive or powered NOS8 tube, mounted in the trunk.

Some SoCal (Southern Californian) street rodders have gone the passive route already, painting the first-generation NOS8 tubes to match the their vehicle and often enhanced with flames.

A better suggestion might be to find another cooler, and use it to house a small-box subwoofer. We also discussed replacing the MRV-T407 with a newer Alpine four/three/two-channel amplifier with two channels bridged to power whichever subwoofer is selected. With the emerging popularity of satellite radio here in the States, Pagliano also asked how this option could be added to this system.

If he wanted keep it all Alpine with his existing cassette receiver, the easiest way would be to add the XMA-T200RF package which includes the CRA-1667RF controller with the external TUA-T020XM tuner. The controller, which can be accessed via a second remote, could be semi-concealed when mounted up in the cabin, with its output fed into the system via an FM modulator.

A second solution would be to upgrade the existing TDA-7563 cassette receiver



with a brand new XM-capable Alpine receiver; the only problem being that Alpine does not yet offer an XM-capable cassette receiver. This means that if Pagliano wants to add XM, and control it from a head-unit, he will be forced to eliminate the cassette option and add a current CD receiver with XM capabilities.

## Rare Metal

While I'm sure that Corvettes are rare Down Under, from my vantage point it seems that Aussies have a healthy love for vintage iron too, and it would be easy to apply the same principles for a stealth, non-invasive install to your car when a purist, original approach is desired. The MGB featured in *InCar* #61 is just another approach to installing a high-performance system in your ancient classic. No matter which direction you take, owning a vintage car and achieving top-flight audio is not mutually exclusive.

It should be noted that in the Southern California region, which often seems awash in show-quality vintage Corvettes, Dr. Pagliano's '57 is in a class virtually of its own. In 2001, Super Chevy magazine awarded it Best of Show at the huge Pomona Fairgrounds show, right after its restoration was completed. This is an honour coveted by Corvette owners nationwide and signifies that his Little Red Corvette, his '57 'fuelie', is one of the best in the nation. The little cooler full of ICE in the rear makes it that much more special. 🎧

# IN CAR IN CAR IN CAR IN CAR INFO:



**Owner:** Dr. Dennis and Connie Pagliano

**Vehicle:** 1957 C1 Chevrolet Corvette

**Engine:** 283 cubic inch, 283 horsepower, fuel injected V8 (one of 1040 fuel injected cars built from total 1957 production of 6339 units)

**Drivetrain:** Factory 4-speed (one of 664 4-speed cars built from total 1957 production of 6339 units)

**Suspension:** Stock, independent front, live (solid) axle rear

**Wheels and Tyres:** 14 x 6-inch standard steel wheels with spinner-style hub caps and tyres.

**Bodywork:** Frame-off, ground-up restoration by Charlie Bacon, Running Springs, CA

**Interior:** Charlie Bacon and Finish Line, Monrovia, CA



## SYSTEM

**Source Unit:** Alpine TDA-7563 cassette receiver with CD changer controls

**Changer:** Alpine CHA-S624 AiNet 6-disc CD changer

**Front Stage:** Alpine SPS-4629 4 x 6 plate two-way component speakers

**Amplifier:** Alpine MRV-T407 80-watt 2/1-channel amplifier

**Installed By:** Finish Line, Monrovia, CA

**Credits:** Charlie Bacon, Running Springs, CA; Finish Line, Monrovia, CA

