

# 1969 Chevrolet Z/28 Camaro Cross Ram Sport Coupe

This is a \$175,000 car all day long. Throw in the \$25,000 the Cross Ram in the trunk will net on eBay, and I call it a bargain by at least \$50,000

by Colin Comer

Images: ACME Studios



Chassis: 124379L529646

Nineteen sixty nine was the final year for the first generation Camaro and for many collectors, the Z/28 is the ultimate derivation. It was fast, not only in a straight line, but also around corners. It drove like a real sports car, with a high-revving small block, and also came only with a four-speed and decent brakes.

A few enthusiasts noticed option code JL8, which put a set of Corvette disc brakes on all four corners of the Z/28. Chevy said 206 people ponied up the \$500.50 they charged for the JL8 option, but real numbers indicate only about 56 JL8 Camaros were actually delivered from the factory. The few that survive are the most desirable Z/28s built.

The car offered here is a rare factory-original JL8-equipped, fully documented, numbers-matching 1969 Chevrolet Camaro Z/28 Cross Ram Sport Coupe.

Including its original window sticker, dealer order form, and original factory shipper invoice, it was bought by auto writer Dave Emanuel and featured in several articles on Z/28 performance written by him in the 1970s. There are fourteen factory options on it, including 4.10 Positraction rear, rear deck spoiler, cockpit instrumentation, cowl induction hood, and M21 close-ratio four-speed, in addition to the Z/28 package and the JL8 disc brakes. Emanuel also ordered it in Le Mans Blue (the most desirable color among today's Camaro collectors), with the fold-down rear seat, center console, Endura front

bumper, sport steering wheel, AM radio, and deluxe interior trim.

It is fitted with the standard four-barrel Holley carburetor, but also comes with one of the rare and desirable Holley Cross Ram dual four-barrel intake manifolds, still in the original factory packaging. Carefully restored and in better than showroom condition, there is probably no better 1969 Z/28 anywhere. The engine and all-important components are numbers-matching and original to the car. It is not a "clone," a "replica," or a "tribute." It is a real, factory ordered JL8 Z/28 and is the best '69 Z/28 in the world.

*The SCM Analysis:* Including a 10% buyer's premium, this 1969 Z/28 sold for \$140,000 at the RM auction in Monterey, California, on August 16, 2006.

In 1967, Chevrolet introduced Regular Production Order (RPO) Z28 (the slash didn't come until 1968) to publicize the new Camaro, then racing in the SCCA Trans-Am series. The conservatively rated 290-hp, 302-ci small block V8 (basically a de-stroked 327) featured special cylinder heads, an aluminum intake manifold, a huge 750 CFM Holley four-barrel carb and specially selected components. It was an engine built to live at sustained high rpm.

Even the accessory drive pulleys were special deep-groove units to retain the fan belt at high engine speeds. With aftermarket or GM "over-the-counter" exhaust headers installed and a competent tune, the 302 made far

## DETAILS

Years produced: 1967–1969 (first generation)  
 Number produced: 1967—602; 1968—7,199; 1969—20,302  
 Original list price: (Z/28) \$3,184  
 SCM Valuation: \$35,000–\$55,000  
 Tune-up/major service: \$150  
 Distributor cap: \$15 at NAPA or \$11.98 at Wal Mart  
 Chassis #: Left side of dash visible through windshield, door VIN decal at rear edge  
 Engine #: On machined pad behind alternator in front of right head, and/or stamped in rough cast area of engine block near oil filter housing, left side  
 Club: www.worldwidecamaro.com  
 More: www.yenko.net  
 Alternatives: 1969 Pontiac Trans Am; 1970 AAR 'Cuda or Challenger T/A; 1969/70 Mustang Boss 302  
 Investment grade: B

## COMPS



1969 Chevrolet Camaro Z/28  
 Lot # S244  
 Condition: 1-  
 Sold at \$187,000  
 Russo and Steele, Monterey, CA,  
 8/18/2006  
 SCM ID# 42809



1969 Chevrolet Camaro Z/28  
 Lot # 431, 12437N635416  
 Condition: 3+  
 Sold at \$82,500  
 RM, Monterey, CA, 8/18/2006  
 SCM ID# 42799



*in excess of the 290-hp insurance-friendly rating. This engine, coupled with Z/28-specific parts such as power disc brakes, quick-ratio steering, big E70/15 tires on 7" wheels, and heavy duty suspension made it instantly competitive.*

*It might not be as lively in city driving as a torque-monster big block or even the SS 295-hp/350-ci engines, but with a good driver behind the wheel who wasn't afraid to twist that 302 up to the "sweet spot," there wasn't much out of Detroit that could run with a Z/28 on a curvy road.*

*In competition, the Z/28 made a name for itself in the Trans-Am Series with the likes of Mark Donohue, Roger Penske, Ed Leslie, Dick Gulstrand and others.*

*By 1969, Chevrolet had fine-tuned the Z/28 package and one could order a very purposeful Z right from the factory. The subject of this profile is one such car. With any Camaro, documentation is key and very few cars have it. While the validity of the proclaimed number of 56 cars leaving GM with the JL8 option is debatable, in the end it's rare to find a real factory JL8 car with documentation.*

*In addition to the (some say) 206 factory JL8 cars, many Zs were later fitted with the JL8 Service Package, a complete setup that was available over the counter from*



Chevrolet. The way to tell the difference is the factory-installed axle tube is tapered at the ends, while the service part has a larger diameter tube with no taper.

Factory JL8 cars also used 11 3/4" diameter front brake rotors, versus the standard 11" size. Today, the rear axle JL8 components are reasonably easy to find; it is the special JL8 front brakes that are nearly impossible to secure and are quite valuable.

A well known "real" car, our subject vehicle is without question an excellent factory JL8 Z/28. Owned for many years by Emanuel, it was later owned by a master fabricator who spends his days building hot rods for Roy Brizio, who's often compared talent-wise to Boyd Coddington or Chip Foose, but builds more traditional-looking cars. He performed the restoration over a roughly ten-year period, completing it around 2002, when he sold it to a friend of mine for the princely sum of \$40,000. My friend later sold the car to a dealer in 2003 for \$75,000, and presumably he sold it to the vendor who had it at RM. While the engine block had been decked by Emanuel many years ago, removing the engine codes and other numbers from the all-important block ID pad, this is well-documented and it has never been a question that this is the original motor. The paperwork is impressive and the history beyond reproach.

Restored to a very high yet not totally correct level, the restoration was still very pleasing and fresh appearing. I take some issue with RM's catalog heading describing this car as an original "Cross Ram" car,



## THIS IS HOW YOU CAN MAKE YOUR CAMARO A SPORTING PROPOSITION.

You can build your Camaro from an economical family car all the way to a spirited sportster with a name to match: Z/28. Read over our power team choices and pick the one that matches your idea of a car. We'll start with our strongest, Z/28 Camaro. This is our mean streak. A tough car to match, a hard car to top. Z/28 is a high-performance option package for the Camaro Sport Coupe. Includes a special 290-hp Turbo-Fire 302 V8, quick-ratio steering, special suspension, special white lettered tires, special rally striping, Z/28 emblems and more. Power disc brakes and 4-Speed transmission with Hurst floor-mounted shift are required. Not exactly everyone's idea of a family sedan, so Camaro offers a perfectly matched power team selection that's second to none. Here goes:

### POWER TRAINS

#### Standard Engines

**140-hp Turbo-Thrift 230 Six.** Get velvet-smooth performance and economy, all in one engine. Single-barrel carburetor, single exhaust system. Seven-main-bearing crankshaft. New quieter operating air cleaner.

**210-hp Turbo-Fire 327 V8.** This powerplant offers high responsiveness with regular-fuel economy. Two-barrel carburetor, new sturdy construction. Like all '69 Camaro engines, the 327 has a new accessory drive system and a more durable cooling fan design.

**Extra-Cost Engines**  
**155-hp Turbo-Thrift 250 Six.** Bigger than the standard six, but still provides the economy that you expect. Quieter air cleaner, single-barrel carburetor.

**255-hp Turbo-Fire 350 V8.** More pep than you would expect for the price, the 350 offers high-performance characteristics on regular-grade fuel. Four-barrel carburetor and sturdier construction.

**300-hp Turbo-Fire 360 V8.** For Camaro SS only. That, right there, tells you a lot. A performance standout all the way. Four-barrel carburetor, dual exhausts, new stronger construction, tougher cylinder blocks, improved fuel handling system and extra-firm four-bolt main bearing cap attachment.

**325-hp Turbo Jet 396 V8.** Camaro's "boss" engine. Unique "porcupine" cylinder heads for maximum engine breathing and combustion. Four-barrel carburetor and dual exhausts.

**Standard Transmission**  
**3-Speed fully synchronized.** Comes with all six-cylinder and standard V8 engines. Shift lever is column mounted unless floor-mount is specified.

**Extra-Cost Transmissions**  
**Special 3-Speed fully synchronized.** Available with 255-hp 350 V8 and Camaro SS engines only. A more durable design for '69. Floor-mounted shift in a snug rubber boot. Closer ratios than the Standard Unit to utilize bigger V8 output. Available with console.



as it was never Cross Ram-equipped prior to 2003 and still isn't today.

But there is no question that an original GM Cross Ram setup in the box is worth at least \$25,000, so that is value added to this transaction.

By the way, as a previous owner of cars equipped with Cross Ram induction, I strongly suggest that the best use for these parts is in the box, not on the car. Pushing the limits of over-carburetion with the stock 750 CFM Holley, these are ridiculous cars with two big Holley four-barrels installed. Chevrolet supplied a special camshaft to be installed in conjunction with the Cross Ram setup, a step often overlooked when these cars are retrofitted.

Furthermore, the stock hood will not work with a Cross Ram, necessitating a fiberglass replacement as GM supplied in period. It's another good reason that you couldn't get a Cross Ram installed from the factory. Drive a Z/28 so equipped on the street and you will soon see it's not user friendly.

So why was this car hammered sold so short of the low estimate of \$200,000–\$250,000? This was one of the few bargains that slipped through the cracks in Monterey this year. When displayed at the auction, none of the original paperwork—or even copies of it—was available.

With the huge number of made-up JL8 and/or “Cross Ram” cars at any auction, this car assumed the role of just another “maybe” real Z/28. Had the consignor made a bigger effort to display the virtues of this car, he might have realized substantially more.

Is it the “Best '69 Z/28 in the World”? Perhaps not, but it is a really good one. Is Le Mans Blue the “most desirable color”? No, but it isn't dark green. Perhaps the catalog scared bidders suspicious of “best in the world” claims.

How cheap was this car? Even without the Cross Ram in the trunk, this is a \$175,000 car all day long. Now throw in the \$25,000 or better the Cross Ram will net on eBay, and I call this car an outright bargain by at least \$50,000. Hopefully the new owner will keep the engine over 6,000 rpm and enjoy his new Trans-Am racer for the street. I know at least one former owner who is disappointed he wasn't at the auction. ♦

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COLIN COMER is founder and president of Colin's Classic Automobiles and an avid collector and enthusiast.



**We've got a mean streak.**

**Z/28 Camaro.**

The '69 Z/28: So serious it goes by its code name. Cubic Inches: 302. Standard equipment: mechanical lifters, high-performance cam and an aluminum intake manifold under a monster Holley 4-barrel. Underneath: multi-leaf rear springs and heavy-duty shocks. New for '69 are special white lettered tires on 15 x 7-inch-wide wheels and a Hurst shifter for the 4-speed. To complete the setup, just add the new 'vette-type 4-wheel power disc brakes. By now you know the mean streak isn't just painted on—it's built in. One more thing. People are bound to ask what the Z stands for. Tell them "Zap!" **Puttin' you first, keeps us first.**