



Corvette Grand Sport

Photos by Michael Cooney

2011 Corvette Grand Sport

Forecast: Rolling Thunder with Lightning Strikes

Nailing the throttle in first shoves you back in your seat and catapults you forward so fast you barely have time to blink before reaching the 6500 rpm redline and pushing in the clutch while pulling the lever back into second. Release



clutch, floor the throttle again, and as second gear engages, a nice loud “chirp” from the wide, sticky rear tires lets you know you’re putting down pavement-wrinkling power. There ya go... lightning just struck again.

According to Motor Trend, 0–60 comes up in a blistering 3.9 seconds—two-tenths quicker than the Audi R8 exotic reviewed in the last issue. Covering the quarter mile in 12.2 seconds, the Grand Sport with 6-speed stick is one seriously quick car.

The Grand Sport is an amalgamation of parts from different Corvettes to

form a new variant. Now in its second year (not counting the 1996 version) the Grand Sport takes front and rear fascias from the wider Z06, with unique wider fenders and rear quarter panels to cover the Z06’s wider tires, and mounts them on a standard LS3-engine Corvette. Bigger Z06 brakes and anti-roll bars are added, along with the (former) Z51 model’s stiffer spring rates and closer-ratio manual transmission (or a lower axle ratio with the 6-speed automatic).

Manual transmission Grand Sport engines also get the Z06 and ZR1 dry sump oiling system, which means they will also be hand-assembled by a single technician.

All this comes together to create a meaner looking Vette at lower cost. Make no mistake, though, the Grand Sport’s base engine with 430 horsepower (436 with this car’s optional X-pipe exhaust) and 428 lb-ft of torque should be enough to make nearly everyone happy. If that doesn’t satisfy, you can always spring for more: 505 horsepower with the Z06, and 638 with the ZR1.

Driving the Grand Sport is viscerally rewarding. Its ride is quite stiff, but never harsh. Around town, the low rumble reminds you that fierce acceleration is at the ready.

Attacking tightly winding roads, those wide Goodyears (275s in front, 325s in back) tenaciously grip the pavement as you get slammed from side to side. The seat’s adjustable side bolsters hold you firmly in place, though, letting you concentrate on the nicely weighted and responsive steering to help carve the corner. On the straights, well, the piercing snarl as you approach redline in each gear should put a smile on your face. And those massive brakes—14-inch rotors in front, 13.4 in back—are immensely powerful.

Inside there’s the nicest Corvette interior I’ve seen. An optional package included leather on the dash and upper door panels. With 5,500 miles on the odometer, nary a rattle could be heard. Seat heaters with perforated leather was a welcome addition too.

With a base of \$54,790 this Grand Sport totaled \$69,920 including destination fees. It is EPA-rated at



16-city mpg, 26-highway mpg. I averaged 18.1 mpg. Using cruise control at 70 mph, it gets around 30 mpg because the engine is loafing along at just 1700 rpm. Nice.

The Grand Sport borrows some of the best components from various Corvettes to come up with a real winner. For those serious about sports cars with extremely high capabilities, consider a Grand Sport—targa roof coupe, or convertible.

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