



Tired of Key Twisting

TIME TO POWER UP THOSE 30-YEAR-OLD DOOR LOCKS

BY TOM RUSSO

If your 1978-82 Corvette is a daily driver equipped with RPO AU3 power door locks that haven't worked like you believe they should...we've got tips that will restore them to their original functionality.

Power door locks were first introduced in 1978, offering buyers more convenience, and over 100,000 buyers picked up this option by the end of the 1982 production year. Over 90 percent of Corvettes were equipped with this feature, and today it is a standard option. But after 25-30 years, their efficiency gets sluggish, especially if it's a daily driver.

Power door locks are taken for granted in today's high-tech vehicles, but when introduced in the late '70s, protection from the elements was minimal. A vapor barrier (sheet of plastic) kept moisture from penetrating the door panel, but did little to keep water from entering the door interior and watering the door lock linkage, actuators and electrical components. After thirty years, it's not

surprising those door locks get cranky and require some TLC.

Our donor vehicle is a 1978 Pace Car that had served as a daily driver. It sports 56,000 miles, was neglected and had been subjected to the elements. Therefore, it was a perfect candidate for this power door lock repair and restoration project. The obvious problem was that the doors would not lock and the door key required much force to lock the door, to the point of fear the key would break off. The power door lock switch would only lock the door...the switch failed to unlock. Your power door locks may not be in as bad a shape as those of our pace car, but we show how the lock systems are interrelated and how best to restore the functionality of RPO AU3 power door locks to their full potential.

ASSESSMENT IS SIMPLE: The doors lock or they don't. By spending a few extra moments, you can get a feel for what is causing the doors to not lock. For those new to the late-model Corvette, an overview of normal operations is included to assess how best to tackle this project. But it is a DIY project – one that is quite rewarding, but does require patience.

A Corvette can be locked in one of three ways: manually from inside by pressing the door lock knob into the armrest, using the door key that works the lock mechanism from outside and the power door switch, located just below the door handle. The interior door handle unlatches the door, but once the doors are locked, will not unlatch the door. In the same fashion, the exterior door handle will open the door only when the door is not locked.

The door switch is easy to diagnose... it locks (observe the door knobs) or it doesn't! When properly functioning,

