

Technical Notes — June '09' - Universal Home Remote System



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This month's article is another look at Corvette technical wizardry. A few months ago I discussed the RKE system in the C6. That system has had some minor changes/upgrades in the five years of the C6 including different zone programming and a different key fob (remote). However the topic of June's article is an accessory that underwent a major change in the fall of 2006, the Universal Home Remote system.

First, let's look at the system. Universal home remote control transmitters are available in C6 Corvettes with the 3LT or 4LT option package (2LZ & 3LZ in the Z06 or 3ZR in the ZR1). Those folks with 2005 – early 2007 Corvettes have the HomeLink system. Starting with vehicles produced in September 2006, GM replaced the HomeLink Universal Home Remote system with one from Lear Corporation, called the Lear Car2U. Unfortunately for me, my car was built in October 2006 and this new system caused me a great deal of consternation. I had to make numerous phone calls to Chevrolet, Lear and Johnson Controls (HomeLink) to eventually get my issue resolved.

I should note that if you have a 1LT or 2LT option package in your C6 (or similar base options in the Z06 and ZR1), you could retrofit this option since it is a stand-alone system. You have two ways to go. First, you could buy a HomeLink 60-HOMLVM1 Transceiver and a bezel available in one of four interior colors. Or, your second option is to order a new driver's side visor from GM and have it installed. In the latter case you will receive the Lear Ca2U system. In fact, those owners with early model C6s whose HomeLink unit fails will not be able to replace it with a HomeLink transmitter, since GM has only visors with the Lear Car2U systems in stock. HomeLink visors are no longer available.



The HomeLink Universal Home Remote found on 2005 to early 2007 Corvettes. This unit has a single LED light contained within an imprint of a small house. The light illuminates when the signal is sent from any of the three buttons or when any of the unit's buttons are being programmed.



The Lear Car2U Universal Home Remote found on late 2007 and newer Corvettes. This unit has three separate round LED lights which illuminate when the respective button is used to send a signal or when the unit's individual buttons are being programmed.

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So, what are the issues with the newer model universal home remote system? First of all, as is usually the case, the biggest problem is the operator. Both systems require a bit of technical expertise to get working. My research has shown that many complaints against these two systems are often invalid. Either the solution is “read the instructions” or “if you have zero technical expertise, pay somebody to do it for you.” Second, there are some older garage door openers (pre-1982) that are not compatible with either universal remote (e.g. some very old Genie systems). Nevertheless, even if you are a technical wizard with a modern garage door opener, you still may not get the Lear Car2U system to operate your garage door when someone with a Homelink system can get it working in a flash. I programmed my Jeep with HomeLink to operate my openers without a problem, but the Car2U in my newer Corvette was a dismal failure. The main reason: This new system is simply not as “universal” as HomeLink.

While the Car2U system will work with many manufacturers’ garage door openers, it is not as compatible as the HomeLink system. In the fall of 2007, a Corvette owner could compare the respective “supported garage door opener” pages on the respective web sites and clearly see that the Lear system did not support as many openers as the HomeLink unit. Additionally, if a Corvette owner did an Internet search of these two systems, they could find a plethora of GM vehicle forums, such as those of Corvette, Cadillac, Chevy Trucks, etc. full of complaints about the new GM universal home remote system’s inability to operate some garage door openers. From what I saw at that time, GM’s move to the new system was not received well.

Lear changed their web site in the last few years. There is no longer a page on the web site showing the logos of the manufacturers whose door openers are supported. Nowadays, an owner must enter his remote control model number on a special page of the Lear web site to find out if Car2U will operate their home’s garage door opener. To do this article, I had to look up dozens of model numbers on numerous manufacturer web sites to compile the limited list above. Another annoying problem with the Lear site is that you must have the exact model number off the back of the unit to get an answer. For example, the Genie GIC-1, GIC-2 and GIC-3 are very popular remotes for Genie garage door openers. They are sold at dozens of stores using that Genie designation, but the Lear web site will not recognize any of those model numbers as a valid input. Fortunately, those remotes are compatible with Lear Car2U.

Here’s an approximate list of compatible garage door openers to the two systems. Remember in the list I am providing below, the same manufacturer could make many different brands of garage door openers or remotes. For example, Craftsman, Sears, and Liftmaster all use the same remotes. Both Corvette Universal Home Remote systems will work on: Stanley, Genie, Chamberlain, Allstar, Allister, Pulsar, Heddolf, Raynor, Skylink, Liftmaster, Sears, Craftsman, Digi-Code, and Overhead Door. However, the following openers will not work using the Lear Car2U visor: Marantec (models M3-2312, M1-1312V, etc), Linear (models MCT-1, MCT-2, MCT-3, MCT-11, etc.), Moore-o-matic (model D22A, etc.) and Martin. Is this a consequential problem for Corvette owners? Well it is in my opinion since Linear alone controls approximately 20% of the US garage door opener market.

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If you have a Lear Car2U system in your Corvette and your garage door opener cannot be programmed, you have four choices:

1. Use the remote supplied with your opener.
2. Buy and install the HomeLink transceiver unit listed above. Remember this unit is third party. It is not available from GM.
3. Buy a new garage door opener that is compatible with your Car2U unit
4. Buy the Lear Car2U conversion unit made by Wayne Dalton.

Although a no cost fix, choice one seems ridiculous to me: A \$55,000 car that cannot open your garage door with its “Universal Home Remote” that was included in the nearly \$5,000 LT3 option package. Choices 2 and 3 are also ludicrous for they are over a \$200 expense. Choice 4 is a far less expensive option, but will run you $\$24.95 + \$10.50 \text{ S\&H} + \$2.13 \text{ tax} = \37.58 for a conversion module. Worse yet, if you have a three-car garage with two doors, you’re out roughly \$75 to get your Universal Remote system working. I must add that I had a choice 5 available to me in 2007. Meet me at Woody’s one night and I’ll tell you what I did to solve my problem. Unfortunately, my solution is probably not available nowadays.

Installing the conversion module, which is shown here has other issues. If you have an home burglar alarm system, you may find that your alarm company has already used the remaining open plug in your overhead garage duplex outlet to power the alarm siren. They generally need a continuously powered, non-GFI outlet often near the garage attic for the siren transformer and your overhead garage door outlet often fits the bill perfectly. However, that arrangement presents a bit of a problem. In these overhead outlets it is unsafe or inappropriate to install heavy objects, like siren transformers or this conversion module without using the cover plate screw to hold such units in place. Notice the little tab at the top of the picture of the conversion module. So, if both outlets of your duplex are populated with the garage door opener power cord and the siren power transformer, you may have to reroute the siren transformer to another location or replace the duplex with a quad outlet to get a useable socket. But wait, you were technically challenged! So in order to get your expensive sports car to let you in your garage, you may have to hire an electrician to boot.



Finally, if you chose to make your garage door functionally using the conversion module, you must be aware of the security problem associated with this method. The Wayne Dalton Conversion Module works by putting the contacts in parallel with the manual open/close button on your wall control switch. It does not work with the circuitry of the opener’s remote function. Thus, it bypasses the “vacation” or “disable remote” switch found on most garage door opener’s wall switch. If you decide to disable the remote function of your garage door while out of town for a few weeks, you must disconnect the conversion module’s wire from the opener (i.e. get up on the ladder). You lose the convenience of the one-switch disabling function of your opener.