

**CRITIC
AT
THE
SHOW**
continued

"Kieft shows a very interesting flat-four engine with separate Amal carburetors for each cylinder."

found in the article elsewhere which deals with the high-performance cars. The same applies to the striking Austin-Healey 100 with the special body which achieved nearly 200 m.p.h. at Utah. A look into the plastic bubble-covered cockpit of this car, with its rectangular steering wheel and central-boss "Fire" switch, is enough to give the claustrophobe the horrors, and he doffs his hat to the driver. Such ordeals give a different meaning to Shakespeare's "bubble reputation." The rest of the Healeys, as always, impress for their graceful line.

Last in the corner is a newcomer, the Swallow Doretta, which uses the 2-litre Triumph engine built by the Standard company—an engine with a very good reputation, incidentally. This car has obvious affinities with the Triumph and the leather padding round the cockpit edges is to be commended for the

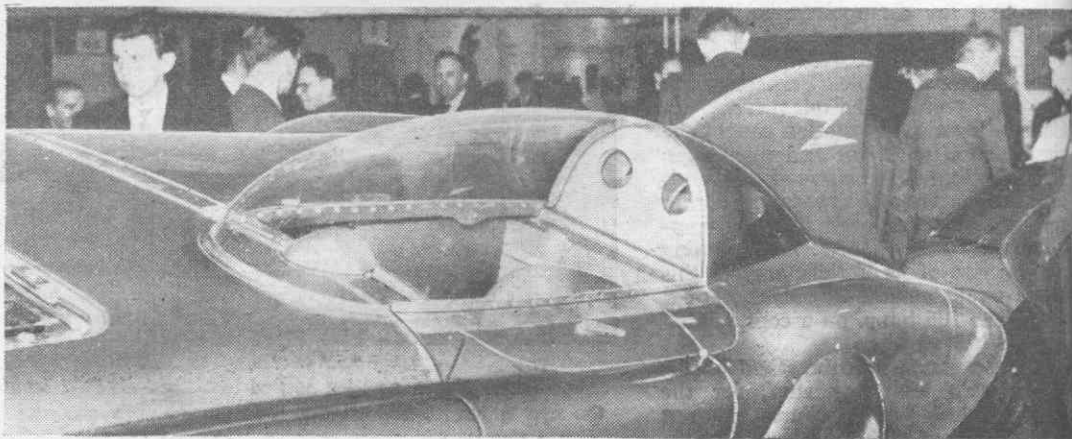
avoidance of hard knocks. Fairly hard knocks could, it seems, be taken by the bumpers, for their mounting brackets go back to bolt on to the side members of the chassis. The display chassis is a good one, representative of several sports types using tubes and rectangular principles.

To continue the Show investigation into this side of the main hall is to go to an extreme, for several American makes are located here. From the trim, medium-powered, very high-performance British sports cars the visitor passes to the slightly bogus world of the Oldsmobile Starfire and the Cadillac Eldorado coupés, both incredibly long and both carried out in blue. These cars look tremendously fast and sporting, but it is impossible to avoid the feeling that it is the speed of the styling department and the sportiness of the teen-age adult rather than

the product of pit counters and wind tunnels. Impressive, though; intimidating, rather. At least to the poor Briton who has hardly room on his roads to swing a 750 Renault, and certainly not enough in his cities.

Whither America? is still the question that occurs to the motoring observer. The Studebaker is positively vexing to those British visitors who so much admired last year's styling. This was clean, restrained, even beautiful. It owed much of its beauty to a simple shallow front end, sloping forward to almost a knife-edge. The effect was slender, elegant. Now someone at South Bend, Indiana, has wrapped the front end in chromium, square feet of it, and the effect is of a solitary gold tooth the size of a tombstone in a region where all else is gum; only the rear of the Studebaker can now be contemplated with equanimity. If this is

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"Sales" pandering to Joe Q. Public, then the I.Q. of Joe Q. is abysmal. Even the sides have been bedizened with chromium gew-gaws. The car, for this observer at least, is redeemed only by the incredibly delicate little switches for lights and so forth that are grouped round the steering column; they are like golf tees, and one can imagine the pleasure of handling them.

Hudson Italia

Hudson's Italia, a Superleggera design by Carrozzeria Touring of Milan, helps to distract attention from the other Hudson models, which could never be described as beautiful, however practical, or however many other virtues these cars possess. Criticism of such appearance is harsh because it is a staring failure; attempt has been made to produce a beautiful thing; it has failed, but the claim remains. Such criticisms cannot be made of cars like the Willys Jeep, the Land-Rover and station wagons in general. They are successful in their aim, which is a functional one. Anyway, the Italia has a few interesting features. The red rubber-covered fascia is one, and the beading round screen and back window has a certain nineteenth-century charm. The body suffers from an odd-looking styling failure at the after-end of the front wing orifice, where the outline does not seem to know quite what to do, but the intakes above the head lamps are functional in that they direct air down on to the tyres and wheels. But how soon do such positively acting scoops nullify the streamlining of the vehicle as a whole? Scoops exist at the back also. The seats, which are aircraft type, and the safety straps, can be fully commended as making high-speed sense.

Unwilling Iconoclast

One hates to be disparaging about transatlantic cars because the charge is so easily levelled against this country that it is jealous of America's rise to world pre-eminence. But the fact remains that, for the most part, there is a tastelessness about contemporary U.S.A. styling that borders on the vulgar, and it is nice to be able to say that it is mitigated by the better behaviour of American cars on the road than used to be the case. Their ease of control is remarkable, aided by power steering and automatic transmission, their handling on corners much improved over pre-war years, and their sogginess now under anti-roll bar control. Under the bonnet the engineering is sound. But even there objection must be raised. The power race over the Atlantic is plainly silly, for 220 b.h.p. in unskilled hands is using a sledge hammer to crack walnuts, with disastrous results on fingers and furniture; moreover, there is a tendency for American sales staffs to claim that age-old principles have just been discovered in Detroit. All of which having been got off the British and admittedly conservative

"Fairly hard knocks could, it seems, be taken by the bumpers": Doretta.

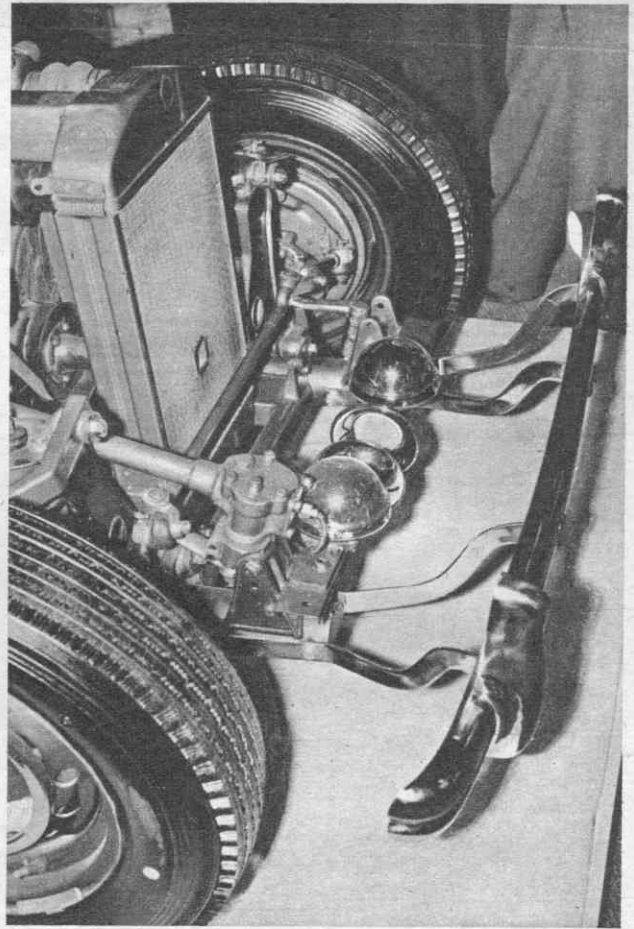
chest, it is nice to record that the rockery with fountains on the Dodge and de Soto stand is quite lovely.

The Continentals come off better. Everybody loves Juliet, if the name of that delicious blue Alfa Romeo can be anglicized; if not, *tutti amano Giulietta*. This is a fast car even with an engine of only 1,290 c.c., from which the Milan firm extracts 65 b.h.p. at the high revs of 6,000. There are twin overhead camshafts, and no owner is likely to mind the characteristic Alfa thresh that always comes from their twin o.h.c. gear, for it is one of the most satisfying motoring noises of the era. But there are other things that are satisfying about this car; the interior is a driver's interior, and the corded seats add to the air of quality that an Alfa always has. The lamp arrangement on Alfa Romeos is exceptionally neat; head lamps, side and auxiliary lamps are well laid out in harmony with the frontal grilles. The roll-top seat backs on the 1900 Super Sprint models look luxurious.

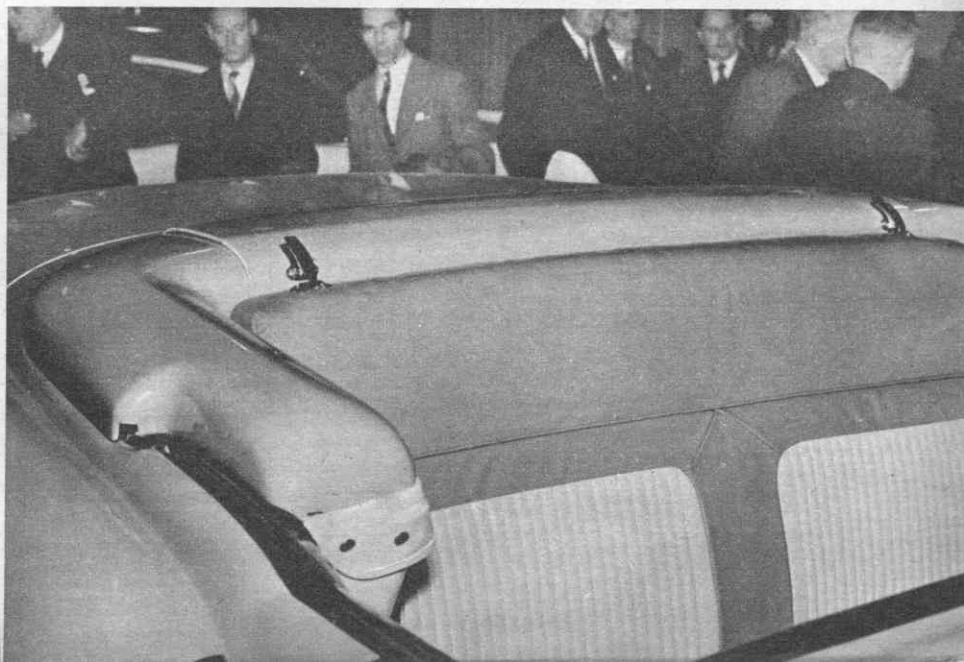
A most noticeable tendency is for the important instruments nowadays to be grouped in a subsidiary, and usually cowed, panel directly in front of the driver. The Fiat "full light" saloon

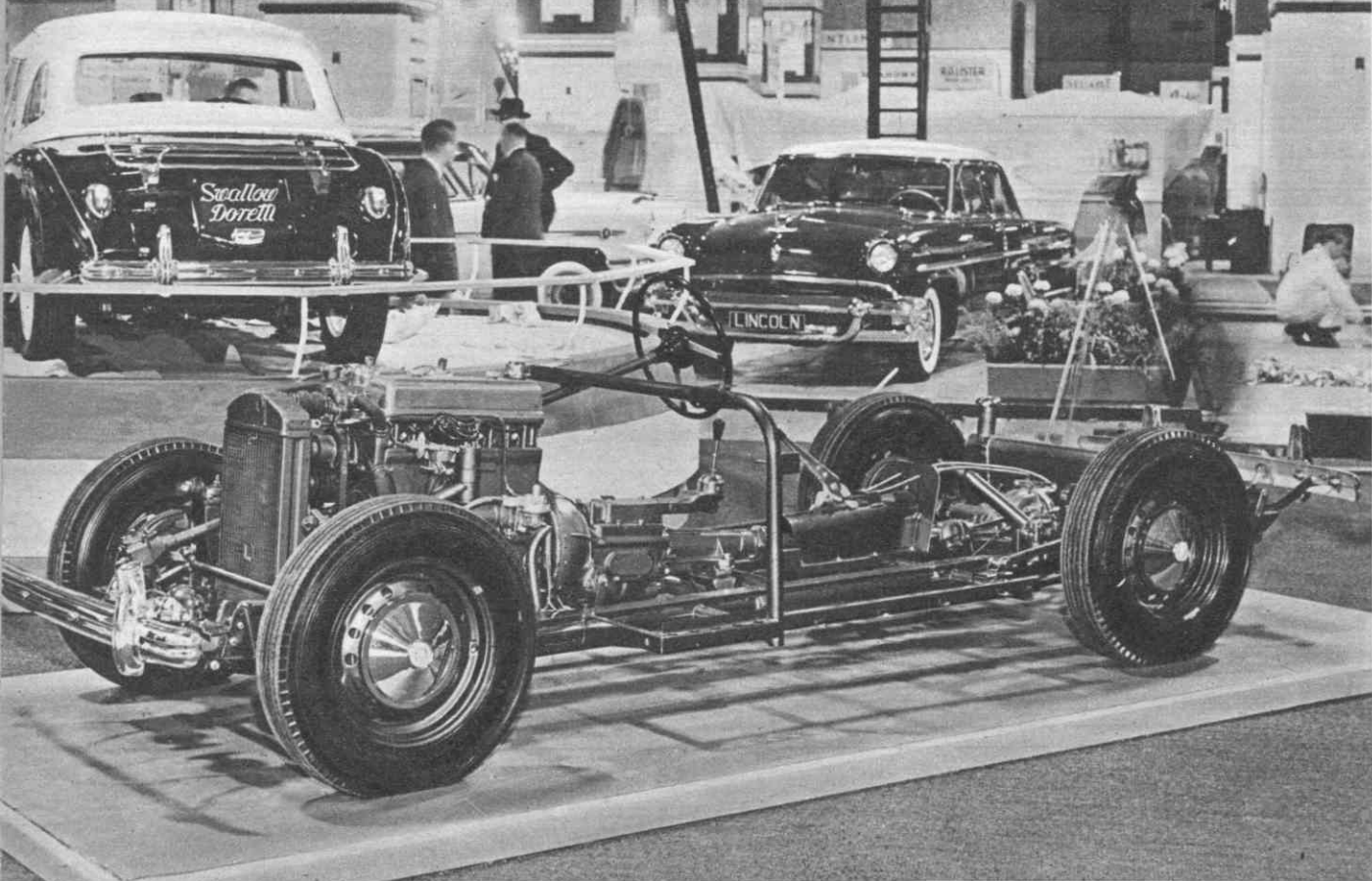
has them so installed, and it has, also, the neatest little parking lights just forward of the front door closing line. On a slab-sided saloon this makes them visible both fore and aft and it is a pity that the law cannot be amended in this country to legalize such lights. Anyway, those on the Fiat are about the size of strawberries, and, looked at from the rear, they are a very good imitation of them. Similar parking lights exist above the semaphore arms of the Peugeot's turn indicators. The choice of cream for the wheels of the Fiats seems very happy, for they seem to harmonize with any body colour. The Peugeot's fascia is plain, almost to the point of dullness, almost everything being in grey, switch knobs included. But there would be no tiresome reflex-

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"The Cadillac Eldorado": neat hood casing.





"The display chassis is a good one, representative of several sports types": Doretti.

tions from, or highlights on, such a facia as this, whereas the Pontiac's, for instance, must prove almost literally a nightmare.

Renewed acquaintance with the Lancia Aurelia Gran Turismo on a Show stand confirms an impression held for some years: that the shape of this car grows on the observer. When the Gran Turismo first appeared it had a faintly brutal, intimidating air. This slowly mellowed through a rather attractive malevolence—that of a woman who deliberately uses a high heel as a weapon on the dance floor—until it is now a quite friendly looking road companion. A cynic might say that one can get used to anything, but this year the apt retort is, "Studebaker."

The small points of appearance are important. Lagondas use a beautiful ruby red for the centre of their wheel hub caps, and the spot of colour does quite a lot for the car; Vauxhall have admirable hub plates on the Cresta model, with the gryphon as a centre-piece; unfortunately, the gryphon seems to be just large enough to look gross. The Americans continue their heraldry, usually, encased in plastic, fly-in-amber style. Most of such devices from America are so admirable that it becomes increasingly difficult to understand how other bloomers of styling are so easily made. One is forced to recall the movie moguls who estimate that the

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average age of the cinema audience is eleven and cater for it. Perhaps the car makers do, too?

The Vauxhall Cresta display is a good one, the doors opening and closing as the car revolves on its turntable, and the luggage locker opening to reveal

plenty of space for all normal purposes. The abnormal purpose might be said to be the Show models (feminine) who risk their nylons clambering into the locker just to show how big it is, though the observer is left at a loss as to why a locker should be held to be

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