

The Robb Report COLLECTION™

Sports, Luxury and Classic Cars

August 2004

Automobiles d'Elegance

COLLECTION CLASSICS: Bugatti, Daimler, Duesenberg, Talbot-Lago & Voisin

DRIVER'S NOTEBOOK NEW & OLD: Ginetta and 1965 Bentley Flying Spur

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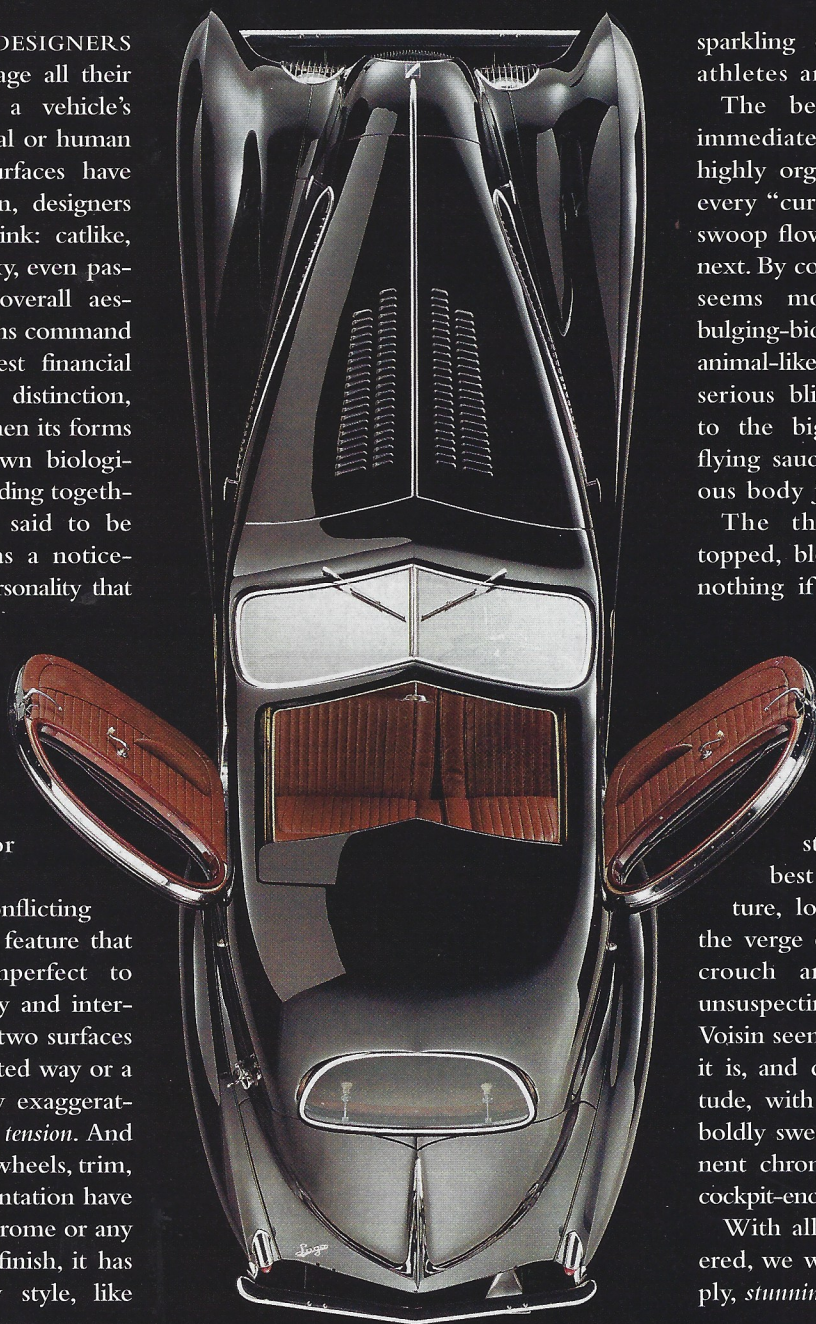
The Language of Fine Design

Exceptional Coachwork from the 1930s.

GARY WITZENBURG ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT WILLIAMSON

MOTORCAR DESIGNERS have a language all their own. When a vehicle's design mimics animal or human forms, when its surfaces have musclelike definition, designers call it *muscular*. Think: catlike, agile, lithe, wiry, sexy, even passionate. When its overall aesthetic and proportions command attention and suggest financial success and social distinction, they call it *noble*. When its forms appear to have grown biologically, its surfaces blending together seamlessly, it is said to be *organic*. When it has a noticeable demeanor, a personality that could be, say, playful, aggressive, or intimidating, it has *attitude*. When its lines and shapes imply motion, when it looks as if it is ready to launch or leap, it has *gesture*.

A vehicle with conflicting themes or a design feature that is purposefully imperfect to generate controversy and interest—perhaps when two surfaces meet in an unexpected way or a detail is deliberately exaggerated—is said to have *tension*. And when a car's grille, wheels, trim, badges, and ornamentation have particular flare in chrome or any bright, scintillating finish, it has *bling*. Think showy style, like



sparkling oversize jewelry on athletes and rap stars.

The beautiful Talbot-Lago immediately strikes one as highly organic. Every line and every “curvilinear” sweep and swoop flows smoothly into the next. By comparison, the Bugatti seems more muscular, with bulging-biceps fender forms and animal-like grace. And there is serious bling drawing the eye to the big chrome bumpers, flying saucer wheels, and copious body jewelry.

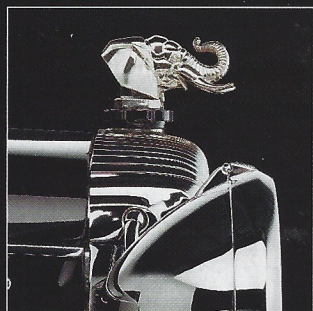
The thick-bodied, chop-topped, block-long Daimler is nothing if not noble. It looks exactly as if it were designed to transport royalty. Both noble and bling also apply to the massively striking Duesenberg roadster, but the word that best describes it is gesture, looking absolutely on the verge of springing from its crouch and attacking some unsuspecting common car. The Voisin seems to look larger than it is, and displays a lot of attitude, with its oversize mascot, boldly sweeping fenders, prominent chrome fender struts, and cockpit-encompassing paint stripe.

With all of this duly considered, we would call them, simply, *stunning*.

The Talbot-Lago's teardrop coachwork does not have a bad angle, and this view from above is among its best.

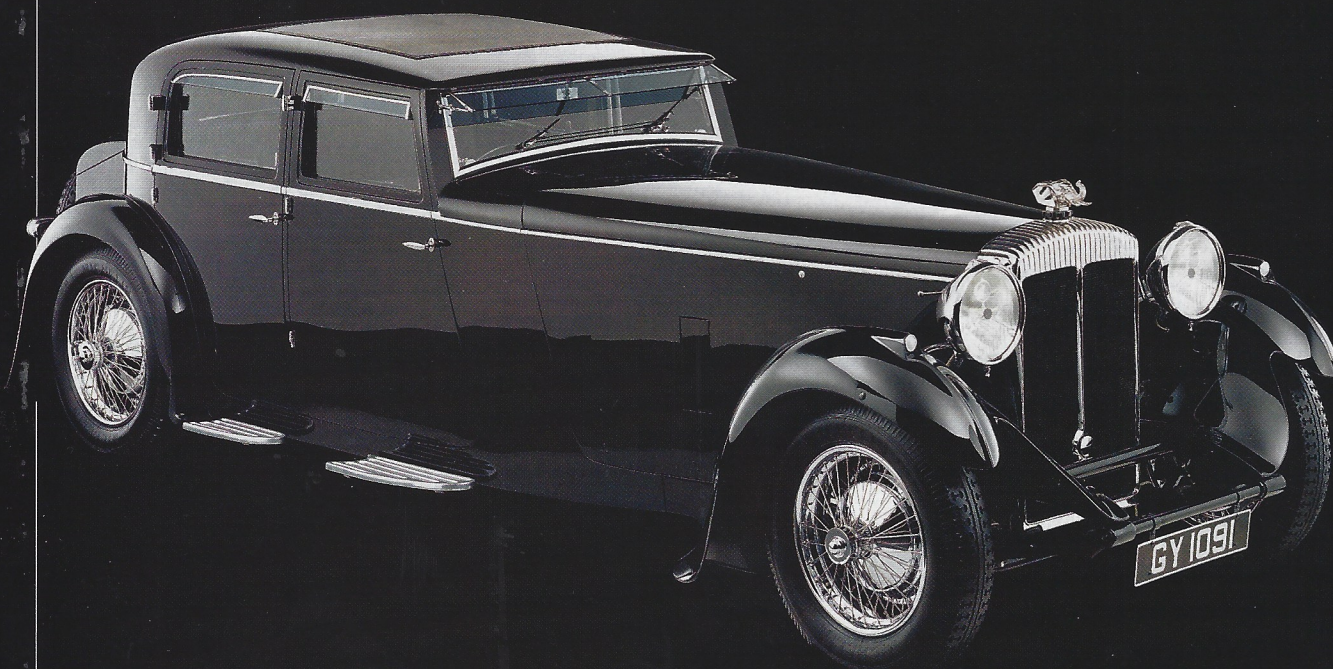
1932 Daimler

Double Six Martin Walter Sport Saloon

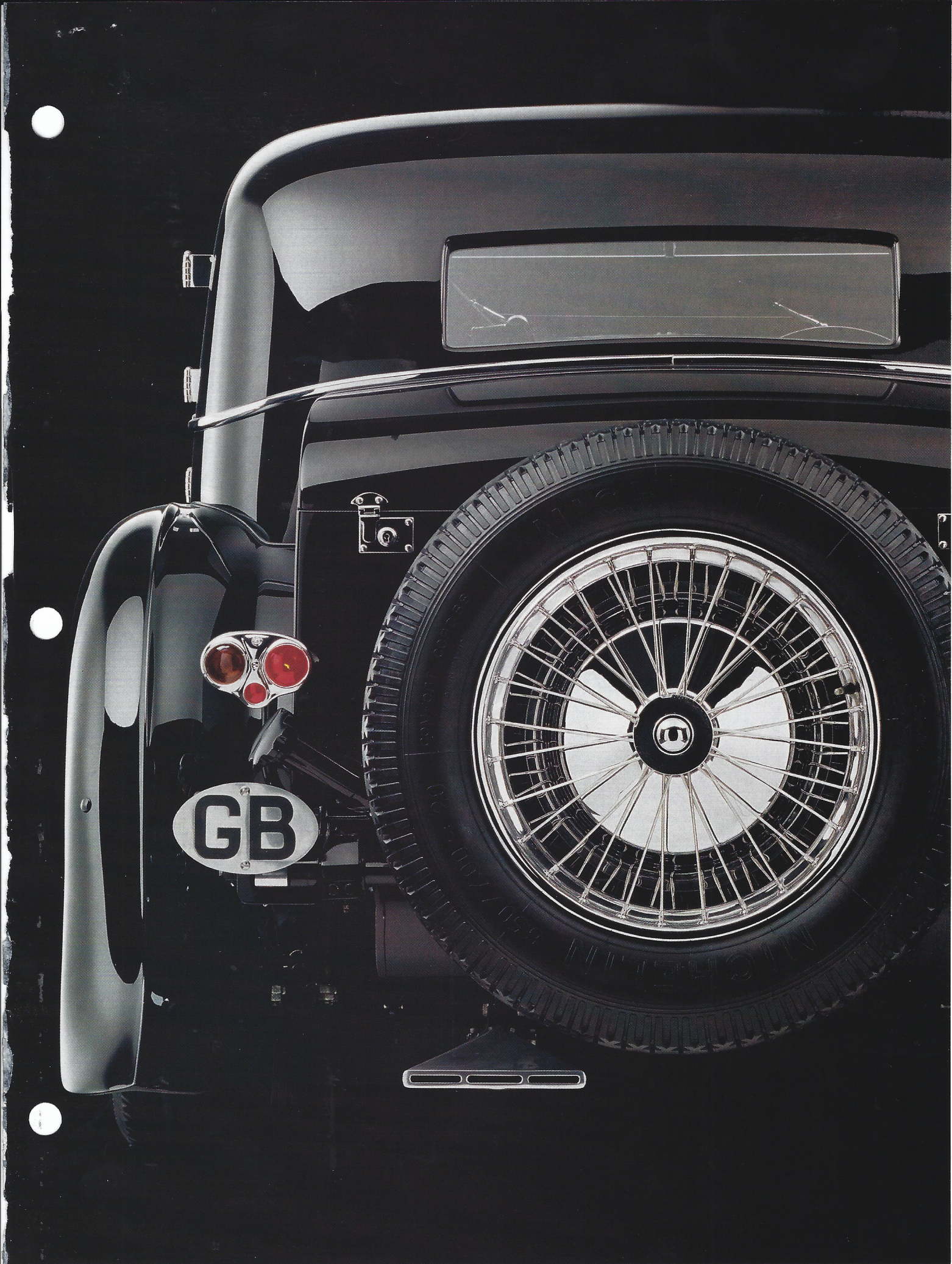


GLAMOROUS BRITISH FILM STAR Anna Neagle was apparently a woman who got what she wanted, since this magnificent Double Six was commissioned by her husband, a Mr. Webber, and built by Martin Walter especially for her. Of 26 Double Sixes built, mostly for royalty over a 10-year period, this is among the longest—its hood stretches 8 feet, and its 159½-inch wheelbase is a couple inches short

of a Bugatti Royale's. The model designation derives from the Daimler V-12 engine, a marriage of two incredibly quiet sleeve-valve sixes with a combined displacement of 7.1 liters. Neagle's long, low, black H.R. Owens-designed sports saloon won England's Eastbourne Concours d'Elegance when new in 1932 and (following a five-year restoration) Best of Show at Pebble Beach in 1999.



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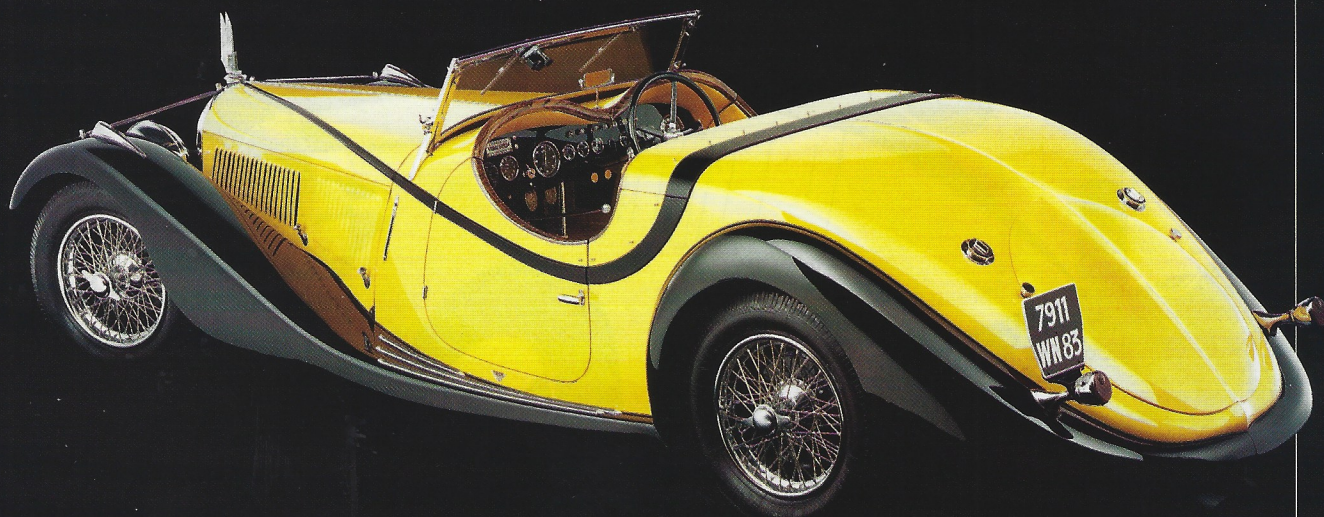




1934 Voisin

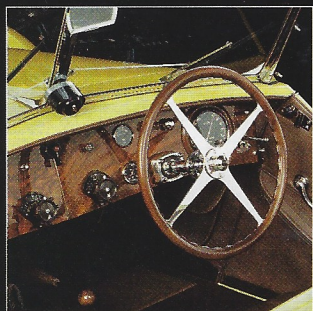
C27 Grand Sport Cabriolet

BROTHERS GABRIEL AND CHARLES VOISIN established Les Frères Voisin in 1906 to design and manufacture aircraft. Charles was killed in an auto crash in 1912, and Gabriel converted production to Avions Voisin automobiles following World War I. Given his passion for aviation, his cars tended toward the light, fast, quiet, comfortable, aerodynamic, and technologically advanced. The Depression of the early 1930s led to the factory's sale and eventual bankruptcy, but this rare Figoni-designed Cabriolet emerged out of Gabriel's valiant efforts to revive his business under court supervision with a new range of expensive, custom-built C27 models. Interestingly, its 3-liter twin-carb six drives through a 4-speed transmission with two gears controlled conventionally by a floor shifter and two controlled electronically on the steering wheel. Alas, the effort finally failed in 1939.



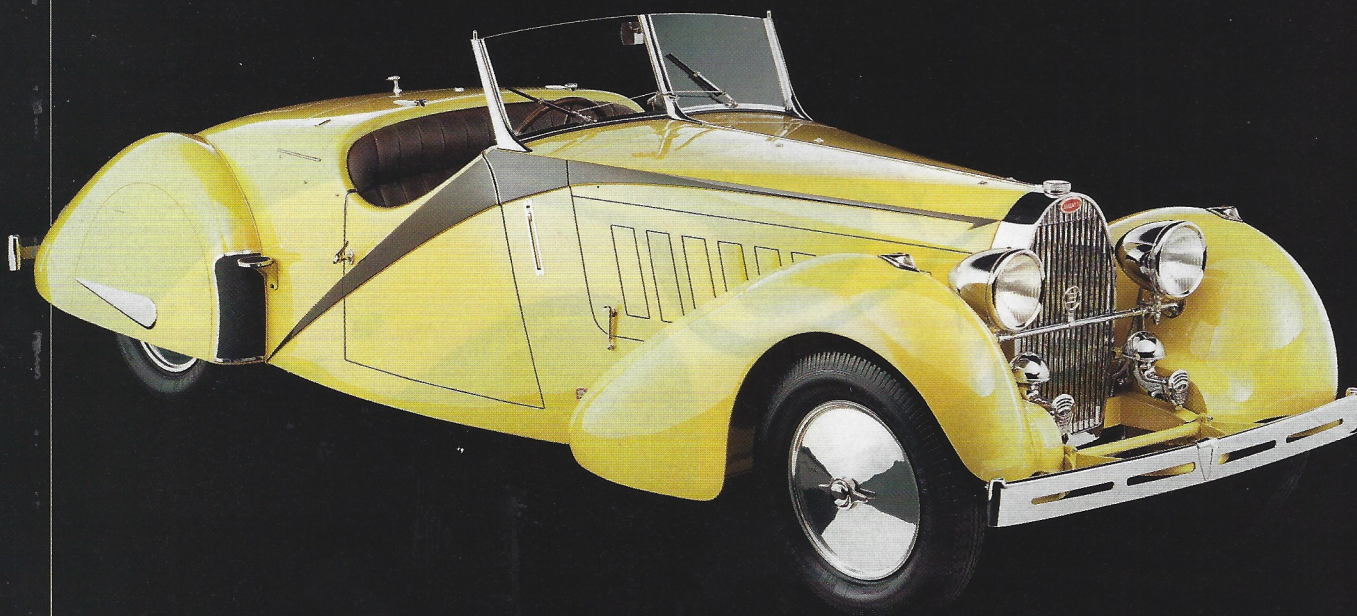
1934 Bugatti

Type 57 Roadster



MR. AELLEN of the famous Golden Pheasant Restaurant in Fribourg fell hard for a flashy Bugatti roadster by Swiss coachbuilder Fritz Ramseier & Cie, best known as Carrosserie Worblaufen, at the March 1935 Geneva motor show. The sister car he ordered, chassis #57260, was the only other one built, and one of a dozen Bugattis on competition-derived Type 57 Grand Raids chassis

(precursor to the Type 57S) intended for lightweight two-seat coachwork. It was completed that May 15, just in time for the Montreux, Switzerland, Concours d'Elegance, where it won the Grand Prix d'Honneur as Best of Show. Sadly, it sat in a barn in the Belfort region of France for nearly 50 years before being discovered and restored to its original colors and details in time for Pebble Beach 2003.



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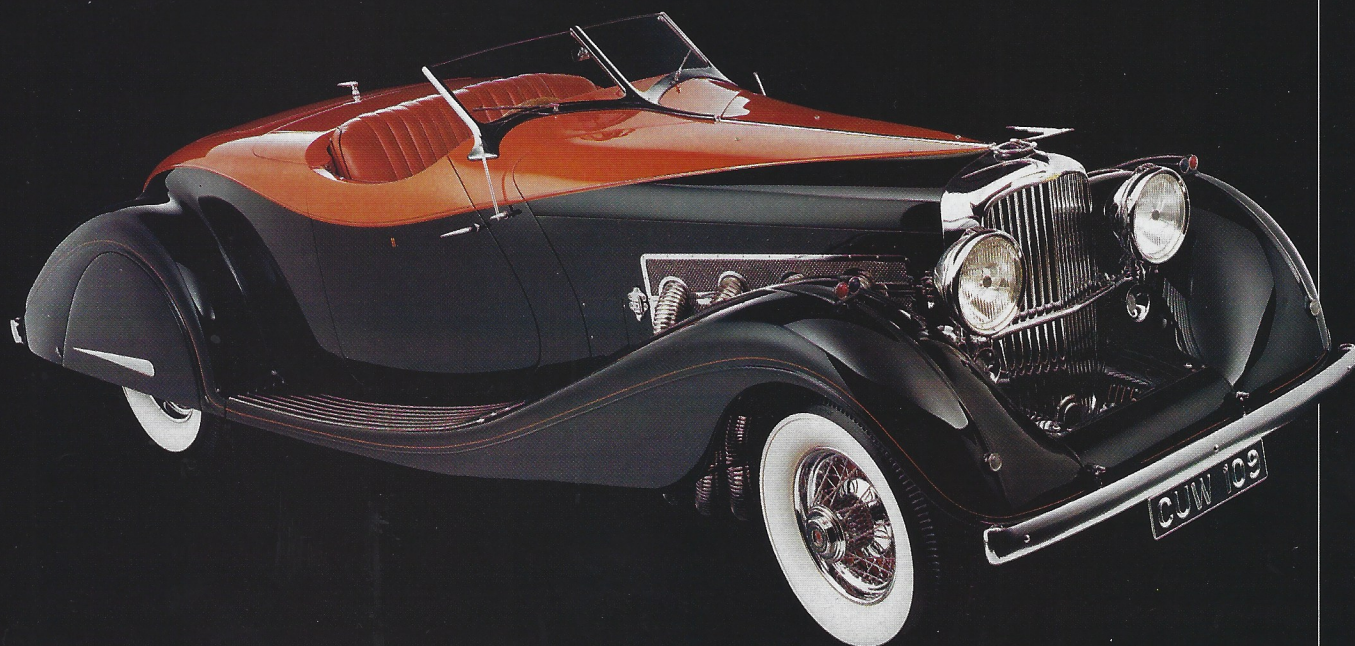
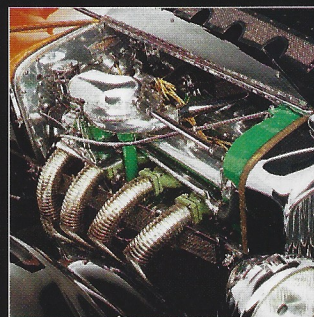




1935 Duesenberg

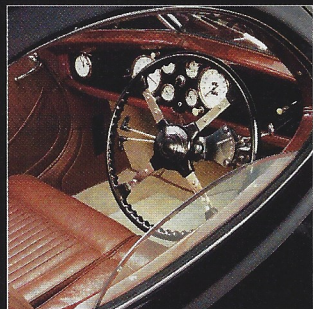
SJ Gurney Nutting Roadster

IN 1935, India's car-crazy Maharajah Holkar ordered several new automobiles to enhance his substantial collection, one of which was this striking long-wheelbase Duesey SJ roadster. Stretching 6 full yards bumper to bumper and visually lowered by its clever orange-over-black two-tone paint, it was designed by Scotsman A. F. McNeil and built by Britain's Gurney Nutting on what was said to be the last Duesenberg chassis (#2614). It was then—for reasons lost to history—registered CUW109 in England, shipped to New York, and driven 3,000 miles to California to complete its circuitous journey to India via an ocean freighter. Nearly three decades later, it was returned to the States by the late collector Bill Brewster and sent to Jim Hoe's shop in Connecticut for a ground-up restoration, which was completed in 1964.



1938 Talbot-Lago

TI50C SS



DUKE PHILIPPE DE MASSA ordered Talbot-Lago chassis #90117 in the fall of 1938 with the idea of enjoying it in competition as well as on the road. Its extra-low and long Figoni et Falaschi aluminum body sported steel fenders, a sunroof, a unique rear window that opened for cockpit ventilation, and a special racing hood cutout on its side for cooling, in addition to the standard louvered hood.

He and co-driver Norbert Mahe were running a solid ninth, 88 laps into the 1939 24 Hours of Le Mans, before a spin forced them out. After World War II, the car resided with successive owners in East Germany, in West Germany, and in a Netherlands museum before a collector brought it to San Diego in 1996, where its restoration was completed in 2000. ☐



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