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Design: Wheels of Fortune

Nation may quarrel with nation, but automotively, at least, the international era has arrived. At the seventh annual International Automobile Show, which opened in Manhattan's Coliseum last week, it was hard to tell the European from the American entries. The Europeans are going Detroit while Detroit is going continental. And the mode for both is sportif.

Speed Line Chrome. The bucket seat is everywhere; Cadillac's special Eldorado achieves the ultimate in conspicuous consumption of space by putting buckets in the back, thereby sacrificing an extra passenger for the bucket's thronelike comfort. Racing-style stick shifts sprout from car floors, even when they are really only disguised automatic transmission levers. Tachometers stare from dashboards to dazzle the Sunday driver with precious information as to how many revolutions per minute his motor is delivering. And where car nomenclature once connoted carriage-trade—victoria, brougham, landau—the new names and models now smack of high compression—Monza, Le Mans, J-TR, Spyder, Grand Prix.

Ferrari has returned the bow with a brand-new, 400-h.p. model called Super-America. But it is not in name only that the European designers are turning toward Detroit.

The bare, spare autos of postwar Europe, which sparked the American revolution in favor of the compact car, are growing big for their boots, as the British might say. Citroën and Renault, Fiat and Hillman, BMW and the Japanese Datsun are adding new inches, new horsepower, and new luxury of interior appointment and exterior trim. Even the Mercedes-Benz 300 SL is tarted up with the same kind of speed-line chrome trim that is the one jarring note on the beautiful, continental-style new Buick Riviera.

Putting on Weight. With European small cars getting bigger and U.S. compacts de-compacting, the big cars seem to have nothing to do but put on weight too. The luxurious French Facel-Vega, for instance, has added a four-door model (both side doors open dramatically away from each other

without a center post) that lacks the sprung elegance of the smaller two-door style. Even Rolls-Royce boasts that the new Silver Cloud III (with its four Detroit-style headlights) is roomier than ever.

Under the hood, the news is negative. The turbine engine, touted at last year's show as the wave of the future in power plants, is nowhere to be seen this year; its pickup and power problems seem a long way from solution. Studebaker's prototype fuel cell is still not ready for public exhibition. But on the standard engines, the car manufacturers have boosted horsepower on nearly every model.

Some notable premieres unveiled among the 500-odd models of more than 85 makes from ten countries:

> **QUANTUM SAAB** has a fiber-glass body developed by engineers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, using an IBM computer to determine the best body design for road competition, low center of gravity, and good cornering capabilities. It is powered by Saab's 850 GT engine, which has won some top competitions in Europe and the U.S.

> **DAIMLER LIMOUSINE** marks the introduction to U.S. distribution of one of the illustrious names in the annals of luxury automobiles. A Daimler was the first motorcar owned by a King of England (Edward VII), and was known for decades as "the car of royalty." Designed primarily to be chauffeur-driven, it has an electrically controlled glass partition between front and rear seats, and the doors open to a full 90° angle, revealing a concealed step for easy entrance and exit. A 4½-liter V-8 engine provides a top speed of 114 m.p.h. The price: \$11,600.

> **HINO CONTESSA 900 SPRINT** is the latest entry in what may be a drive by the Japanese to parallel their postwar success in the camera field. The Italian-designed Contessa is a small, stylish two-seater with a 45-h.p. motor and a price that is right: about \$2,300.

> **MORGAN 4/4 MARK V ROADSTER** is a new version of a classic classic. It will delight the old-fashioned sports-car lover who deplors the passing of the old look and feel of riding a torpedo with wheels attached. Price: \$2,500.

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