



Although this car may look like an Italian model, it was really born in Detroit. That's because it's a . . .

Foreign-ized Olds



Alterations of front includes frenched headlights, hand made grille and protruding oval shell, and Merc bumper.

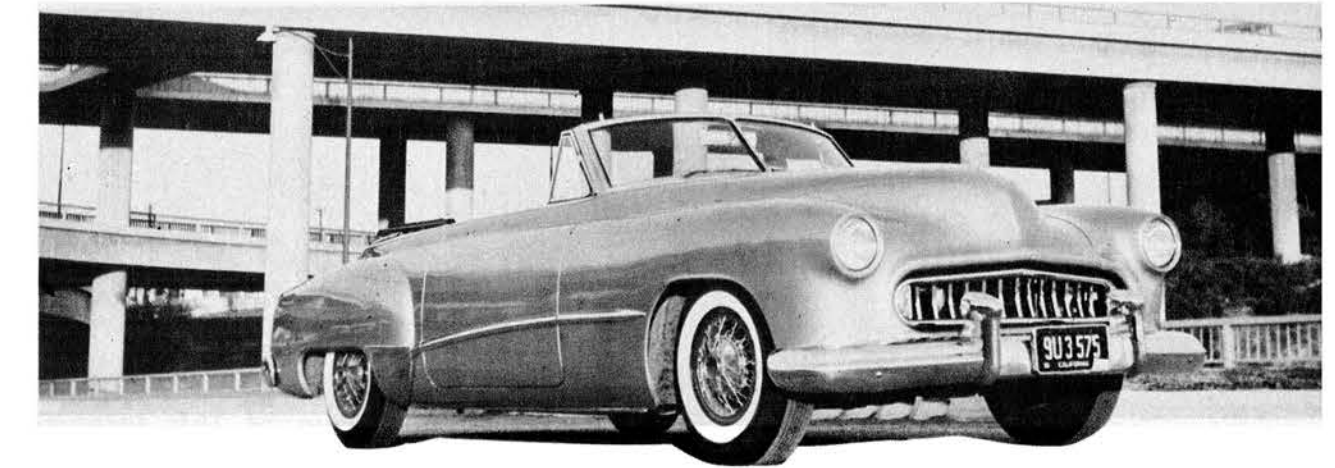
Proving the fact that minor alterations can make a great difference in overall appearance, this Oldsmobile convertible resembles one of the foreign built jobs.



HOP UP, June, 1953

WHEN Doctor Robert La Briola decided that he wanted a sports car, he made up his mind that if he ever got one it wasn't going to be a foreign job. He liked the qualities of the American cars but he also liked the foreign styling trends. He thought the matter over for a long time, then he finally decided that perhaps something could be made of his 1949 Oldsmobile "98" convertible. The natural thing to do, in that case, was to take the car to several of the custom shops in the Los Angeles area and see what the various restylers had to say.

The doctor definitely did not want an ordinary run of the mill custom car; one that he could not see out of, or enter steep driveways with; rather, he wanted a purely functional automobile that was the size of an American car, but with the appearance of an Italian



creation. He finally wound up at the Barris Kustom Shop in Lynwood, Calif., where he approached Sam and George Barris with his ideas. The brothers jumped at the chance to carry out the design along foreign lines. George, in particular, was highly interested since he had only recently returned from Europe where he had accumulated many foreign ideas that could be incorporated into, say, an Oldsmobile.

Doctor La Briola left the car in the Barris' care and when he returned to pick it up several weeks later, he found that the brothers had, indeed, rendered a beautiful design on his car.

The greatest alteration was the new frontal treatment given the car. The original Oldsmobile grille was removed completely and discarded. Next, a length of two and a half inch seamless tubing was bent to shape and welded to the hood, front fenders, and gravel deflector, then the resulting gaps were leaded over. This resulted in a protruding, oval grille opening that gave the front of the car a "scoop" look.

The next process was to rework the headlight units so they could be removed from under the fenders, then "french" them in. Late model Ford headlight rims were used so they would protrude beyond the sealbeam units. This serves to give the fenders a longer appearance when viewed from the side adding to the apparent increase in the length of the car.

To replace the original grille, a more modernistic grille was formed from odds and ends found around the Barris shop. Incorporated into each end of the new grille are the original parking lights that were formerly located below the headlights. The completed grille was set into its opening in the car and mounted in rubber. To protect the car from the front, a 1951 Mercury front bumper was added.

To further enhance the appearance of the car, the unnecessary ornamentation was removed from the hood and the holes filled in.

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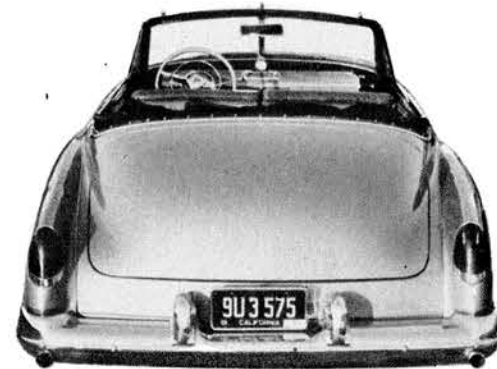
Moving around to the side of the Olds, the doorhandles were removed and the resulting holes filled. Electric push buttons were installed to operate the handle-less doors, and the lower corners of the doors themselves were rounded, to add to the overall appearance of the car. Under the rocker panel (the section of the body below the doors) a one half inch steel skid rail was installed to protect the body and frame from the damage that could result from driving the car over a hazardous road.

The backs of the rear fenders, completely recontoured, no longer taper down to almost a point as they had previously. Instead, they have been extended two inches rearward and, at the same time, raised four inches higher. When the car is viewed from the side, the new rear fender shape conforms to the general lines of the car much better than it had before. Inverted Frazer taillights were fitted to the fenders to carry out the theme that "a fender should end in a taillight." Because the car is of the "98" series, the rear fenders were removable from the body instead of being a part of the quarter panels as in the "88" series. The doctor, being practical minded, insisted that the rear fenders remain removable, and so they are. The only alteration along these lines was to remove the original black fender welting and install chromed beading.

The convertible top was left the stock height rather than being cut down as seems to be the fad lately. The top was recovered in black and the interior was reupholstered by Hilborn.

To further emphasize the fact that the Oldsmobile was to resemble a sports car, the fender skirts were left off, the car was lowered slightly and chromed spoke wheel discs were added. A beautiful lacquer job of Lime Gold Green was given the car and this, together with the side chrome strip from a 1951 Buick, make the Olds stand alone whenever it is compared to its drab brethren.

Mild lowering job, wire wheel hub caps and lack of skirts make car look foreign.



Frazer taillights set in extreme ends of reworked fenders blend with lines.

Close up view of extended portion of rear fender show the inset taillight.

