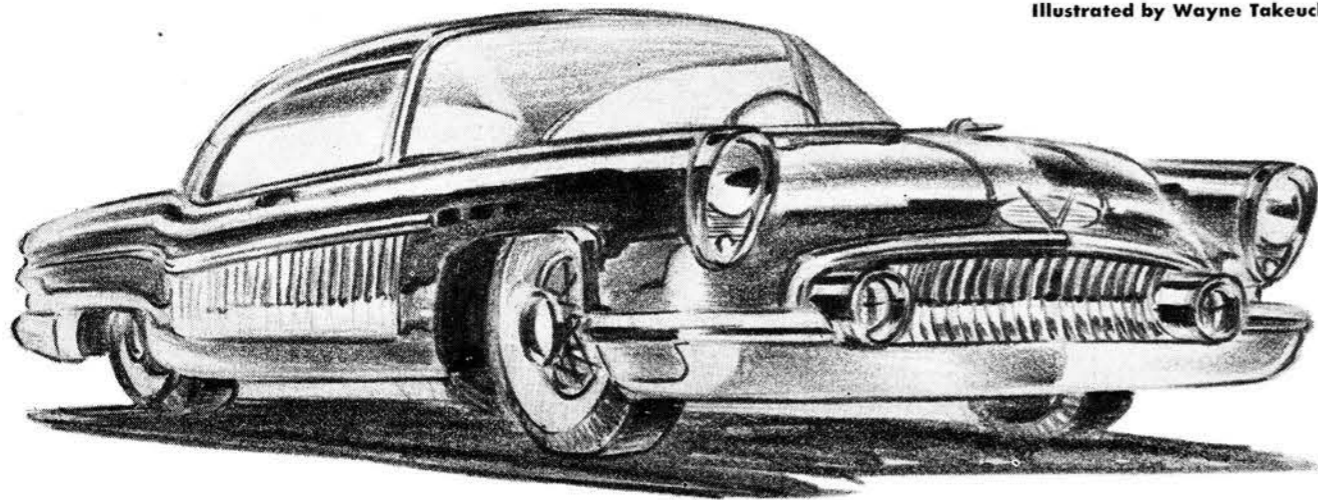


Text by Eugene Jaderquist  
Illustrated by Wayne Takeuchi



## '54 STYLING PREDICTIONS

**T**H**ERE** will be styling changes—many of them—in U.S. stock cars in 1954, but none of them will add up to anything as stunning as the Studebaker surprise in 1953. The rest of the industry is waiting to see what happens to Studebaker sales during the coming year before committing itself to anything quite so drastic in the way of retooling. In the meantime changes will be modest and evolutionary, rather than extremely revolutionary.

Cadillac, long the pace-setter stylewise, will lead the parade of new bodies across the nation's showroom floors. The general proportions of the car will not be greatly disturbed, unless a "step-down" type of design (in which the body floor is dropped below the top of the frame) is adopted, as

some of the rumors indicate. The all-important fins, now more thoroughly a Cadillac trademark than the crowned crest, are to be continued with only minor reworking. There will be a wrap-around windshield, similar to the one now on the El Dorado, and, according to some, a built-in sun visor. This last item should bring a short laugh from the old-timers, who will remember well that the built-in sun visor was once standard equipment on many stock automobiles a few years ago.

Scheduled for the same new body is the Buick Roadmaster, but Buick treatment will necessarily be different. The Buick Special, and the small Oldsmobiles, may get a new body of their own, different from the big GM body, but similar in

*ARTIST'S conception (above) of what the all new 1954 Buick body will look like with some radical styling revisions*

many respects, one of them perhaps being the wrap-around windshield. In addition to the new styling, the small Buick is also set to receive its new engine, a scaled-down version of the present Super and Roadmaster V-8s.

Of the independents, Nash and Hudson are the only firms planning any extensive changes in body design. The Hudson is long overdue for its new skin and this is a logical year to shed the old one. Chief among the changes is said to be the discarding of the old, sloping rear deck for the more salable "bustle" back. Rather extensive revamping is expected on the front of the Jet, since Hudson executives are reportedly unhappy with its appearance.

Nash won't do anything drastic to its senior lines, but a four-door Rambler will be introduced. Also, the new baby Nash may make it in time for this year's parties. Nothing is yet known about the exact shape of the little one, but it has a British body so it might turn out to be the most unusual surprise package in '54.

Packard is one of the big question marks for 1954, though the majority of the guessers think the old line company will hold off on style changes for at least another year, contenting itself with nothing more sensational than a few superficial alterations this year.

The rest of the industry is almost definitely committed to keeping present bodies. Chrysler just had a new body, so can't afford the switch. Ford, Lincoln and Mercury have one more year to sell their familiar shells, but the Lincoln might very

well spend extra money this year to finance a major face lift. Cadillac's new body will not be easy competition.

Almost everybody expects a new series of experimental and pseudo-sports bodies to appear on the scene during 1954, just as they did this year. Whether any of them find their way into production or not will depend on the success of the Chevrolet Corvette and public interest at the motor shows across the country.

### ENGINES: 1954

While styling changes will be conservative, engines will become more extravagant. The horsepower race is still being run. Ford's new ohv V-8, which has already been reported as definite by much of the automotive press, will be the first of the new engines to appear in the Big Three's small cars. Plymouth, of which little has been heard, might have the biggest surprise of all under its '54 face lift but this is not considered to be any better than a possibility. Chevrolet won't have a V-8 until the '55 models appear.

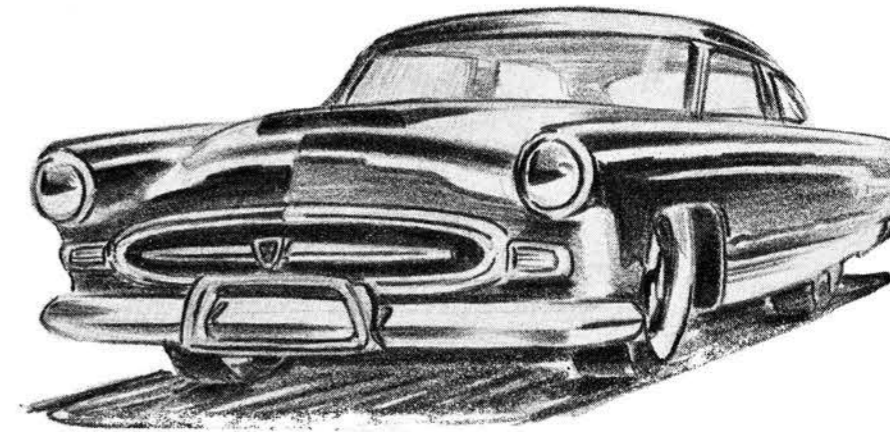
Ford's move is significant because it moves the horsepower race down to the so-called "low-price" cars. The Ford line will include one powerhouse car—the new V-8—and one economy car—the ohv Six. Given a choice between jackrabbit performance and real economy, the motorist will probably choose performance, as he has consistently done in the past. Chevrolet may have increased horsepower if the engineers can find a way to boost the output of the basic Six without spending too many dollars on re-tooling.

Three other V-8s are also reliably reported as ready—Pontiac, Mercury and Buick Special. All three will probably run around 140-160 bhp, with the higher figure applying to the Buick. Neither Pontiac nor Buick are expected to introduce any engine innovations in the ohv V-8 design, but the Ford and Merc will be new developments, though based on the existing power plants of Lincoln and other makers.

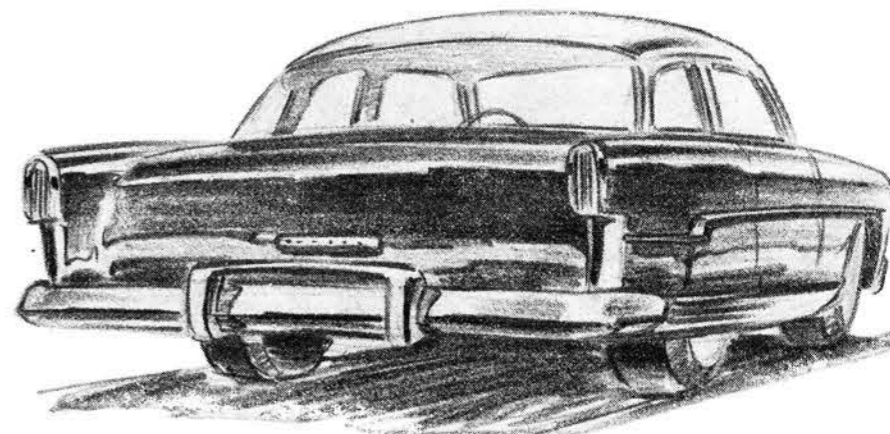
There is little doubt that the big engines will get bigger. Exact horsepower ratings of Chrysler, Cadillac and Lincoln are not being handed out yet, probably because each maker is uncertain of what the other is doing. Nobody would be too surprised if one of the three moved up to the 250 horsepower mark. Some rumors say the top rating of the '54 season will be closer to 265, another figure that will titillate the old-timers since it will mark the first car since 1937 to match the output of the unsupercharged J Duesenberg. If Packard has its V-8 ready the horsepower race will be accelerated greatly in the next few years. Looks like the only thing that will stop the frantic boosting of power is a truce between the big-car manufacturers.

One beneficial aspect of the horsepower race is the engine developments that can probably be expected. It is no secret that the Cadillac is almost at the limit of its

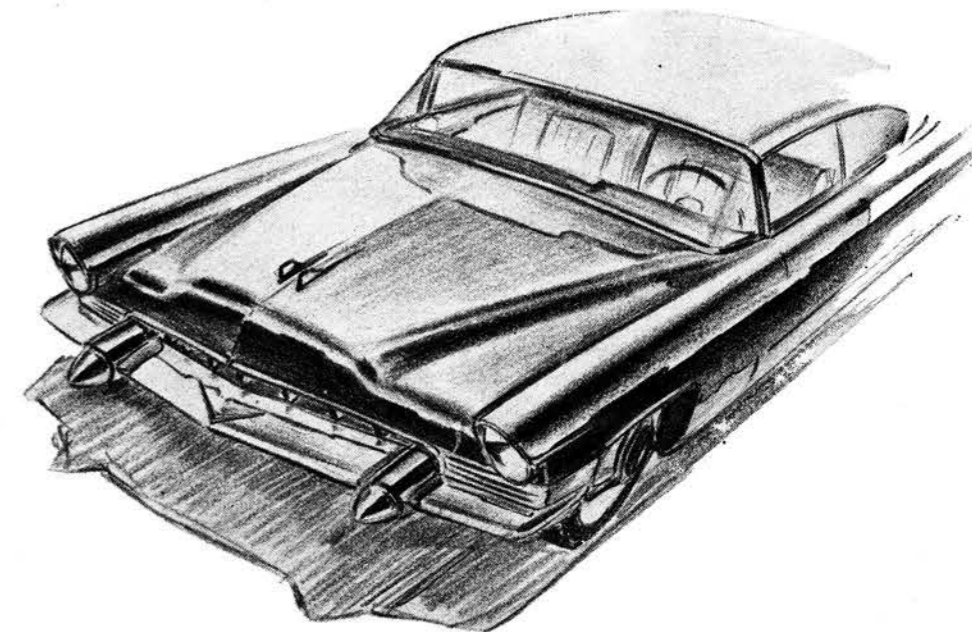
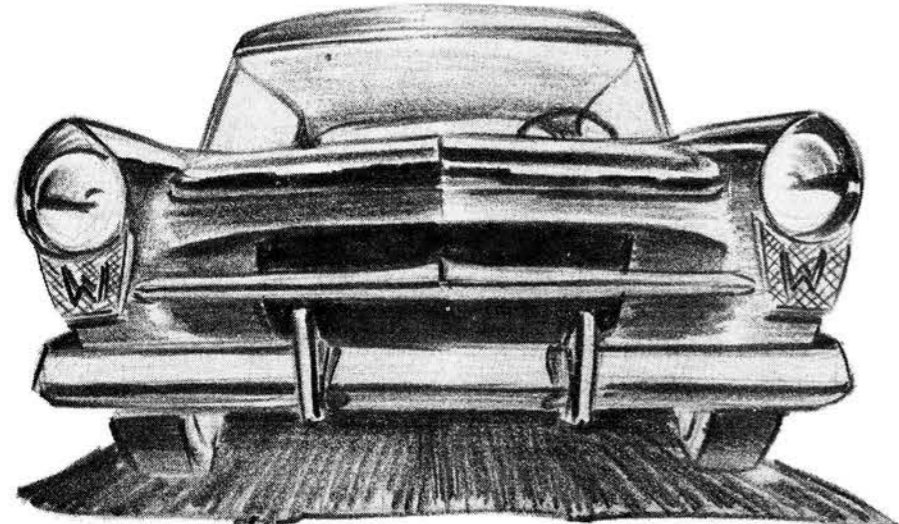
*(Continued on page 64)*



*HUDSON is planning limited changes on body shape. New nose and grille is assured BUSTLE back will probably be one of Hudson changes following trends of others*



*CADILLAC is due for an all new body probably with step down design and full use of the wrap-around windshield (similar to the El Dorado) on all of the models*



## STYLING PREDICTIONS

(Continued from page 25)

capacity with its 1953 head and compression ratio. Any boost that will come will have to be gained by making the engine larger or redesigning important engine components. Chrysler, of course, is sitting pretty with the hemispherical combustion chamber already in production.

Packard's V-8, if it arrives, will dispel many of the current rumors about the super-engine the company is preparing. More than one source predicts hemispherical combustion chambers, and a few have insisted that it will be of all-aluminum construction. The wildest tale of all, and one that seems hardly credible, speaks of some extremely experimental form of supplying fuel to the cylinders, either a drastically redesigned carburetor and manifold system or fuel injection.

All other engine projects are being kept a dark mystery. The Willys-Kaiser union has probably caused enough confusion to stall the new engines both firms were reportedly working on. Nash and Studebaker will most likely keep their present plants.

Hudson would like to change, but whether this is the year or not is not known.

### Chassis: 1954

Outside of Mercury's new Lincoln-type ball-joint front suspension, little that is new will be seen on the 1954 chassis. Here again, conservatism is the keynote. The Ford is going to get the ball-joint front end, but the date is not yet certain. Definitely by the '55 models, probably for the '54s. Packard is rumored to have a front suspension that will jolt the entire industry, but just when it will first appear in the showrooms is as vague as the details of the new Packard engine.

### Miscellaneous

Chrysler's new transmission heads the list of other improvements to be seen in '54, though this is hardly news since the Powerflite has been stock equipment on the Imperials since early in 1953. As production of the transmission increases, it will be extended downward in the Chrysler line, and '54 looks like the year when the other Chryslers—New Yorker, Saratoga, etc.—will be equipped with it. This is a

torque converter with planetary gears, providing one shift in the forward speed ranges. Chrysler has engineered the transmission for ease of operation and simplicity of manufacture and repair rather than for maximum acceleration, though a series of informal tests showed that in the passing range from 40 to 60 mph the Powerflite will give tremendous performance.

No other new transmissions are expected. Power brakes, power steering, air conditioning, and other conveniences are probably going to be on most makes of cars. It will be possible to buy a low-price car and add so many accessories that the total outlay will be as much as a medium-price car, or a small model of a top-quality machine. With these accessories, and remembering that the horsepower of the low-price cars is being increased year by year, there will soon be even less difference between Cadillac and Chevrolet, Lincoln and Ford than there is at present.

### Long-Term Predictions

More than one Detroit engineer has said that there will be no major body changes until one of the Big Three adopts unit construction. Almost everyone expects this to happen sometime in the future, though the guesses range from 1956 to 1960 for the date. As long as the conventional frames and bodies can be sold without meeting much consumer resistance, there will be no economic need to change. Only when competition tightens considerably can the U.S. car buyer expect to see vast improvements in the most popular names in domestic automobiles.

A change to unit construction would enable manufacturers to cut weight and horsepower, yet still improve performance and safety. Cost is the factor that is holding the big manufacturers back, since it will be necessary to remodel production lines and feeder lines extensively, and train workmen to new jobs.

As far as the much-publicized gas turbines are concerned, they won't be adopted until it becomes very plain that the piston engine is completely outmoded. If the usual pattern is followed, one of the independents will try it first and the majors won't follow until the public has accepted it. Turbines by 1960 are a possibility, but very few engineers expect them that early. If the gasoline companies find a way cheaply to produce higher-octane fuels, the improved piston engines that would be immediately marketed might prove to be as efficient as early auto turbines.

Right now the industry is worrying more about marketing than about engineering. The big used-car slump that developed early in 1953 has everyone from local dealers to factory sales vice-presidents worried. As used-car prices go lower, trade-in allowances must fall, too. This has the effect of making it more difficult for the average buyer to bridge the gap between trade-in value and new-car price. It operates the same way as raising the

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price of the new car. Eventually new-car sales will slump drastically, too.

When, and if, that happens a new era of vicious competition will probably develop. Manufacturers would return to the yearly model change, engine, chassis and body improvements would be more frequent and radical than they now are. Even in today's comparatively mild competition there is a good chance that the three-year life span of body dies may be cut to two years. All that is required is for one of the Big Three to break the accepted cycle.

Detroit is facing 1954 with a little less of the breezy confidence of the previous post war years, mostly because of the ailing used-car market. Otherwise, conditions are about the same as in the past few years. There will be a few new V-8s, some new bodies, and minor alterations in transmissions, suspension systems and chassis. Nothing radical, nothing to compare with Cadillac's introduction of the ohv V-8 in 1949 or Studebaker's 1953 continental body. The publicity guns will boom like atomic cannons, the auto shows will be better than ever. To the customer, however, there will be no price relief, just more expensive gadgets and more expensive horsepower. Which seems to be just the way the auto buying public wants it.

### IMPROVING THE BREED?

(Continued from page 21)

that direction, a further step to gasoline shouldn't be disastrous. Suppose every one does go a little slower, they will still be on even terms and competition will be even more keen. Future refinements will bring speeds up to their present level eventually, but the trend won't be to the impractical range as soon.

Hot rodding, although looked down upon by the Indianapolis clique, has progressed far ahead of the "brick yard" with regards to fuel development. This has been true for many reasons, but foremost is the fact that the use of additives at the "500" has been an individual effort. In other words, its use has been governed by the individual car crew's knowledge of the fuel mixing potentialities.

Last year, 32 of the 33 cars at Indianapolis used one type of engine so it is easy to see that there is no competition between manufacturers at the "brick yard." If the competition were as keen there as it is in hot rodding, there is no telling what the result would be—maybe 150 mile per hour qualifying speeds would have been common this year.

Maybe the rules committee won't see the light in time to create a new policy for the 1954 race, but the change is inevitable and will eventually take place. Pressure from the oil companies and many other interests will make it imperative. Let's hope that they don't wait until the horse is stolen to lock the barn door.



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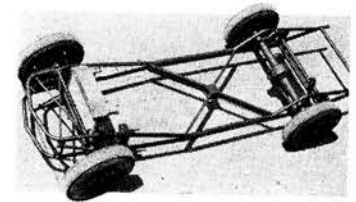
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