



CAR LIFE introduces the fabulous Pinin Farina to its readers. 'He dreams up designs in his sleep.'



When Farina offers a car design, his confident expression leaves no doubt in a customer's mind that the Italian master is right in every sculptured detail.

Design-Unlimited

By **HUGH HUMPHREY**

Editor, *CAR LIFE*

The 1952 Nash made the average driver in this country 'Farina-conscious.' A European flair had arrived in Detroit.



CAR LIFE

LIKE the distinctive touch of Lily Dache with a hat or Ceile Chapman with a dress, the fine Italian hand of Pinin Farina, the coach maker of Turin, has become synonymous with the exclusive and the ultimate in automobile styling.

A few years ago the name of this artist from Italy's 'Detroit' was unknown in America except to the few who could afford his individual sculptures in metal, chromium and glass. His fame in Europe, however, has long made him a byword at auto salons and on the highways where his crest adorned the bodies of small, racy sports cars and the regal palaces-on-wheels which transported the wealthy. Today, thanks to American advertising, his designs for Nash, beginning with the 1952 Ambassador, Statesman and Rambler, have become an accepted styling. Yet little is known in this country of the man, Pinin Farina.

If you were to visit his small factory (about 650 employees) in Turin, your first move would probably be toward his office—the last place in which he could

be found. You might locate him in the paint shop, mixing the exact shade of lavender ordered by a duchess for her new car; perhaps he could be found in the mock-up room, wrestling with the whims of an Indian rajah as he modifies a scale model of an exclusive design. On the other hand, you could find Farina, spattered with grease, squatting by a car as with hacksaw in hand he changes the suspension system of a \$10,000 Lancia Aurelia chassis to meet some client's requirements.

Farina is a working designer whose father was a coachmaker and from whom he inherited a master craftsman's hand. In the 1920s he began styling automobiles and soon abandoned coachmaking for the cars pulled by iron horses. Now, at 59 years of age, Farina is small, rotund and white haired, still nimble enough in mind and body to be called the best automobile designer in Europe. That his influence has been felt heavily in this country, exclusive of the Nash designs, is without question.

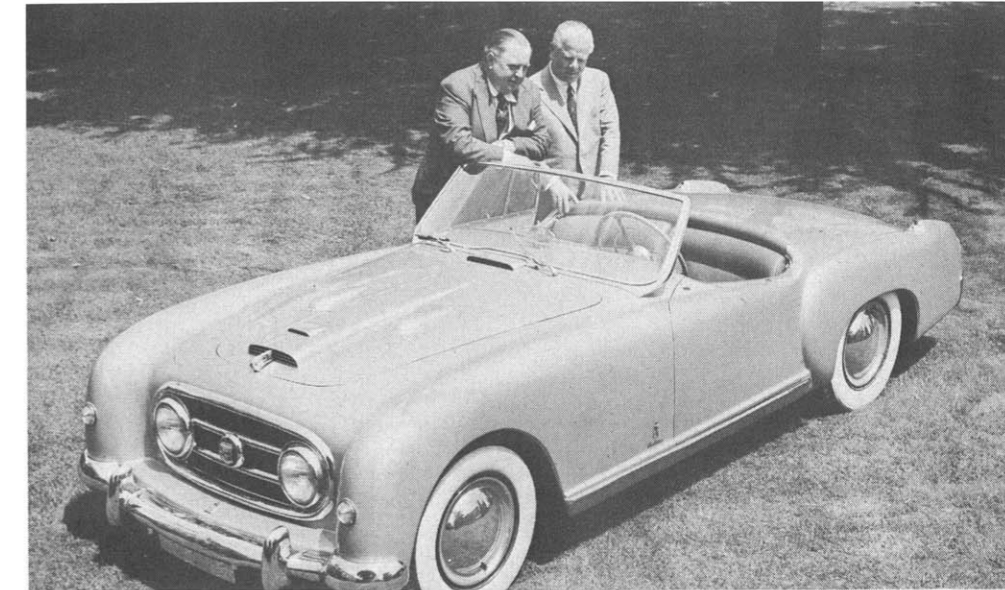
Variety is Farina's hallmark. There is no particular body line or ornamenta-

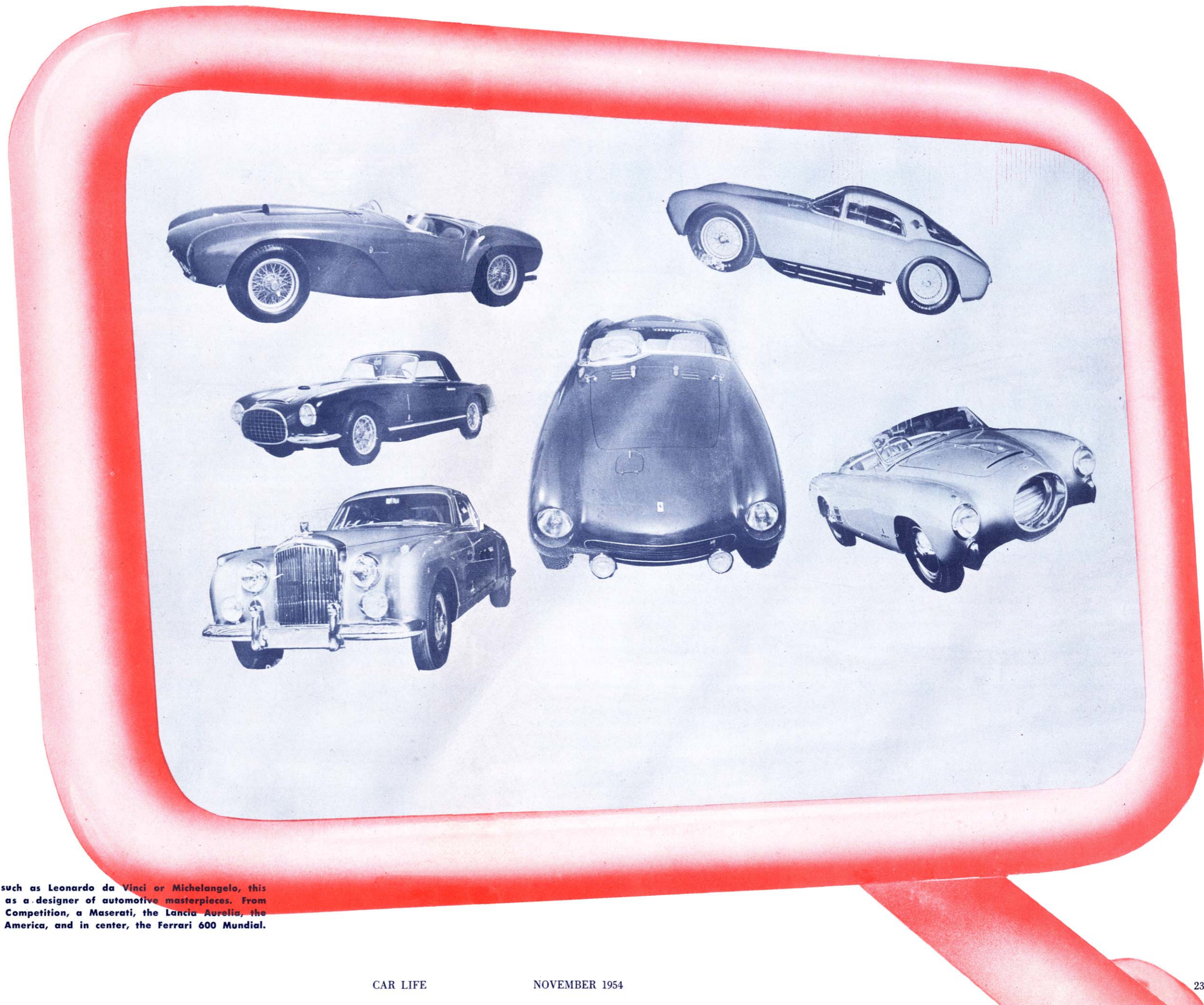
tion that carries through all of his designs. His auto styling is not spectacular; in fact, most of his models are distinguished by a singular lack of gaudiness when compared to other cars. Yet any European with a passing acquaintance with fine cars, can spot a Farina from other models in the same way a patron of the arts can distinguish between a Rembrandt painting and lesser works. The difference is there if you can recognize it.

At the Nash plant in Detroit, Farina has become a legend—a sort of superman in automotive design. He visits the motor capital a few weeks each year to discuss new ideas in his capacity as styling consultant to Nash. After each dynamic appearance, he returns to Italy to get along with the special orders of royalty and others who can pay the price for 'one of a kind' in automobiles. The Nash line, incidentally, is the only mass production design he has tackled.

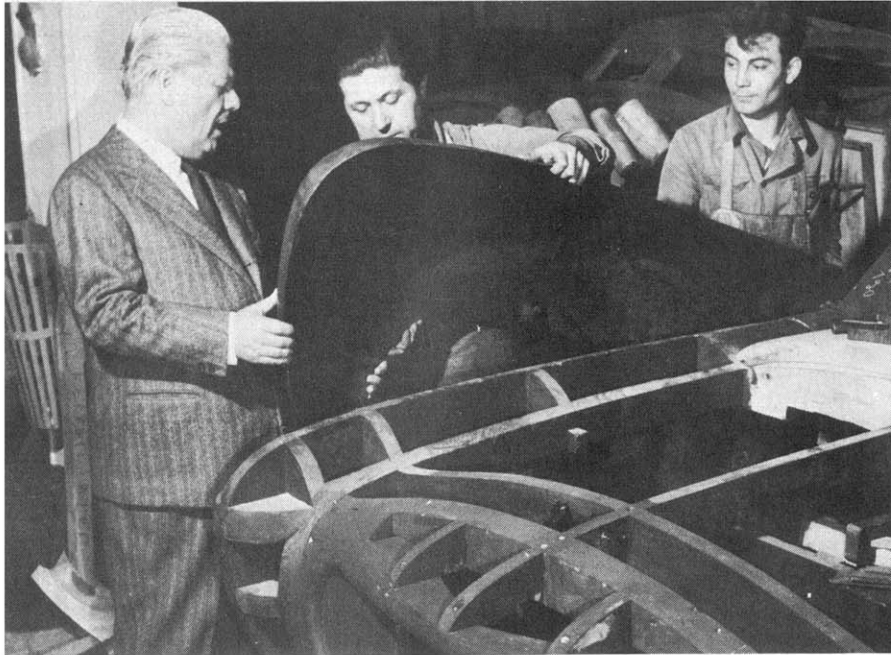
Farina is expensive. His crest comes high. Perhaps the costliest piece of artistry produced by him was a creation for the Prince of Monaco, a mere baga-

The chairman of American motors, George Mason (left), brought the Artist from Turin to this country. A lover of fine automobiles, Mason looks over the sports Nash-Healey, another creation by Pinin Farina.





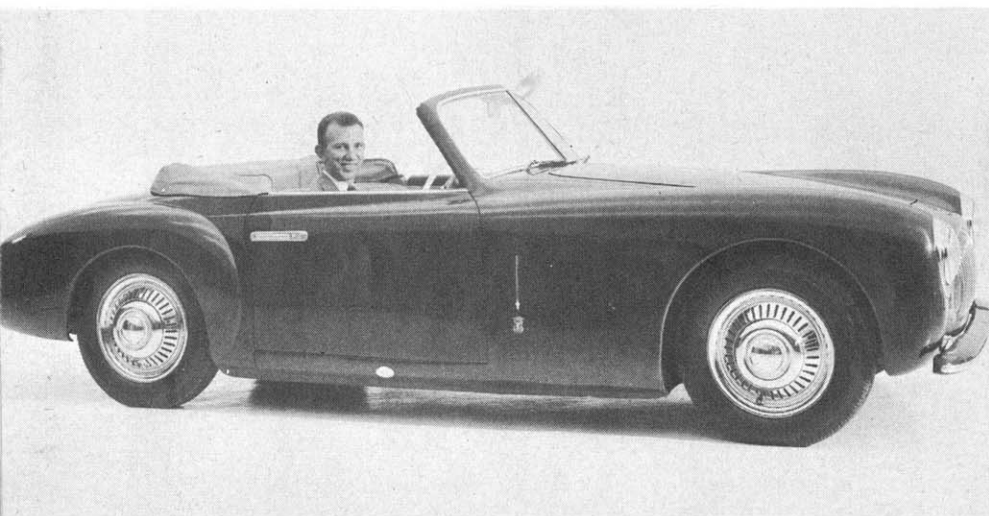
With the versatility of a Renaissance artist such as Leonardo da Vinci or Michelangelo, this display mirrors the range of Farina's talents as a designer of automotive masterpieces. From upper left, clockwise, are the Ferrari Spyder Competition, a Maserati, the Lancia Aurelia, the Continental Bentley Custom, the Ferrari 3.42 America, and in center, the Ferrari 600 Mondial.



Farina is no 'white-collar' designer. He is a master in metal, glass and wood as he guides workers through a molding job.



This Cisitalia sports convertible, designed by Farina, caught the eye of Mason at the Paris Auto Salon in 1947. An introduction to the Turin craftsman was arranged and within a short time, Nash had a new stylist.



chassis and engine, but all recognize Farina.

Yet he never has built an automobile! He is a designer of bodies, not of engines and frames. He merely places his bodies on cars provided by other manufacturers, many of them not Italian.

"To understand Farina," a friend once explained, "you must think of him as the same way as you think of a painter. A painter in committing his art to a mural, fills up a certain portion of wall with design. Farina does the same thing. He fills up a space given him by a chassis builder with certain bits of steel, wood, chromium and paint. The result is a picture."

Not all top designers of motor car bodies follow this procedure. The difference is that Farina does special work. He has placed small bars provided with comfortable chairs in some designs. He has provided a frilly, feminine—almost bedroomly—atmosphere for one beautiful and titled Italian lady who felt that the leather customarily used in automobiles was far too austere to promote the tenderness she desired from the gentleman with whom she was riding.

Farina was born at Turin in 1895 and married when he was twenty-six after returning from his first trip to America. He has two children, a daughter, Giama, born in 1922, and a son, Sergio, born in 1926, and who now is being trained to follow in his father's footsteps. His first venture into automobiles was characteristically Italian, as a driver of racing cars. He was good, but never expert in the sense that Nuvolari, Ascari and others have been.

No one questions his right to the title of artist, yet he looks and acts less like an artist than like an alarm clock. His face is round, like a clock's dial, and its movement, far from being disorderly or Bohemian, is as regular and

telle on a \$20,000 Rolls Royce chassis. He refuses to disclose the actual price tag, feeling that it is a trust between the Prince and himself, but by putting two and two together, it isn't hard to see a \$40,000 to \$50,000 price tag.

Obviously a Farina car costs much more than a factory-built job, but the master himself cannot always tell exactly how much more—until completed. He gives his customer a general figure and often is filled with naive surprise when the actual cost turns out to be less than the estimate.

Stories of the Fabulous Farina are widespread in European automotive circles. Not long ago, a British motor manufacturer was being escorted through the Farina plant. The Englishman, accustomed to British factories where the entire output may consist of one model only, was amazed by the scores of cars—all different—on Farina's floors. He turned to his guide.

"All these models; all these individual designs," he inquired, "did Farina do all of them?"

The smiling guide nodded.

"But when? How does he find the time?" the Briton asked.

"We think," the guide replied, "that he does them in his sleep."

It hasn't been established that the

master craftsman designs cars in his slumbering subconsciousness, but in the light of his prolific output the man definitely has some kind of an edge on his competitors. Working in a field where plodding deliberation, not speed, is the rule, Farina is a contradiction. He scorns the elaborate and highly detailed draftsman's plans when building a car body. Instead, he begins with a few fairly rough sketches and then, with hammer and saw in hand, proceeds to build a car from metal. His men follow his example.

Except for his Nash designs—which must be adapted for mass production at la Detroit—his creative mind and hands are unhindered by customer demand. When a buyer enters the Turin plant he often has fixed ideas as to the styling he wants. When he leaves, it is almost certain that he will have a fixed idea as to what Farina wants instead. Oddly Farina is right. His suggestions on body lines and paint combinations are indisputable, patrons have discovered.

His role in the world of automobiles is somewhat difficult to understand at times. When he puts his bodies on Ferraris, Alfa-Romeos, Fiats, Lancias and other fine European chassis, they immediately become 'Farinas.' Only experts and engineers can identify the actual

Flanked by Prince Bernhard of The Netherlands (left) and Farina's son, Sergio, who is following his father's art, the master points out a highlight in a new design at his plant in Turin.

methodical as the sweep of clock hands. He has no flamboyant appetites, so often found in men of his temperament and vocation. He drinks a little, but very little, and smokes only in the afternoon. He regards those who fire up a cigarette in the morning as a race apart. Like a good clock, he needs to be wound regularly and he does this by going to the best restaurants, but he orders his food with a completely absent-minded air and eats with apparent indifference. His brain—whirling in a circle of designs—often forgets in what country Farina has stopped. He has been known to complain about the spaghetti in London and the sauerbraten in Paris.

Meticulous about the color or quality of a tack in upholstering one of his cars, Farina's indifference to the materials covering his own body is something to see. He regards clothing merely as a covering to protect himself from the more violent elements—rain, cold, or snow. His suits fit him like a sack and while dealing with customers whose dress is as elegant as their taste in cars, Farina often looks as if he had just crawled from under one of his cars—and he probably has.

His employes, with some tact, point out that the "boss" has been gaining a bit of weight, here and there in recent years. Farina once noticed—between design ideas—that the front button of his jacket no longer could make decent contact with the buttonhole. He wound a rubber band through the buttonhole and looped the other end around the button, to him a legitimate and functional answer to a pressing issue.

The Italian Farina travels constantly to almost any place in the world. His business is international. When he goes anywhere in Europe, he uses airplanes exclusively and always manages to travel on Sunday, finding it intolerably wasteful to interrupt a working day by a trivial flight to London. He has been forced to build up a linguistic talent and he happily breaks into the native tongue of a new customer, gaily

While Farina's influence can be seen mainly in the fancy 'one-of-a-kind' European cars, he has also designed this medium-priced British Rover.



chattering and quite unaware that his accent is so strong that much of what he says is a total loss. However, because of his American business relations with Nash, he has put in quite a few hours in practicing English with his son, who speaks it perfectly, and his conversational efforts in English have steadily improved.

In his factory, Farina is a pudgy dynamo of perfectionism, but outside he is quite another guy. We Americans know that the bundle of energy in an office in this country often becomes the slipper-clad homebody when he leaves the office. In Europe, however, this Jekyll-Hyde complex is more rare. Some of Farina's friends, mystified by his performance, think of him as some sort of split personality.

"I don't know," one of them said recently, "but once he leaves his factory, the lion becomes a mouse."

There's a story floating around that his family had long heard about his two-fisted factory personality but were puzzled because at home he behaved in the best tradition of the Italian father. However, in an effort to continue the illusion, his daughter, Giama, began calling him 'The Lion.' Farina took this with considerable parental equanimity but after several months the family noticed a subtle change. In answering the telephone, he stopped saying 'hello.' Instead, he began conversations with a kind of amiable growl, like a well-fed lion.

Farina sleeps alone in a room that

a convict in the 'hole' might consider rough. It has a single, unshaded light bulb hanging in the middle of the ceiling; there are no pictures on the walls and no curtains. The only furnishings aside from a bed are his suitcases where he stores his clothing, fully packed. He has permitted himself one luxury—an air conditioner—since he is certain that hot weather is his personal enemy. Doubtless, Nash-Kelvinator's work on auto air conditioners must delight him.

In 1947, George Mason, then president of Nash (now chairman of the board of American Motors—Nash and Hudson), attended a Paris auto show. Mason, like Farina, is something more than average in appreciating good styling, and he was delighted with a little Cisitalia sports convertible which was on display. The now-familiar Farina crest adorned its body and Mason demanded an introduction to the designer.

Oddly, both men look somewhat alike and within minutes they had reached the 'paisano' stage of personal relations. Three years later, Mason succeeded in bringing Farina to this country to supervise the styling of the 1952 Nash line. Besides the three Nash stock models, he also styled the Nash-Healey, a hot little sports car that has captured the imagination of many European notables, including former King Leopold of Belgium.

Farina calls his designs functional.

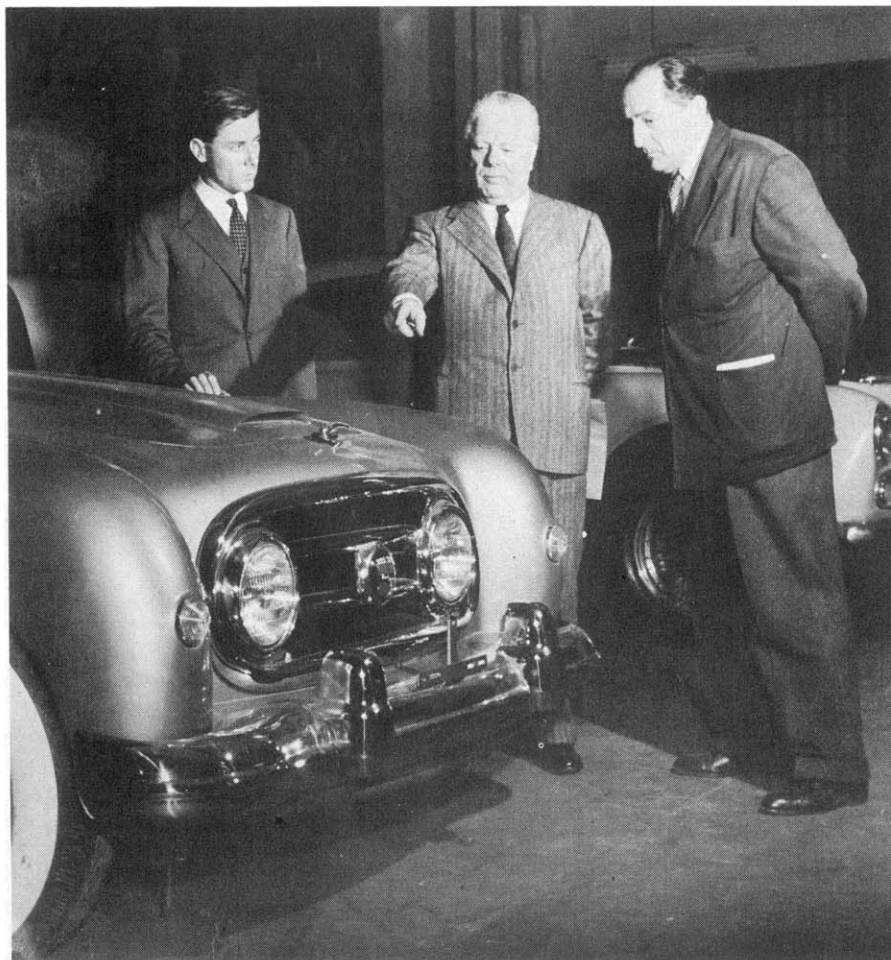
He always has been faithful to his own conception of beauty in a car. Fifteen years ago, or more, when small windshields, peephole windows and flamboyant fenders were the rage, Farina continued to design 'Farina' cars which today are as modern as next year's model.

The trend toward his functional design is increasing, so the old master has become stubborn on other matters. When you ask him about the American habit of 'dressing up' everything in sight with chromium, he smiles politely, but with some disdain. He is so frugal in the use of chrome that his amazing pocket-size Cisitalia sports racing car has one simple oval grille as its single ornamentation.

Unusual for continental designers, Farina has an American's appreciation of comfort. It's been said that when a 'Yank' steps into a Farina-styled car, when he feels the seat fit the body, the wheel fit the hand and sees the whole world through vast windshields, he becomes weak with desire to own one.

Once, for lack of something to do for a spare hour or so, Farina designed a boat.

"It was a failure," he recalls sadly. "I forgot one thing and that is, when you design a boat, that's the end. With a car, you can change the design. With a boat, you can't." And, as he squints his sharp eyes slightly, he philosophizes, "Without change in design, there is no life. That's what life is. Changing designs." ☆☆



Imperiously, Farina tells his son and Prince Bernhard of the styling that went into the Nash-Healey sports car.