

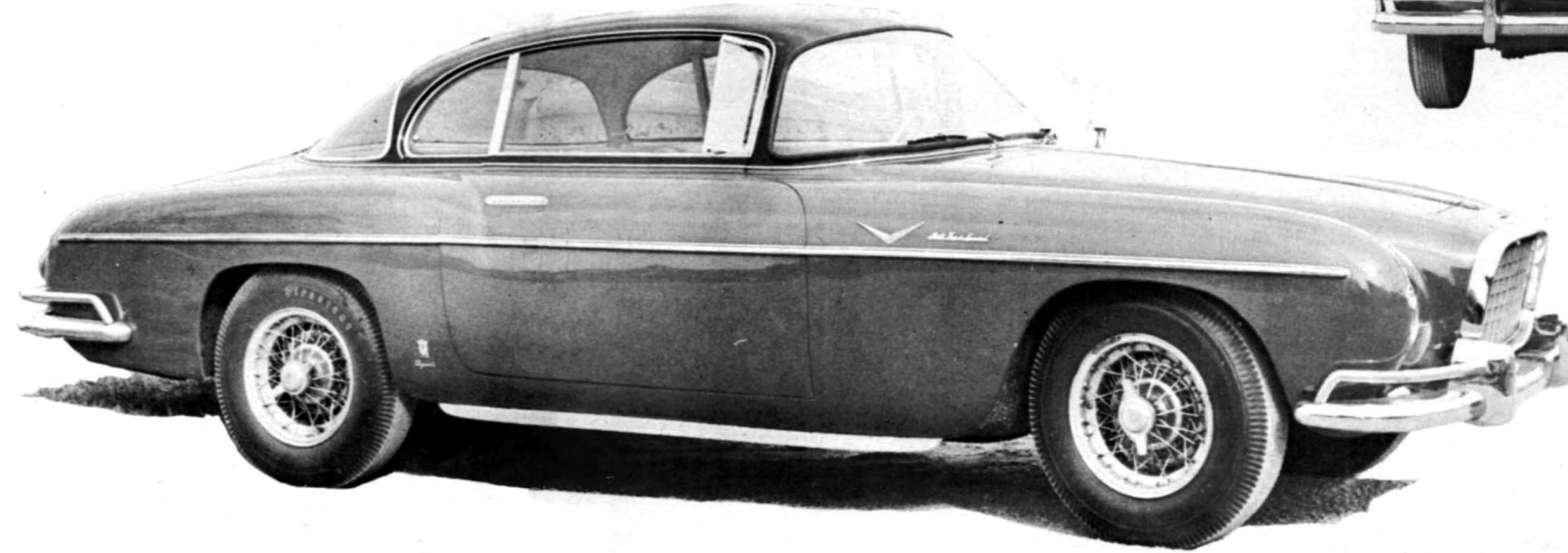
MOST sports car fans enjoy the passive pleasure of spinning dreams about THE car, THE car being one of the fine existing machines or an amalgamation of the best features of many different cars. This is the car they'd like to own, if, when, and in spite of. For almost all of us this is just talk, but there *are* a few men who can make their dreams come true. Chances are they don't want to do it themselves, though, and this is where Bill Frick steps in.

Famed for the time-bomb Fordillacs and Studillacs, honored for the 1950 Le Mans Cadillacs, and revered for the Cadillac-Allard, Willie Frick is probably the greatest Caddy exponent east of Frank Burrell at that company's experimental garage. Willie has reached a complete understanding with those rugged OHV engines, and knows just what he can and can't get away with. As a result, the only standard part in a Bill Frick Special is a current Cadillac powerplant. From that point on, it's up to you.

Bill Frick Motors, of Rockville Center, Long Island, will build that dream car for you, just the way you want it. For that reason, there's really no such thing as a "catalogue" Bill Frick Special. The specifications are as flexible as your imagination and pocketbook, the finished price being remarkably low for a completely custom-built and personalized automobile. The minimum tag, for a reasonably unmodified interpretation such as the shop demonstrator, will run around \$8750. As inferred before, there's no upper limit.

Naturally, you can't have a dream car right away. A wait of four to five months from order to first drive is required for an "ordinary" Special, while you might have to control yourself as long as seven months for a more spectacular version.

First decision in building a Bill Frick Special is the selection of a chassis. Frames are never of a specific make, Studebaker components having been used among others, since all parts are extensively reworked and built-up. A characteristic layout might include two channel side rails, with one front crossmember, a large X-member in the center, and two rear crossmembers. All channel sections are reinforced by boxing, which results in exceptional stiffness for this type of frame.



The Bill Frick Special with body by Vignale is seventeen feet long, six wide. Although this Special is not for sale, a similar custom built job will cost less than the Mark II Continental, and offer superior appointments and performance. Tests show, with '55 Caddy engine, Special will go 0-60 in 7.2 seconds.

Wheelbases can vary from 110 to 124 inches, the demonstrator measuring 114. This car also had a slight crab-track, the front tread dimension of 56/16 inches being an inch larger than that in the rear.

Equally problematical and irrelevant is the exact origin of the unequal wishbone front suspension, the lower arms of which are connected by a torsion anti-roll bar. Coil springs support the weight, and enclose Armstrong shock absorbers with any settings either side of 50/50. A Ross gear handles the steering problem, and a Thunderbird column can be used to provide easy wheel position adjustment. Rear suspension is by semi-elliptics, but the axle is positively located and all torque reactions absorbed by two radius rods and a lateral sway bar. Armstrong tubular shocks are again used, "sea-leg" mounted to fight roll. Actually, with a sway bar in use vertical mounting might be even more effective, but again this is your choice to make.

The simple Vignale grille offers a maximum of cooling for the 310 horses lying beneath the hood ready to leap into action.



Braking is usually by Chrysler-type two-leading-shoe front mechanisms in combination with the Bendix pattern at the rear. These operate within 11½ inch drums, and can be actuated by a single Lockhead master cylinder. Many wheel options are available, the choice running from Detroit discs and Dayton or Borrani wires to Halibrand's magnesium lightweights. The size is usually 15 inch, though, and a typical tire might be 6.70 x 15.

Reposing just behind that front crossmember is, you may have noted, a Cadillac engine. Bill Frick is prepared to give you anything up to 350 horsepower, but he doesn't like to do it by modifications of valve timing, carburetion or anything else that might spoil running smoothness. The Special is primarily a fast touring machine for an owner who appreciates refinement, and Bill would like to retain this characteristic above all else. This still leaves room for his standard Cadillac techniques, though, which include extensive boring,

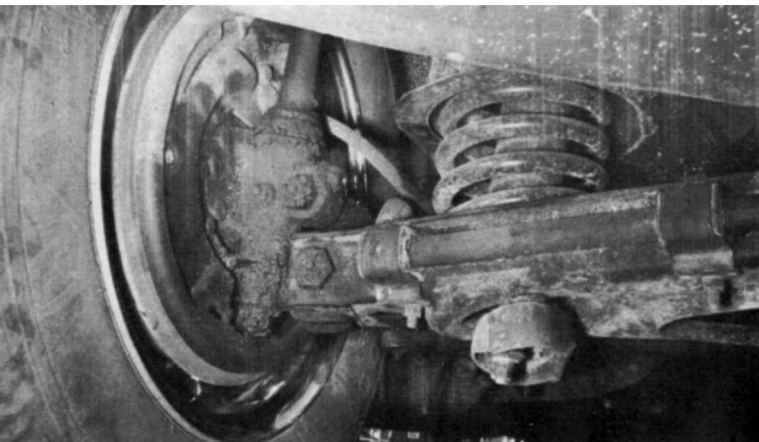
Bill Frick Special:

America's Answer to Europe

By CHARLES ERICSON



From any angle, the Vignale body shows clean, unmarred lines. In spite of low-slung lines, the car gives complete visibility to the driver.



Undershot of front suspension shows heavy torsion anti-roll bar for stability at high speeds and sharp curves. While Studebaker steering and Bendix brakes are shown here, the choice of frame is up to the customer.



Trunk deck-lid is padded for sound absorption. Note the gas filler pipe inside the trunk. The inconvenience of opening the trunk to fill up is far outweighed by the smooth, uncluttered body lines.



To keep hood height low, special double air cleaner is used. This is a standard Caddy engine. As is, stock power-to weight ratio is 12.1 to 1.



Despite seeming snugness under hood, everything is readily accessible for minor repairs and adjustments. Layout is neat and compact.

a McCulloch supercharger, or a combination of both. Frick Motors have long been stretching Caddies to 390 cubic inches, and with a blower on this you have real speed with silence. The factory car has a standard '55 Cadillac engine, with special double air cleaner to lower hood height.

Torque can be transmitted via dual-range Hydra-Matic, which can be fitted stock or with raised shift points. Early floor controls were straight-line progressive type, but a new lever gate is being devised, for surer selection by "feel." If you want something a little more flexible and challenging in gear changing, Bill Frick thinks he has just the answer. He has already built some cars with the good but expensive German ZF four speed gearbox, but he's now trying out a new French unit. It's the Ponte-a-Mousson transmission, as used in the De Soto-powered Facel Vega. Also supplying four speeds, this box looks to Bill like a good candidate for use with U. S. V8's, and we will have a better idea after his pilot installation gets on the road.

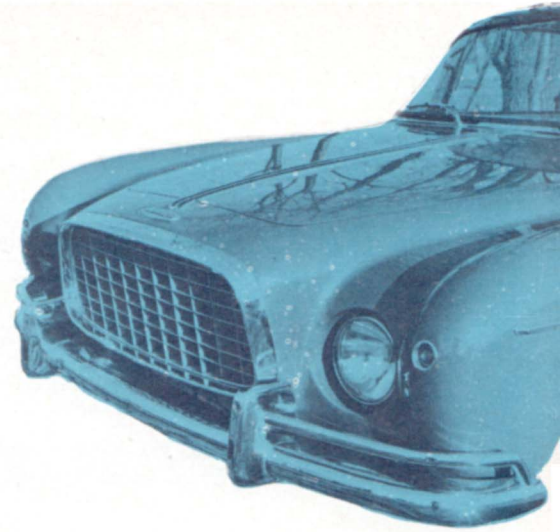
A Hardy Spicer propeller shaft with two universals carries the load to the hypoid rear axle, which is often found to be of Lincoln origin. Final drive ratios may vary from 2.91 to 4.15, according to your touring tastes, and the Lyeth Hi-Tork differential can be substituted for a less discriminating unit.

With the addition of American electrical wiring, these parts make up a running Special chassis, which is then ready to be shipped to the bodybuilder. This has always been the well-known Italian Vignale firm, which has also supplied bodies to Fina and Cunningham in the U. S. This company's broad experience allows it to fill most requirements accurately and with taste, so the purchaser again has a free hand there. Through its size, the car lends itself to occasional four-seater treatment, and both convertible and coupe bodies have been fitted.

Upholstery is usually in unborn calf hide, interior hardware of German silver. The driver sits behind a wood-rimmed 18 1/4 inch steering wheel facing a suitably imposing array of dials. Instruments have Stewart-Warner works with Vignale faces, and on the demonstrator included clock, speedometer, tachometer, oil temperature and pressure, water temperature, manifold vacuum, and fuel level and pressure.



Instruments are placed directly before driver for quick spot checking. Adjustable steering column is reminiscent of Thunderbird.



Recessed headlamps are shaded by body preventing oversplash of light. Yet removal and installation of new unit is simply accomplished.

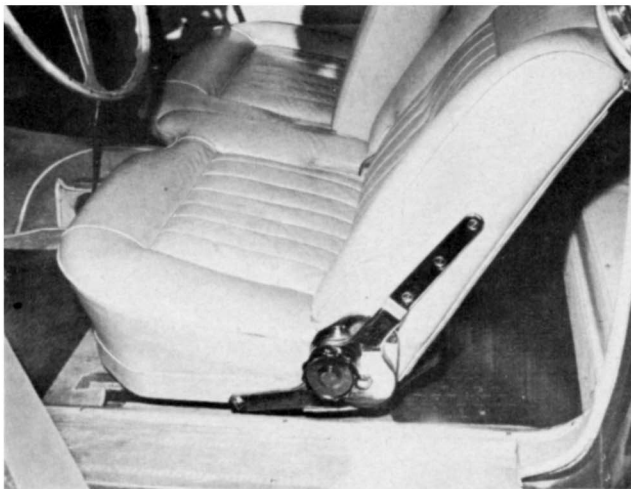
When all these amenities have been supplied by Vignale, the car goes back on a boat, and Frick Motors does the rest. Quite a few tasks remain, not the least of them being the job of trimming the height of the car with body fitted. There is no telling just how heavy a Vignale body will be, so much juggling of spring leaves is in order. The completed cars scale between 3600 and 3800 pounds, divided almost equally between front and rear axles. At this point accessories may also be added, most selections being made from the Cadillac range. After a tune-up, a touch-up, and a final fitting-out, another completely personal Frick Special is ready for delivery.

Though not attempting anything even approaching a road impression, we kicked the "works" car around enough to get a general idea of its attitude. At roughly seventeen feet long and six feet wide this is not a small car, and at first we felt a little lost amid the scaled-up sports car surroundings. The steering, at $4\frac{2}{3}$ turns lock to lock, was too slow for quick correction and had an annoying bit of play in the straight-ahead position. This would probably adjust out, at the possible risk of some stiffness. The two-leading-shoe front

brakes quickly announced their presence at a pedal touch, braking being very sharp until the proper pressure was determined.

Most impressive aspect of the car was, understandably, the performance. With correct use of the Hydra-Matic control, the Cadillac could be taken to any desired speed in the gears, and it moved out with a satisfying surge. Thanks to proper radius rods, the drive line is slop-free and response is immediate. The slow steering can be bypassed and sharp turns made by a mere touch of the throttle, behavior being surprisingly stable and flat in most situations. The Special was above par for a car of its size in most respects save the steering, and one can't help thinking that Frick might do better to admit that he has a heavy car and fit it with quicker power controls.

Now going through the construction process is one of the most interesting Bill Frick Specials yet, with power by Eldorado. Transmission will be by Ponte-a-Mousson gearbox and Hi-Tork rear end, the whole being clothed in a four-passenger coupe with a full-length sliding roof. #



Driver's back rest can be tilted back or forward to assume various driving positions. The seat itself is adjustable for leg length. Seat and back can be changed while driving for optimum comfort.



The interior appointments of the Special are immaculately fitted and customized. The padded inside offers safety in every corner. The back rest for the rear passengers has been removed to show excellent fitting of matting.