
Parlez-vous Fastback? Five design classics from Detroit to Kopřivnice

23 March 2013 | Joe Breeze

The fastback bodystyle delivers the rare phenomenon of adding practicality and sporting intentions in one fell swoop - literally. We've searched our marketplace for some cars of the past which best execute the slope-roofed design, and now present them in a country vs. country showdown...

France: Citroën SM



The SM was a variation of the lauded DS, and featured a similarly aerodynamic profile and 'magic-ride' self-levelling suspension. However, it also had more sporting intentions than 'La Déesse', benefitting from a V6 Maserati engine (similar to that found in the Merak), as well as variable-assistance steering and all-corner disc brakes. Its characterful, Robert Opron-styled body also means it possesses the same 'contemporary coolness' as the DS, and might one day become even more desirable, considering its relative scarcity.

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Italy: Lamborghini Espada



The quirky Espada was penned by Bertone's Marcelo Gandini, who had partially desensitised the public to its unconventional proportions with the [Marzal concept](#) a year earlier. The quirky design details (including *that* arcing roofline), along with the front-mounted 4.0-litre V12 and low production numbers (fewer than 1250 were made) mean the Espada retains its charm and exclusivity to this day.

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Great Britain: Bentley R Type Continental by H.J. Mulliner



The elegant Mulliner-bodied R-Type Continental is arguably one of the sweetest spots in the distinguished heritage of the Crewe-based manufacturer. With just 207 built, each is special in its own right, but the rarer-still left-hand drive example seen here has class wins at the concours of Amelia Island (2004), Quail Lodge (also 2004) and Pebble Beach (2006) under its contoured beltline.

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Czechoslovakia: Tatra T87



As a successor to what is commonly known as the first aerodynamically-focused production car, the Tatra T87's evermore streamlined shape made it the 'bahnstormer of its day, with near-100mph capabilities. The rear tailfin and side louvres (feeding air to the rear-mounted V8) provide the T87 with further charm - and ensure it isn't mistaken for a stretched Beetle by the uninitiated.

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Germany: Porsche 356 Coupé



As the car that put Porsche on the map, the 356 needs little introduction. This Pre-A, centre-creased windscreen example might not offer *quite* the same rear headroom as some of the other fastbacks we've unearthed, but the panache it provides in return plays its part as a counterweight. The one year warranty offered by the dealer is testament to its faith in the recently-completed restoration it has undergone. And it looks quite fetching in this shade of blue, don't you think?

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USA: Ford Mustang Fastback



In the first half of the mkI Mustang's lifecycle, a 'fastback 2+2' bodystyle joined the family and provided the basis for a forthcoming sporting variant: the legendary Shelby GT350. The fastback has since become one of the most desirable iterations of the archetypal pony car, and was apparently the main design inspiration behind the contemporary version.

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Text: [Joe Breeze](#)

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