

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Citroën DS Chapron Le Dandy: The madness of King Henri](#)

Lead

Fittingly born from the French Revolution, dandyism sees underlying sophistication clothed in material elegance – much like that applied by Henri Chapron to Citroën's own revolutionary, the DS...

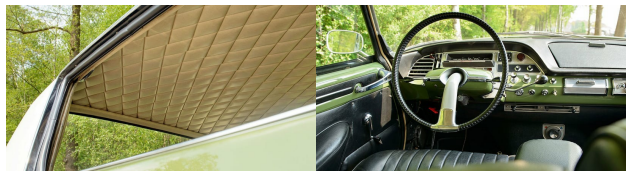
Chapron established his reputation as an automotive sartorial guru back in the 1920s, tailoring beautiful bodies for French luxury cars such as [Talbots](#) and [Delages](#). While his domestic rivals later made the *faux pas* of underestimating the monocoque revolution, Chapron revelled in it. He re-clothed the fashionable DS in a variety of ensembles (despite its unitary construction, its roof and body panels were unstressed); one of the most curious was the Le Dandy.

Haute couture



Citroën's DS was already bursting at the seams with sophistication – in regards to both style and technology– but its instant popularity meant it soon became a common sight. Chapron believed that, much like its human equivalent, a bespoke outfit would provide a convincing take on aristocratic style. Indeed, [Charles de Gaulle commissioned Chapron to build him a unique DS limousine in the mid-60s](#). The Le Dandy was produced between 1960 and 1972, with around 50 examples created – each with their own flourishes of haute couture.

Room for a silk top hat



The car seen here – one of the two built in 1965 – exhibits a taller roofline than its brethren, allowing plenty of room for a [silk top hat](#) to match the driver's poet shirt and pantaloons. It was one of the first to be given fins on the flanks of the elongated rear deck and, contrary to the suggestion of the roofline's early plummet, the Le Dandy was in fact a four-seater. A coastline jaunt from Cannes to Monaco would undoubtedly prove claustrophobic for those perched on the rear bench, thanks to the lack of legroom and a rear quarter window. But perhaps that journey would be best conducted two-up, with an achingly beautiful mademoiselle riding shotgun and a bootful of [Hermès luggage](#). They'd all arrive unruffled, thanks to the trademark hydro-pneumatic suspension.

Wilde styling



The Le Dandy might not be the prettiest DS, nor the most practical – but there’s a Goddess to fulfil those needs at far lower price points. As one of Chapron’s most striking takes on the legendary Citroën, it caters to the small minority confident to parade such a statement without fearing the reaction. “One should either be a work of Art, or wear a work of Art,” Oscar Wilde once said. Had he been born a century later, that sentence would no doubt have a third clause.

Photos: © [Steve Hall](#) for Classic Driver

Gallery

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