

V I N T A G E

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DECEMBER 2015

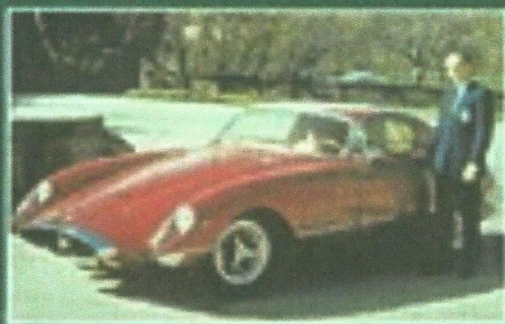
*1931 AJS 9hp  
Richmond  
Saloon*



**Black Country  
Survivor**

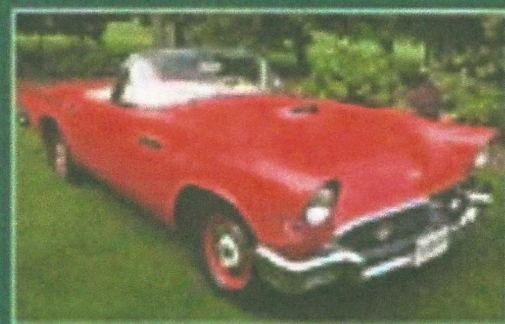
**By Design**

'60s American Dream Cars



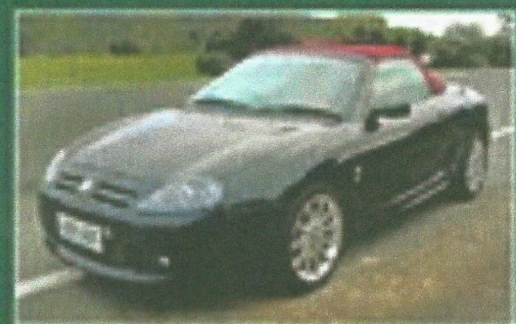
**Thunderbird (Part 2)**

Ford's Personal Luxury Car



**Driven**

2004 MG TF



# American Dream Cars of the 1960s

**T**hroughout the 1950s, American automobile manufacturers developed some of the most extravagant concept cars. While many of these efforts were styling exercises and prototypes, a great many were visionary, featuring futuristic (if not dream-like) scenarios including self-driving cars, flying and nuclear-powered cars. With enormous resources behind them, car designers had an open checkbook to visualize the future.

The 1960s ushered in a new era. Our nation was going to the moon, commercial jets were completing transatlantic flights and computers were dawning. Yes we were dreamers, but educated and skilled to make those visions a reality. So much so that outside of corporate offices and government research centers, clever upstarts, independent professional entrepreneurs and rogue engineers launched some of the most sophisticated independent Dream Cars showcasing the future of the automobile. What follows are three examples of 1960s American Dream Cars, each from very different sources; one from a professional industrial designer, another from a professional automotive engineer, and one from a privateer with no professional automotive background.

## 1963 Brooks Stevens Excalibur Hawk

Brooks Stevens was a pioneer of Industrial Design. He, along with seven key designers of the industrial era, formed the Industrial Design Society of America in 1944. Stevens designed everything from logos to motorcycles, and is perhaps most well known for having designed the Oscar Meyer Wienermobile. But Stevens was also an exceptional car designer, designing throughout the Art Deco era and for Studebaker and AMC into the 1960s. In 1963 he approached Studebaker with the idea for a competition road car. Studebaker supplied the chassis and a Supercharged Avanti engine and Stevens set about building the all-aluminum coupe body with a flair for intuitive aerodynamics.

The finished car was unlike anything Studebaker had ever seen. The two-seat sport coupe featured a small cockpit set back from the long hood, terminating with panoramic wraparound rear glass. Accented on each rear fender were angular stabilizing tail fins. Most dramatically,



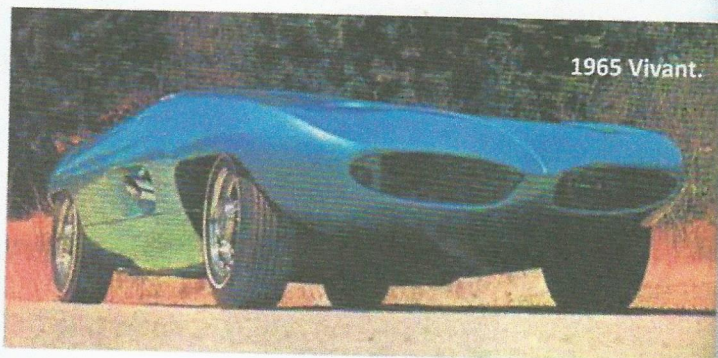
1963 Excalibur Hawk.

the body sides featured sharp two-toned door scoop lines, giving the car forward momentum even while standing still. The peaked front fenders and low hood line beguiled the tall front-engine layout, tight to the cowl, allowing a mid-bias weight distribution. The Hawk competed in local and regional racing events but never won the nod from the financially strapped Studebaker for even limited production. The sole prototype survives today as part of the Stevens family collection.

## 1965 Herb Adams Vivant

Mention "performance" to any Firebird, Trans Am, GTO or Super Duty enthusiast and you're bound to hear the name Herb Adams. Barely out of college when he was recruited to Pontiac, Herb Adams became Pontiac's Zora Duntov. If it was meant to go fast, Herb was the man who made it happen. So it should come as no surprise that Herb had his own ideas about what a sports car should be. Having worked at Pontiac for about a year, the young engineer set about fulfilling his vision for a lightweight roadster using design skills amassed from his years entering the Fisher Body Craftsman Guild Design Competitions. Adams wanted a nimble, jet-like car with roadster proportions, and a high-performance engine. Enlisting the panel beating services of three Detroit-based Englishmen, the aluminum Vivant wrapped around a custom-made tube chassis and big block V8 with competition features and a 4-speed transmission sourced from the Pontiac racing division. Unlike the rounded and somewhat dated soon-to-arrive 427 Cobra, the Vivant was a big block sports car with a fresh aluminum body design. Borrowing nothing from previous designs, Adams used tight body creases to define the plan view erupting from the Pontiac split grille openings in a single line, forming beautifully arched tail fins. The results were shocking, much like the only body interruption cut open for the trumpeting exhausts just aft of the front wheels.

Although Herb Adams would continue his remarkable career at Pon-



1965 Vivant.

1966 Bosley Interstate.



tiac, the Vivant would receive only minor association with Pontiac and appear in just a few car shows before vanishing into obscurity for decades. Recently found, the very original and intact car is now undergoing a complete restoration.

#### 1966 Bosley Interstate

If Stevens was a professional industrial designer and Adams a moonlighting professional engineer, our third example takes it one step further. If you've ever wondered what vision might comprise the automotive dreams of a botanist, look no further. Behold the Bosley Interstate.

Richard Bosley built his first car, the Bosley Mark 1, in the mid 1950s, but was not content simply to rest on his singular achievement.

After amassing thousands of miles in the Mark 1, Bosley traded it for a

Corvette SR2 chassis (the body removed by GM) and began work on his second car, The Interstate. Bosley envisioned this car as a capable GT, one eager to glide at high speeds on the newly refined, vast stretches of open American highway. The long wheelbase and large greenhouse were tailored with a sloping hood line and streamlined tail section. The design, executed in fiberglass, was both classic and clean, but remained fresh and innovative for the times.

Bosley lost some interest in the project as it was completed and the car remained unknown until recently discovered. It is now undergoing a complete restoration using authentic period components (the original engine and SR2 chassis having been separated from the car several years ago).

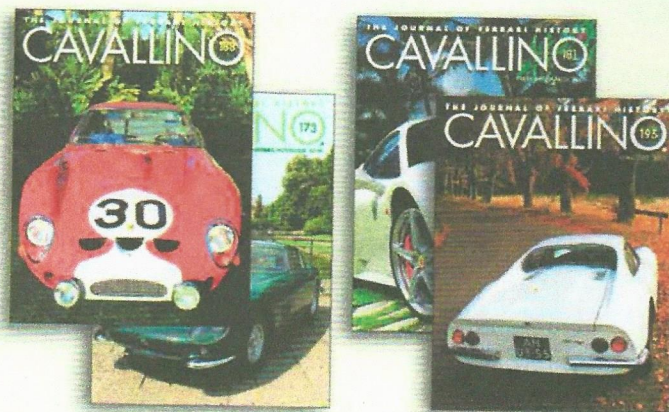
Great car design comes from a wide range of people and places. These three unique car designs are just a few among many that emerged from an era ripe with independent innovation and sophisticated engineering. Thankfully all three remain for enthusiasts to enjoy and appreciate as examples of American Dream Cars of the 1960s.

Big Block Vivant.



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