

WHAT'S NEW ABOUT THE NEW CARS

by PETER KYROPOULOS

AFTER SPENDING ANOTHER SUMMER in Detroit I have summarized the local gossip concerning the new models. Allowing for the fact that, even after copious draughts of Scotch, people don't tell me everything they know, and allowing also for the fact that I don't tell everything I find out, here is the story for what it is worth:

New models will be out sooner this year. Lincoln was announced in September. The tentative dates for other cars are as follows:

Ford: September, October, November

G.M.: Chevrolet, October (?); others, November

Chrysler: November

American Motors: Nash and Hudson, November;
Rambler, December

Studebaker-Packard: October

Nothing very dramatic seems to be in the offing, except the dealers' hassel to sell about 1.5 million 1955 cars before the new models are out.

Except for Lincoln and Rambler and the Continental, which have new bodies, only face-lifting is expected. Colors are supposed to be toned down and two-tones will now be the upper limit.

One leading stylist gave me this as the safe rule for styling in general: "If you can't make it look good, make it look like Cadillac." The tailpipe-in-bumper is perhaps the least fortunate example of this practice. Aside from this, however, I could name a few cars that would do well to put in a little more of Cadillac and a little less of their own haphazard styling.

There will be some new four-door hardtops and there is talk of retractable hardtops.

Experiments are being made with body trim other than chrome and stainless. Anodized aluminum die castings are being used. There is an atrocious-looking

Plymouth running around Detroit with bright copper instead of chrome.

General emphasis on safety will be reflected in the widespread offering of safety belts. Chevrolet has already announced that they will make seat and shoulder belts available.

The '56 engines will have more power, and in one instance a greater displacement. Compression ratios will go up also.

Everybody is working on fuel injection, not because it offers any striking advantages, but because it is different. So far it is a struggle to make the injection system break even with a good carburetor. The systems under development use manifold injection. Mercedes SL 300 is still the only cylinder injector engine. A V-6 is talked about, but not for '56. It also has essentially the merit of being a novelty.

Gas turbines will not appear except in experimental cars.

Transmission selector levers on Chrysler and Packard are supposed to be replaced by buttons.

A new and smoother hydramatic is in the mill and will be available soon.

Interest in a variety of novelty suspension systems is very lively but specific plans are hard to pin down. There is much experimentation. Packard's torsion bar suspension will be put into more Packards, but did not start a stampede for Packards in '55.

Power accessories are growing in popularity and are making an excellent service record for themselves.

Air conditioning is getting to be quite the thing. System size and efficiency has been materially improved in '55 (e.g. Chevrolet) and will lead to further increases next year.

The dressed-up station wagon, led by the Chevrolet Nomad, has proven very popular, and sportier and more elaborate versions will be offered in various lines.

The year '57, rather than '56, should bring quite a few major body changes as well as some other advances in engineering details.

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