

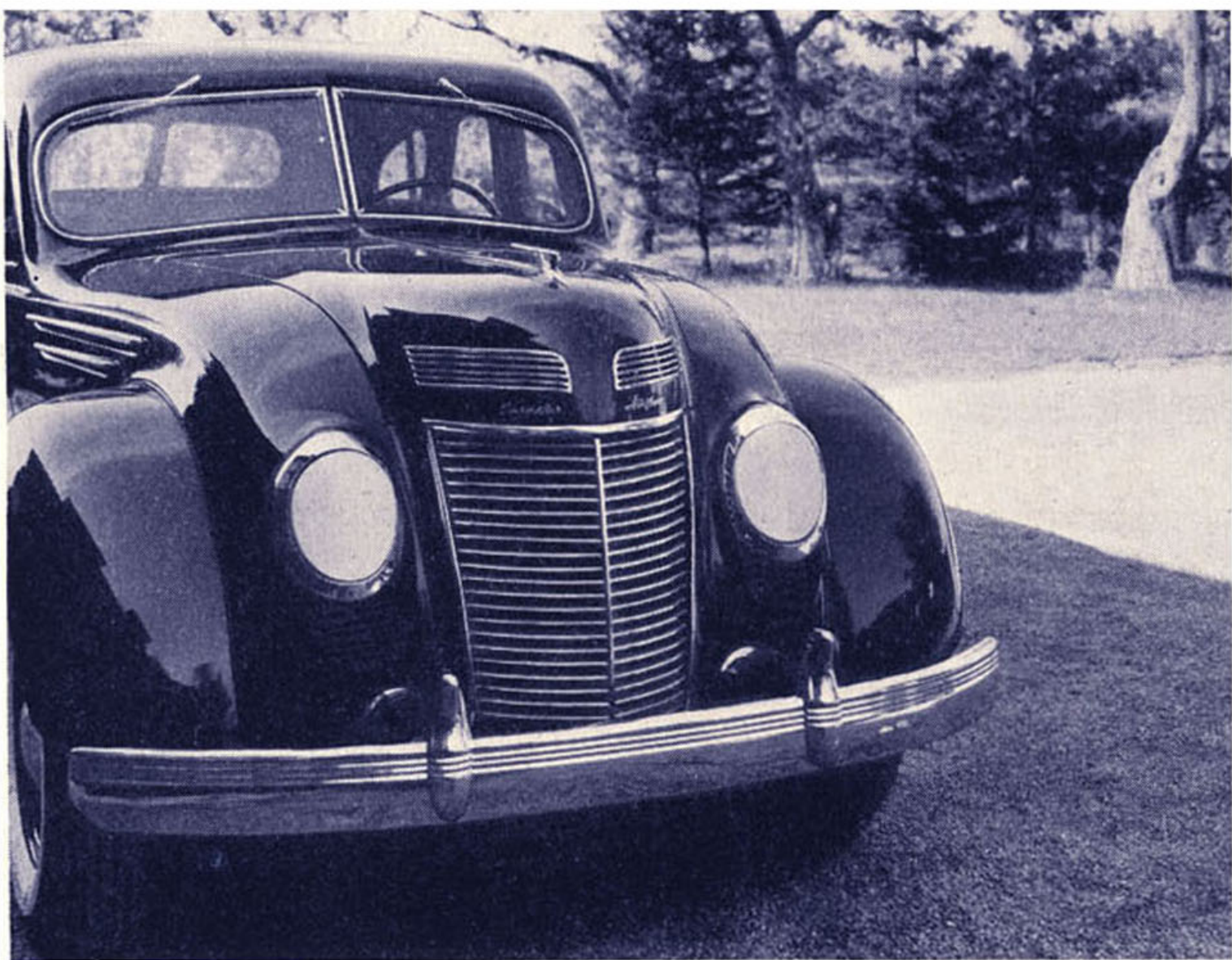
## NEXT YEAR'S CARS

1937 AUTOMOBILES OFFER A STILL GREATER OPPORTUNITY TO THE ARTIST-DESIGNER

By EGMONT ARENS



**1937 PONTIAC DE LUXE SIX** still features the "silver streak" waterfall grille that distinguished its cars the past two seasons. Note also the side louvres extending forward to amalgamate with radiator grille



**EGMONT ARENS**, industrial designer, who predicts in this article that automobile manufacturers must now turn to artists to achieve beauty of line and individuality for their cars

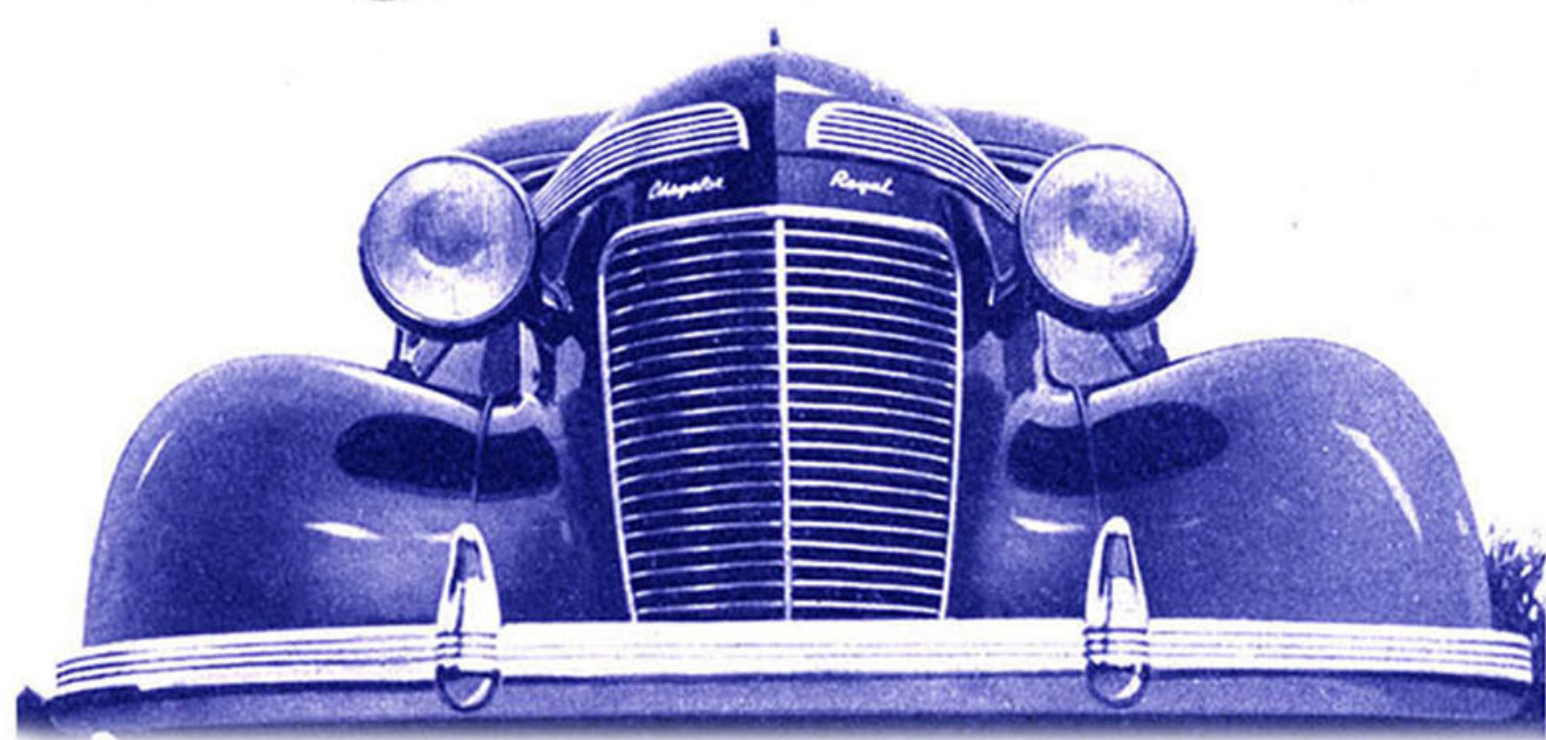
**P**ERHAPS it was just one of life's little ironies that overtook the automobile manufacturers a year ago. In their zeal to provide what they called "streamlined" design, they took the tear-drop for their model, and the results were tearful indeed—to the sales managers. For they all looked alike. The Pierce-Arrow at ten thousand dollars looked like the Chevrolet at seven hundred and fifty, bigger, but not quite as up-to-date, and a General Motors car could only be distinguished from a Nash or a Plymouth by the gadgets and name plates. The be-all and end-all of streamlining is nothing more or less than an elongated egg, and the 1936 automobile show revealed all the eggs in one basket.



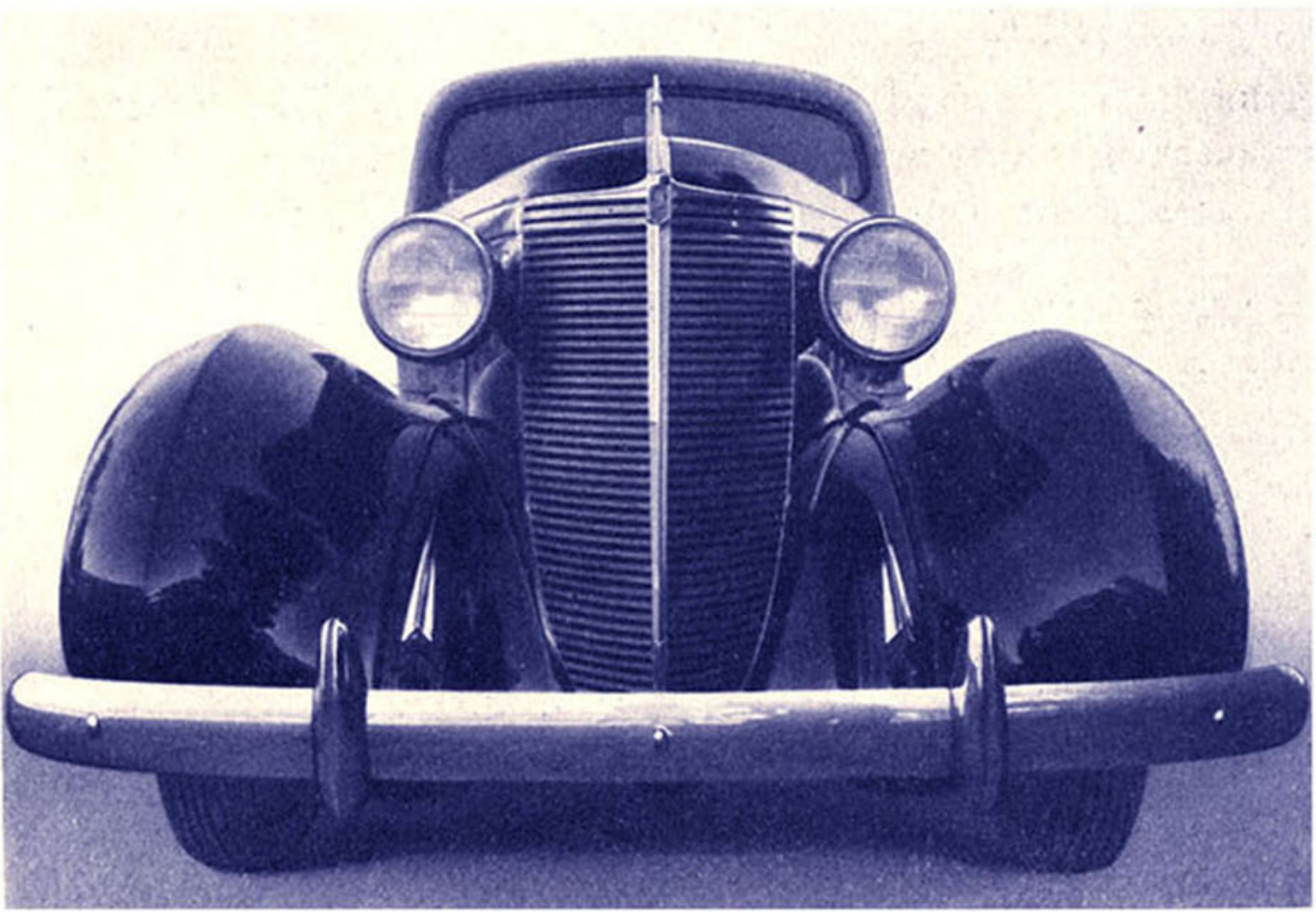
## *The Cars of 1937*

There were a few exceptions to this general lack of uniformity, notable among which were Cord, Lincoln-Zephyr, Mr. William B. Stout's Scarab, and Pontiac. Because the first three were somewhat out of the popular price class, Pontiac won a golden harvest of sales based mainly on the car's different appearance. The "silver streak" grille running down from the cowl along the top of the hood and over the radiator (like a waterfall) gave Pontiac a note of individuality which made this at least the most conspicuous egg in the basket.

I predicted at last year's show that there would be a turning away from mere bulbosity by the manufacturers and that they would have to begin the search for individuality and



CHRYSLER ROYAL, 1937. Note how the louvre grille has been elongated and pulled around almost to the nose, giving the car a look of sleek speed



FRONT END OF NASH LAFAYETTE 400 has smart horizontal lines on sharp-nosed radiator grille. Note the sharp crease at the prow. Note also the crease interrupting the curve of the mudguard, an attempt to get away from the monotony of bulbosity

differentiation. You may see the beginnings of this search in the 1937 models. They look less alike. There seems to be a growing conviction that good automobile design is some-differentiation. You may see the beginnings of this search in the 1937 models. They look less alike. There seems to be a growing conviction that good automobile design is something more than copying the lines of an aeroplane, or a blimp. The engineers could do

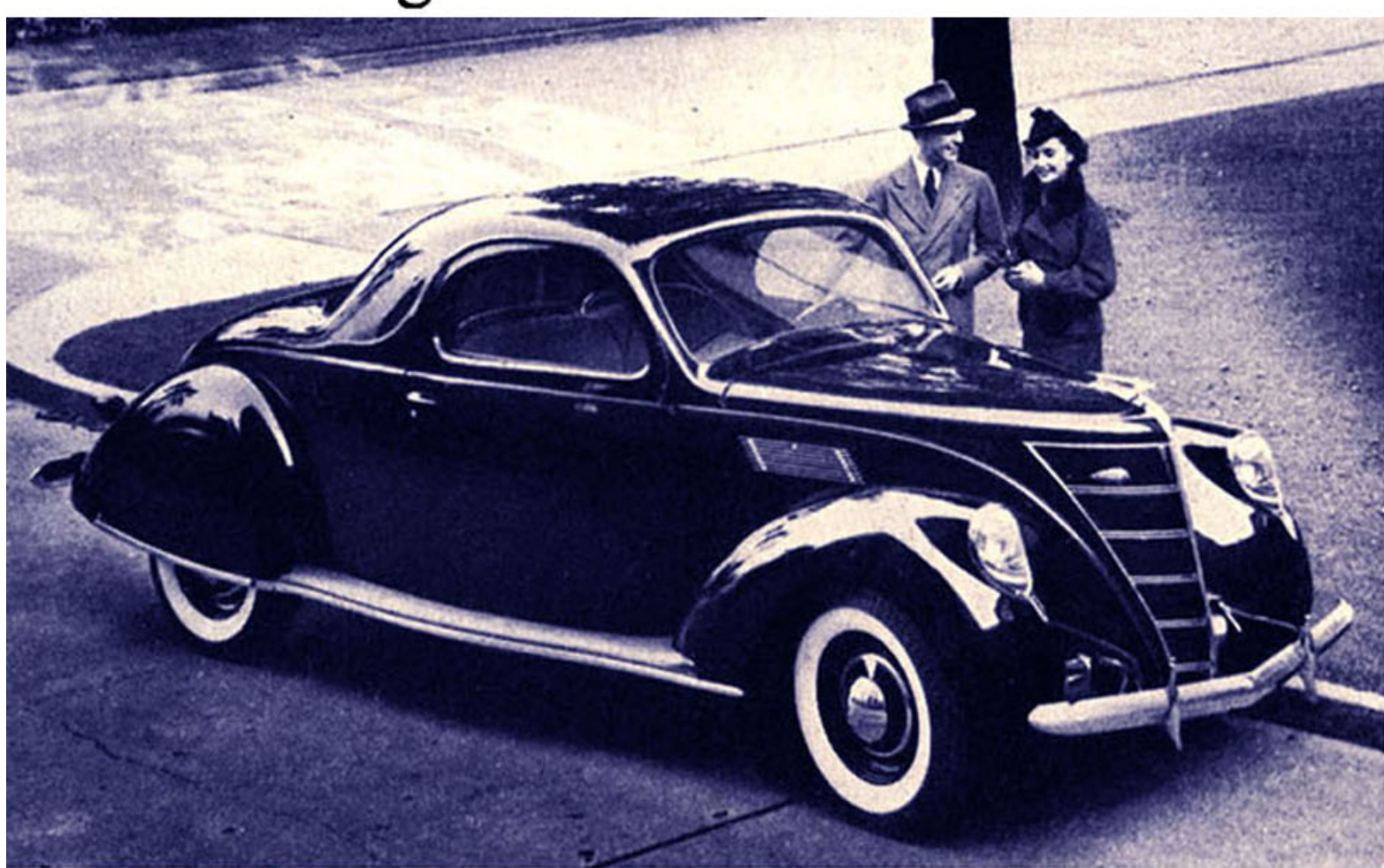


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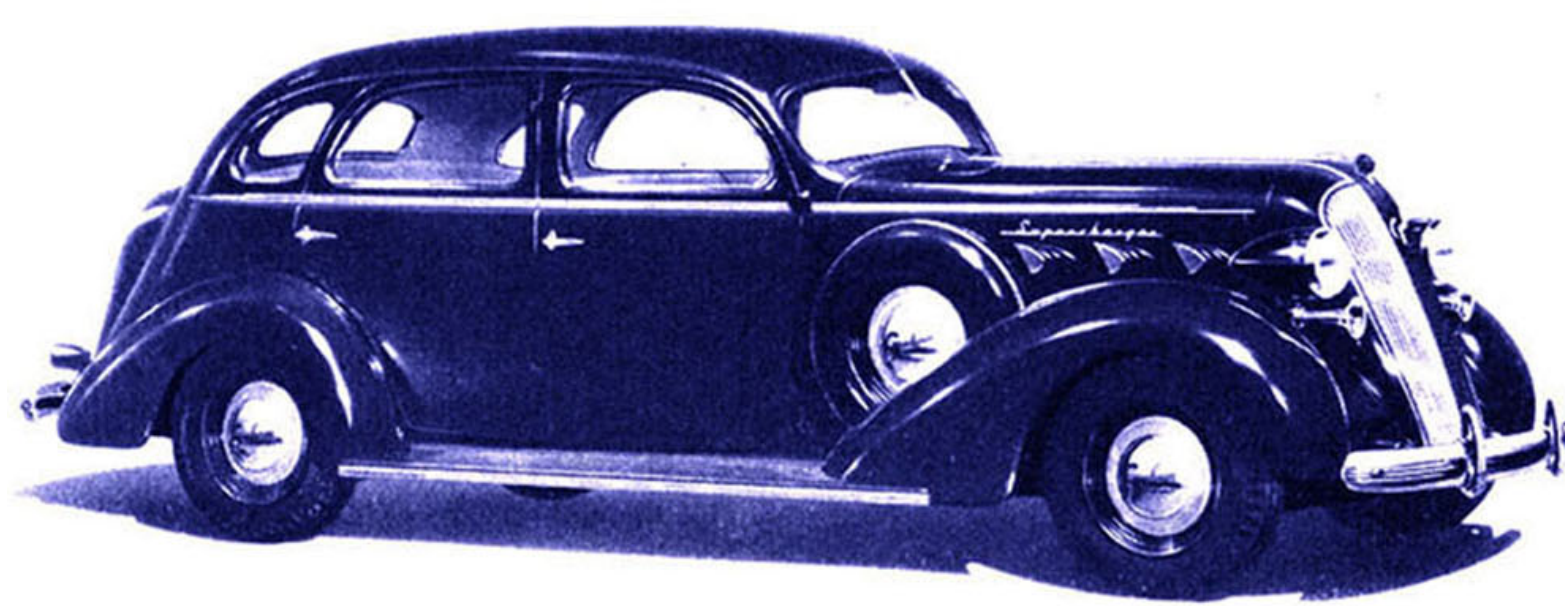
that with their compasses on a drawing board. But design is a subtle and elusive thing that cannot be mechanized—cannot be divorced too long from the human element.

Now I predict that the artists, the industrial designers, will be called in to complete this job of giving the cars individual beauty, distinction, and human appeal. The artist begins where the engineer leaves off—and now that the automobile has been well nigh perfected, as a mechanism, it remains to be humanized.

The word “streamlining” got everybody a little confused, I am afraid, and off the track. Here was a term out of aerodynamics, invented by engineers to describe a solid shape that moves easily through fluid mediums, as the wings and fuselage of an aeroplane. The human eye responded gratefully to the flow of line prescribed by the laws of physics, and thus streamlining became synonymous with modern beauty. Industrial designers sprang up at every hand, and their main business was “streamlining.”



**LINCOLN - ZEPHYR 1937 COUPE.** A prow pointed almost as sharply as a sailboat gives the Zephyr a greyhound sleekness that could not be achieved with teardrop streamlining.



**GRAHAM SUPERCHARGER, 1937.**

The dreadnaught shape of the prow is a recent discovery of automobile designers, giving the car a look of power and speed. At high speeds this front tends to make the car hug the road.

Yet streamlining is nothing new. It was probably invented by a fish in some prehistoric sea. Birds took it out of the water and into the air. Any bodies in nature that have to move with speed through gas or fluid must



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have it. Note the line along the back of a greyhound, or a racehorse, or a girl doing the swan dive. Hogarth noted the same line along the back of a nude and called it "the line of beauty." Long before Hogarth, Da Vinci made some notes about a certain serpentine curve that seemed to be inevitably a part of beautiful form. The Greeks, too, had a word for it. To this day, judges of good form at a horse show or a dog show or a diving exhibit withhold points if that serpentine line is not present. The car designers of today are concerned with the passengers inside the car, and from that point of view develop outward, as it were, a vehicle for safe, efficient, comfortable, and pleasurable transportation. The engineer had become a "humaner." I believe that this approach will revolutionize automobile design during the next few years, for other manufacturers will have to follow.

Obviously the interior is the place to begin humanizing an automobile. for it offers more [OldMagazineArticles.com](http://OldMagazineArticles.com) more directly upon the comfort and conveniences of the passengers than any other part. Let Mr. Stout tell how he went at his job: "Human measurements established seat heights, which in turn established location of the controls, steering wheel, the window and ceiling heights. This demonstrated how interior design should and did influence exterior design, instead of the usual procedure, wherein the interior is considered after the exterior styling has been completed." As a result of Mr. Stout's combination of engineering and "humanizing" the Scarab is the most luxurious vehicle on wheels. It puts the so-called luxury cars like Dusenbergs or Rolls-Royces in the same plane of comfort as the old-fashioned Pullman, that long last rampart of stiff-backed riding. Mr. Stout has put the engine in the rear and the driver up front where he can see, and has extended the inside room of the car to the outside line of the now obsolete running boards. That makes the interior spacious enough to allow for a full length couch. The ride of the car is so smooth that chairs need no longer be anchored to the floor, but are movable. To complete the list of home comforts in this car would use up all my space—a table for eating luncheons en route, "or playing cards or dominoes," is not the least of these.

Mr. Stout is not the only manufacturer who calls his car "the automobile of tomor-

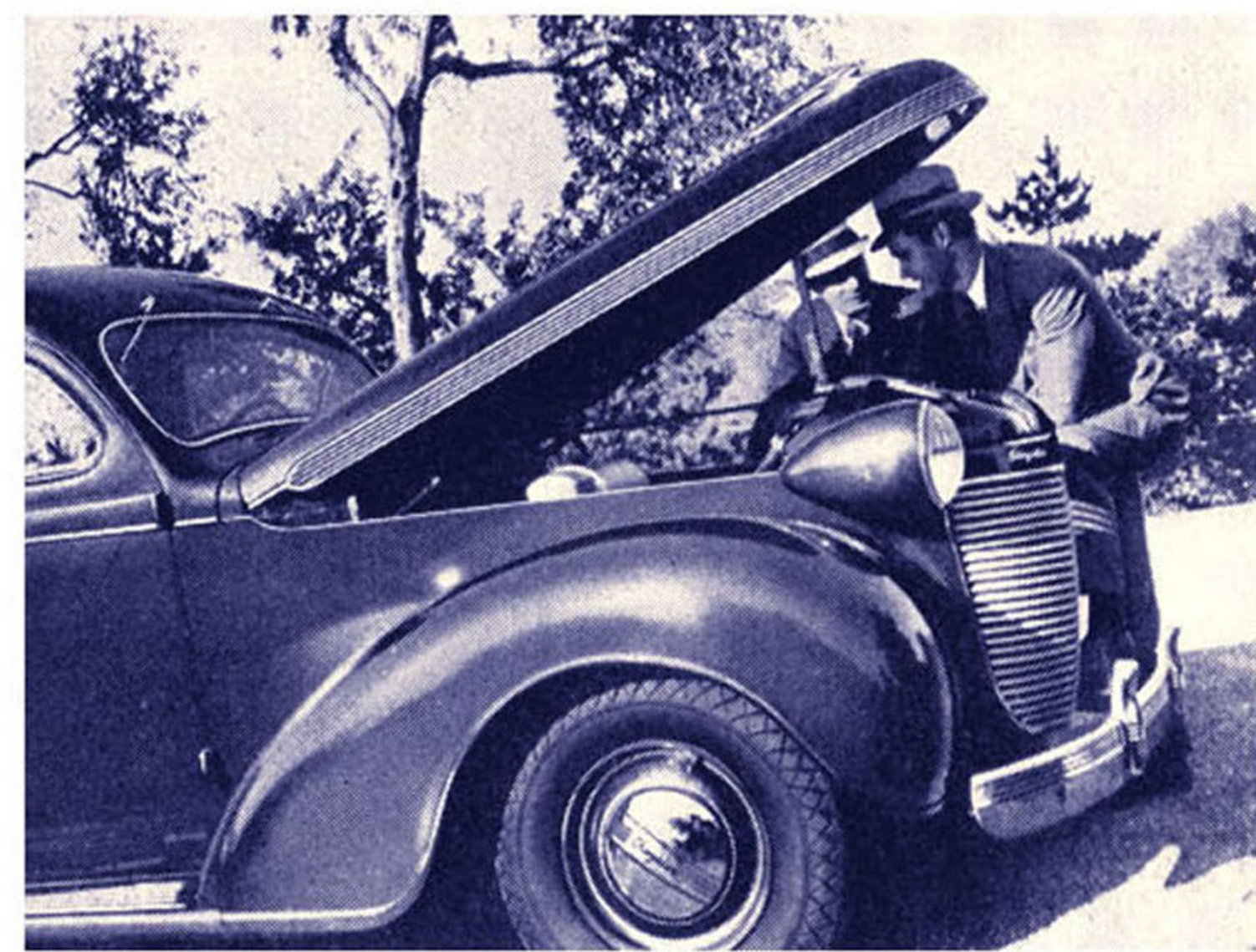
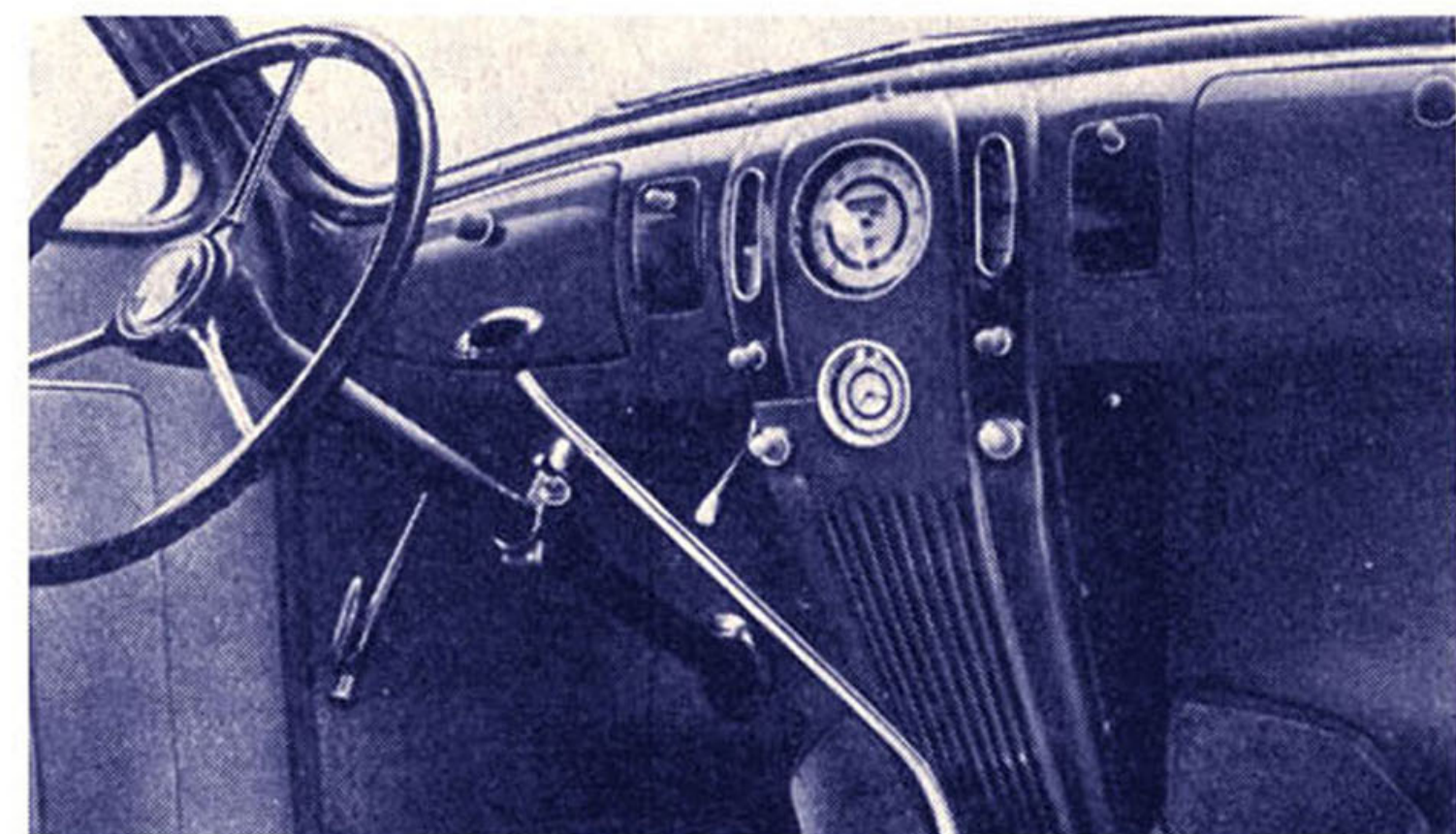
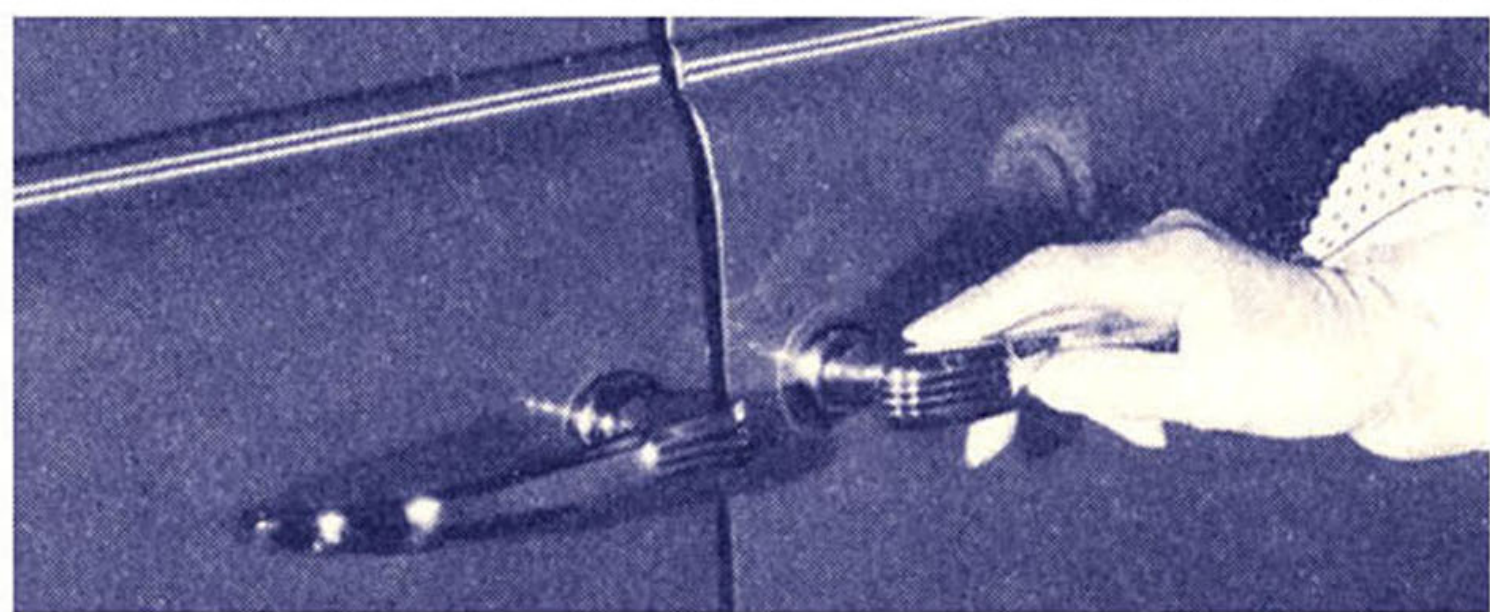
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row." Chrysler, Lincoln-Zephyr, and Cord, although they have been less thorough than Scarab in their innovations, are nevertheless pointing the way to the new tendency in automobile design—to take performance for granted and to work for human comfort and convenience. It is interesting to note that these four cars went so far ahead of the procession a year or two ago that they have not changed their basic lines this year. They are waiting for the public to catch up to them.

Chrysler ran away with the 1933 automobile shows with his Airflow model, which was the most extreme departure from conventional design that this country had then seen in a factory output job. In that one model he introduced so many innovations in engineering, riding comfort, and exterior design that rival manufacturers have been breathless ever



*Top:* **PONTIAC 1937.** Even the door handles have been "humaneered." Pleasant to the hand, the points are curved inward to avoid catching and tearing clothing. *Center:* **LINCOLN-ZEPHYR 1937.** A fine example of integrating various functional elements is this vertical instrument panel which reaches down to the top of the transmission housing and encloses both car heater and radio. *Bottom:* **CHRYSLER ROYAL 1937.** The alligator hood makes it possible to shoo away the flock of chromium gadgets that hitherto have nested on the nose of a car



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since trying to catch up. The Airflow was not entirely successful from a design standpoint, because many of the innovations in structure had not been fully digested by the designers, but it was many steps in the right direction, and needed only the modification of detail, like that incorporated in the 1937 Chrysler, to bring it very near current perfection. Among other innovations was the "alligator" hood, which lifts up in one piece from the front like the mouth of an alligator, thus greatly simplifying the diverse elements of the nose of the car which have been hitherto so distracting to designers. Lincoln-Zephyr picked up this hood motif, and by avoiding some of the design pitfalls of the first Chrysler Airflows, and refining the front end with a sharper point, came closer to achieving a fine flowing line that was authentic automobile design and no longer derivative of aeronautical streamlining.



**SCARAB 1937.** All the comforts of home and none of the discomforts make the interior of Scarab the most luxurious car of the year. The full-length couch and the table are innovations that the public will appreciate.

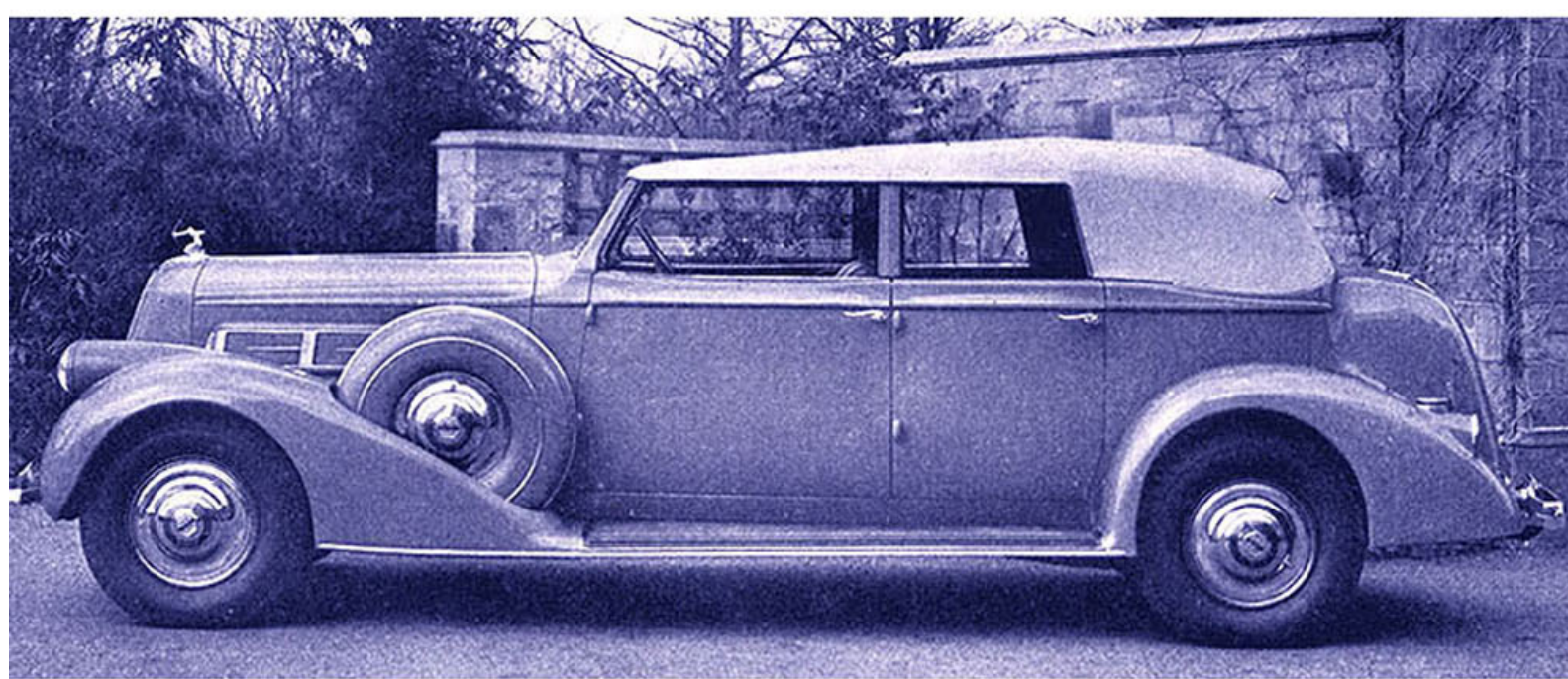
It was the Cord, however, which last year achieved a design triumph with its horizontal grille running from the front around both sides. This device, surmounted by the one piece "alligator" hood, integrates the diverse design elements of hood wings, radiator grille, grille frame, and louvres. The horizontal lines of the grille give the car a look of ele-



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gance and speed, and eliminate, forever I hope, all the chromium gadgets that hitherto seemed inevitably to congregate on a car's nose. Simplification of a mechanism as complex as an automobile is not easy, and can only be achieved by a series of design amalgamations, i.e., by pulling together a variety of functions within a single design element. This Cord job may be considered a brilliant advance in automobile design for that reason, and you may be sure that other manufacturers will come as close to copying it as they dare. Cord has further simplified the front of the car by putting the lamps under the mudguard—closing them up for daytime travel. Cord's front-wheel drive makes for many engineering innovations that increase driving comfort and road safety at high speeds.

Tendencies of 1937 are in line with the pioneering work of the cars just described. With Scarab farthest in front from the "humaneeing" standpoint, and Cord leading in design, Lincoln-Zephyr and Chrysler Airflow are now running neck and neck for third place. The latter having refined the lines that made for too much pudginess up front, is now emerging with a car that has a look of sleek power. Chrysler's Royal has borrowed the horizontal louvre lines and has pulled them well forward around the curve of the nose.



**PIERCE-ARROW CONVERTIBLE SEDAN 1937**

Powered by a V-12 Engine, developing 185 Horsepower

While the cheaper cars cannot afford to experiment and must therefore let the pioneering be done with the expensive makes, it is encouraging to see that Ford is designing for eye resistances rather than wind resistances, and that both Plymouth and Chevrolet are beginning the job of "humaneeing" their interiors. Better front and rear visibility, more luggage capacity, elimination of running board, angled windows to avoid reflection glare, simplification of instrument panels, and additional interior conveniences are some of the improvements that we will be seeing incorporated in all makes during those years of increasing grace, 1937 and 1938.



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