



# LA BELLE EPOCH, LA FIN DE FACEL

It was the glamorous ride of celebrities, royalty, and racing drivers. Facel's swan song combined European elegance with American brute force, menacing and defiant to the end.

Twin stacked headlights cruising silently across rows of trees, the moon shining through the rolled-back canvas roof, the soft glow of Jaeger gauges below your deer-skin-gloved hands. In pre-war France, grand touring took on its own form of high art: the curvaceous stylings of Delage, Delahaye, Bugatti, and Voisin were designed to capture the imagination when sighted in motion, up to and over 100 miles per hour. Always fast, but never in a hurry. May we never forget that the French essentially invented the automobile and indeed the long-distance road race; they may have also created haute cuisine and lovemaking, too, but that is a topic for a different day.

The Facel Vega Facel II of 1962 was the culmination of a pre-war dream. It was the final car built by Facel, a company whose place in the grande routière tradition was unquestionable. Nearly every vehicle produced by Facel was hand-crafted, long and sleek like an optical illusion, rightly deserving of a spot alongside other illustrious pre-war marques. Moreover, this last Facel was the sleekest and fastest of all, representing the ambitions of a man who had always envisioned great things for the automobile. Even throughout austerity and the hardships of war-torn Europe, among the microcars and wide-spread necessity for basic transportation, founder Jean Daninos—a flamboyant and

One of the most beautiful grand tourers to emerge from France was also one of the fastest (*opposite*).

The Facel II's full-width dashboard was actually metal, hand-painted to mimic wood (*above*).