

The Newest Thing On Wheels

The Edsel Show, starring Bing Crosby with Frank Sinatra, Rosemary Clooney, and Louis Armstrong, broadcast live from CBS Television City in Hollywood on October 13, 1957. Ford Motor Company's Edsel was launched on September 7, 1957. After years of hype, the Edsel enjoyed more pre-introduction hoopla than any car in history! The '58 Edsel generated more showroom traffic on introduction day than any car in history. Huge lines of people waited patiently for a peek at the new Edsel at brand new Edsel showrooms all over the United States, while the soaped up showroom windows were wiped clean to unveil "The Newest Thing on Wheels".



Ford authorized a huge star studded network television spectacular to give their new Edsel the most exposure. Bing Crosby was hired to host a live jazz music extravaganza on CBS Television shortly after the Edsel's introduction. Crosby convinced Frank Sinatra, Rosemary Clooney, and Louis Armstrong to join him with a surprise visit by Bob Hope. Those well known and loved entertainers were at the peak of their careers at the time, and their presence assured a massive audience. The Edsel



Show telecast was one of the highest rated programs that year! If you were alive, and lived in the USA in 1957, there is no way you didn't know that Ford was introducing and all new car! It was the biggest car hype in history!

In spite of the popularity of the Edsel Show and the unprecedented publicity preceding the launch, the Edsel quickly lost favor as the new model failed to live up to the hype. The styling was unique and interesting but not widely accepted by the masses, and the car quickly became the butt of

jokes. The top comedians of the day seized every opportunity to throw jabs at the Edsel's unique front grille. Roy Brown, Ford's head stylist in charge of the Edsel Program, had designed the grille to be a throw back to the glory days of the ultra luxury cars of the 30's, to create a car that would have instant recognition from a block away. Later in the year, the grille was scoffed at frequently on national television by Bob Hope and others relating the style to an "Olds sucking a lemon". Ford tried to give the Edsel a new look over the next two years, but it seems the damage was done. In November of '59, Ford pulled the plug on Edsel... it was the end of the line.

In my lifetime, I have never known more hype for a new car. I'll never forget all the hubbub over that car. I have to say that, at just barely 9 years old, I liked the car and bought many AMT 3 in 1 models of the '58 Edsel to build and play with. I still like the car to this day. I watched that Edsel Show with my family that night, way back in October of '57, and never forgot it. The Ranger and Pacer were basically Fords meaning that they shared basic sheet metal and chassis with regular production Ford. The Corsair and Citation shared basic sheet metal and chassis with Mercury. The only problem with the Edsel, in my mind, was the push button drive. Unlike Chrysler Corporation's reliable push button transmission equipped cars of the day which were operated by cables, the Edsel set up was electric, with solenoids and electric motor operation shifting gears. The system operates similar to the retractable convertible of the time, so naturally I have no fear of it. I believe the mechanics of the time were ill prepared to diagnose problems. I have never encountered a problem with an Edsel that I couldn't easily figure out, and I have been involved with many of them.

Candidly, I have been looking for a nice example of a '58 Edsel Pacer two door hardtop for quite some time. I think a '58 Edsel would round off the collection nicely. Owning cars from '57 to '60 would be a very rewarding to me, as those years were the best of times in my memory. It's only fitting; the Edsel is different, as I am, so I like it a lot. Ah the 50's... there will never be another time like that!

Happy Motoring,

Dennis M. Vieira

