

## The Story of the Nash-Healey

Nash Motors (which in 1954 became a part of American Motors Corporation) early in 1951 brought out the Nash-Healey, the first sports car to be introduced by a U. S. manufacturer in 20 years.

Donald Healey, managing director of the Donald Healey Motor Company of Warwick, England, had built a special sports car, using a Nash Ambassador engine and drive line, which he entered in the 24-hour LeMans endurance race in July, 1950. So well did the sports car perform in the race (finishing fourth) that Nash elected to contract for a limited number of the sports model.

For the new production Nash-Healey, the high-compression, 6-cylinder Nash Ambassador engine was fitted with an aluminum head and dual carburetors. Overdrive was standard. The prototype, which had an aluminum body built by the Healey company, was shown publicly for the first time at the Paris Automobile Show in early fall of 1950.

Production began in December of 1950. In that month, 36 models were built. An additional 68 were produced in the months of January, February and March of 1951. All were 2-door convertibles.

General specifications of the initial 1951 Nash-Healey included, as standard equipment, leather upholstery, adjustable steering wheel, directional signals, chrome wheel discs, foam rubber cushions and five 4-ply whitewall tires. Standard colors were Champagne Ivory and Sunset Maroon. (No other colors were available.)

The 6-cylinder engine, of 234.8 cubic inch displacement (3847 c. c.), had 125 horsepower, 8:1 compression ratio, 7-main-bearing crankshaft; intake manifold sealed-in-head and two S. U. side-draft carburetors. Other details -- torque-tube drive; rear coil springs; tires 6.40 x 15; 20 U. S. gallon fuel tank; plexiglas side windows. Dimensions -- overall length 170 inches, width 60 inches, wheelbase 102 inches, tread 53 inches front and rear, turning radius 17 feet 6 inches, road clearance 7 inches, weight 2400 pounds.

No Nash-Healeys were made from April 1951 until January 1952, when an entirely new roadster body was created by Pinin Farina of Turin, Italy. A total of 150 of these 1952 convertible models were produced.

By this time, the Nash-Healey was truly an international car. The engine and main parts were manufactured by Nash at its plant in Kenosha, Wisconsin, then shipped to England, where the chassis with "trailing link" front-end suspension was added by the Donald Healey Company. The chassis with engines were then shipped to Turin, Italy, where the custom body was built by hand by Farina. The new Farina-designed Nash-Healey was shown for the first time at the Chicago Automobile Show in February, 1952.

A Nash-Healey took first place in its class (behind a Ferrari and a Talbot) and third among all entries in the 1952 LeMans sports car race in France. Fifty-eight cars had started, and only 17 finished.

In January, 1953, a Farina-designed hardtop model was added to the Nash-Healey series. In 1953, a total of 162 roadsters and hardtops were built.

Dimensions of the two models were as follows:

	<u>Convertible</u>	<u>Hardtop</u>
Wheelbase	102"	108"
Overall Length	170.75"	180.5"
Width	64"	65.87"
Height	48.65"	55"
Tread, Front	53"	53"
Rear	54.87"	54.87"

Nash-Healeys with the Donald Healey Company body all had the 234.8 cubic inch (3.8-litre) engine or "small six." A few of the early models with Farina bodies also had this engine. All others were powered by the larger bore 252.6 cubic inch (4.1-litre) engine which used a pair of side-draft Carter carburetors in place of the earlier SU carburetor versions. How to ascertain which engine is in a Nash-Healey model is to check the car serial and engine numbers. If the serial number is under N2250 and if the engine number is below 1163, it is a 3.8-litre engine. If the numbers are higher, the car has a 4.1-litre engine.

The 1953 Nash-Healey hardtop (designated as the LeMans hardtop) was awarded first prize in March of that year in the Italian International Concours D'elegance held at Tresa, Italy.

From January, 1954 through August of 1954, a total of 90 hardtop Nash-Healey models (designated as 1954 models) were built. The 1954 hardtop featured rear window pillars that sloped to the front. No convertibles were made in 1954. This brought to 402 the number of Nash-Healeys with Farina bodies. It also brought an end to the production of the famed Nash-Healey sports car, with a total of 506 having been built from December, 1950 through August, 1954.

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February 20, 1969