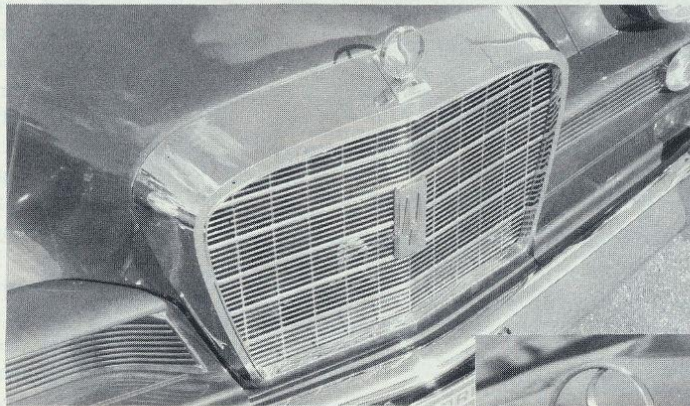


1964 STUDEBAKER GRAN TURISMO HAWK

EUROSPORT SOUTH BEND STYLE



A Mercedes-inspired grille shell was just one of a handful of styling tricks used by Brooks Stevens' design team to reshape the well-worn Hawk image in 1962. By 1964, only a few small details had changed — the distinctive "circle S" hood ornament (also Mercedes-inspired?) was added and the grillwork revamped.

Readers may remember *CAR COLLECTOR'S* coverage of Don McCullen's '57 Studebaker Golden Hawk in the February 1991 issue — "a huff and a puff couldn't blow Detroit down" was the somewhat appropriate title for yet another tragic tale of South Bend's stumblings. Despite appearances by various truly great automotive creations, "it just wasn't meant to be," concluded the article. Mentioned in the same breath as the supercharged Golden Hawk were the timeless Avanti, untimely Lark and oft-times forgotten Gran Turismo Hawk.

"Unforgettable is a fair description for the Avanti," understated the author back in February's issue. "Many remember the Lark because of its mass-market appeal," he continued. "And the GT Hawk? Since it's not the star of this month's long-winded lecture, we'll let it continue to rest in peace — for now."

Six months later, the GT Hawk's turn has come up.

Introduced for 1962, the Gran Turismo Hawk emerged to help promote sagging Studebaker sales by appealing to sport-minded buyers in much the same fashion as earlier Hawk offerings. Based on the

ever-present "Loewy coupe" design of 1953 (which we all know was the work of stylist Robert Bourke), Studebaker's Hawks first appeared in 1956, hot on the heels of the definitely sporty President Speedster. With two seats, wire wheelcovers and 185 horses, the limited-edition Speedster established an attractive "Euro-style" precedent, but sadly was a one-year wonder.

In 1956, though the topline 275bhp Golden Hawk attempted to follow in the President's footsteps, it just wasn't quite the same; the big Packard V-8 under the Golden Hawk's hood made the car excessively nose-heavy, and handling suffered accordingly. In '57 and '58, corrections were made using the lighter 289cid Studebaker V-8, in concert with a McCulloch supercharger, but few customers seemed to care. By 1959, the somewhat sexy supercharged Golden Hawk was gone, leaving the more mundane Silver Hawk to carry on alone. Then the following year, the name simply became Hawk, and the reputation became anything but sporty.

That situation changed for the better in 1961. A Borg-Warner four-speed

BY MIKE MUELLER

Identifying a '64 GT Hawk from the rear was made easier by the deletion of the '62 and '63's rear deck insert. The rest of the car was basically a direct carry over from Stevens' initial '62 restyle. Of the 1767 GT Hawks built for 1964, 1484 were sold in the US and 283 were exported; 224 six-cylinder models were built (for export only), 167 were equipped with the R1 Avanti V-8, while 70 came with the R2 supercharged engine. This Bermuda Brown example is owned by Lawrence Golub of Longwood, Florida.



transmission option, coupled with sporty interior appointments, helped revive hot-blooded images, while the term "Gran Turismo" appeared for the first time in ads referring to the new Hawk. Of course, the "new" '61 Hawk was not much more than the same old '50s Hawk, which was not much more than the timeless '53 Loewy coupe with fins slapped on top of the rear quarters. Sure, the look was interesting, but enough was enough.

Recognizing this, newly appointed president Sherwood Egbert moved fast in an attempt to turn things around in South Bend. With little money and even less time, he kicked off a three-pronged counterattack in an attempt to turn back those among Studebaker's own board of directors who would've just as soon cut losses and ended automobile production right then and there. Leading his offensive

would be the Avanti, while flanking maneuvers would fall to revamped renditions of the Lark and Hawk.

For the latter two models, Egbert chose his friend, designer Brooks Stevens, to do the honors, much to the eventual dismay of Raymond Loewy. As disgusted as Loewy was when the definitely new Gran Turismo Hawk appeared in the summer of 1961, most everyone else agreed Stevens had pulled off a miracle. Faced with a paltry budget of only \$7 million for both Lark and Hawk retools, he began work at his Milwaukee studios in March 1961. In July, a GT Hawk prototype rolled into South Bend. That the job took less than five months was impressive in itself; that Stevens managed to teach an old dog new tricks with his hands tied behind his back was doubly of note.

Obviously limited to a glorified face-lift, Stevens managed to add a little here and take away a bit there until he had created a distinctive look all its own. Up front, a Mercedes-inspired grille shell led the way for the long hood with its polite "scoop." Body sides were cleaned up considerably and were accentuated with full-length rocker panel brightwork. In back, the Hawk's trademark fins were stripped off and new taillights were added. To make sure buyers didn't recognize the same decklid used on all Hawk models from '56 to '63, Stevens covered the recessed area on the back panel with ornamental grillwork.

Most noticeable among Stevens work was the new top, which carried an uncanny resemblance to the Thunderbird's formal roofline. It was this new roof – in concert with the trimmed-down quarters



A 289cid/210bhp V-8 was standard fare for the GT Hawk throughout its sale in this country (export models got six-cylinders or the smaller 259cid V-8). Lawrence Golub's '64 GT Hawk has the optional Carter AFB 4v carburetor, which upped the output ante to 225 horses. Solid lifters, 8.5:1 compression and dual exhausts were also part of the package. Chrome engine dress-up was optional.

Bucket seats, a simulated wood dash and full instrumentation were all GT Hawk trademarks. Options on this example include the three-speed Flightomatic automatic transmission, power steering, hang-on air conditioning, AM/FM, as well as various trim baubles and convenience items.



and super clean slab sides – that helped set the '62 GT Hawk apart from its warmed-over predecessors. Underneath, the body was still Bourke's classic '53 concoction, and the Hawk's traditional beak remained apparent in front despite the new grille. Yet the overall package came off amazingly refreshing. A classic restyle on top of a classic design? You be the judge.

As impressive as Stevens' exterior efforts were, what his crew did *inside* helped clinch the deal. Studebaker's flashy models had always ranked head and shoulders above the rest when it came to interior appointments, and the GT Hawk was no exception. Bucket seats, an attractive dash sporting a simulated wood veneer applique and an optional tachometer helped keep the spirit of the Speedster alive. An available floor-shifter, tied to a four-speed manual transmission, also assisted in the image department.

Standard power came from the 289cid/210bhp Thunderbolt V-8, which relied on a Stromberg 2v carburetor. With the optional Carter 4v, output was upped to 225 horses. In either case, a three-speed manual transmission came in the deal, while overdrive, the aforementioned four-speed and the Flightomatic automatic waited in the wings at additional cost.

Adding the final touch was the name, copied from sporty European counterparts, which Studebaker had been emulating for years. "Gran Turismo" – both

title and image suited the car well, or at least *Motor Trend's* testers thought so. "A willing and able car definitely in the tradition of the high-speed tourers of Europe," was their testament. Too bad few buyers in this country cared about such things in the early '60s. Though initial orders for what was more or less a limited-edition package looked promising – 9335 customers were drawn in by the Gran Turismo image in 1962 – Studebaker's fate was all but sealed, and sporty imagery wasn't going to distract those with a mind to nail the coffin shut.

Nonetheless, the story continued for two more years – and in exciting fashion to boot. In 1963, GT Hawk buyers could choose from two optional power sources borrowed from the Avanti, the so-called R1 and R2 V-8s. Using a conventional 4v carburetor, the 289cid R1 was rated at 240bhp, while the Paxton-supercharged R2 reportedly put out an estimated 290 horses (no exact figure was ever given). Despite the influx of muscle, sales dropped to 4634, a figure probably more indicative of the state of affairs in South Bend than the GT Hawk's worthiness, or apparent lack thereof.

As fate would have it, Egbert and company saved the best for last, as Paxton Products vice president Andy Granatelli took a bevy of high-powered '64 Studebakers to Bonneville in September 1963 to show off the exotic R3 and R4 powerplants, as well as the ultra-exotic

500bhp R5 monster mill, each of which was capable of seemingly endless speed records but never saw the light of day as far as regular production was concerned. In all, 337 USAC records were set by Granatelli's Avantis, Larks and Hawks on the salt, although the impressive effort meant little as far as sales on the street went. One month after Granatelli's grand show, Paula Murphy got behind the wheel of a 304cid/280bhp R3-powered GT Hawk and hit 154mph – again, all for naught.

On December 9, 1963, Studebaker officials announced what many had feared for some time; after 111 years, the company was ceasing operations – at least in this country. Doors at the old – more accurately, ancient – South Bend facilities were closing as all efforts were refocused on production at the small Hamilton, Ontario, assembly plant. The last GT Hawk was built December 20. Total production for 1964 model was a mere 1767, again reflecting not at all on Egbert's plans, nor Stevens' efforts.

Like the Avanti, supercharged Golden Hawk and Lark, the Gran Turismo Hawk was certainly an intriguing automobile, if not a semi-great one. We can only wonder what may have been had the car been a product of one of the Big Three – but then again, none of them would've dared offer a Euro-style package to American buyers. After all, it just wasn't meant to be.

