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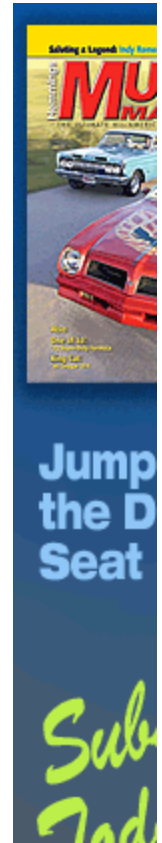
1961 NASH METROPOLITAN CONVERTIBLE

Hemmings Classic Car - OCTOBER 1, 2005 - BY [CRAIG FITZGERALD](#)

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In his book *The Metropolitan Story*, frequent *Hemmings Classic Car* contributor Pat Foster called the Metropolitan, "pure automotive whimsy. It was the perfect car for the young and carefree, and for the stylish, chic and smart." In the same paragraph, he also notes that it was a car of which "a multitude of others simply failed to understand its place in American culture." The Metropolitan's history reads like a perfect recipe for cult status.

Some confusion also existed as to what you were actually purchasing when you bought a Metropolitan. They were sold through Nash, Hudson and American Motors dealers, and the Met was a true crossover. It was built in England, but it was designed and engineered here in



the United States--specifically for use here--unlike other English cars that were intended for the tight urban and country roads of Great Britain, which didn't seem to work all that well traveling from one big American city to another.

The microcar was a European phenomenon specifically for this reason. Following World War II, the small countries of Europe were scrambling to build anything that resembled a manufacturing base. Motorcycles and sidecars were in use, but poor weather meant that they were an uncomfortable ride for the family. Microcars were developed using motorcycle and scooter running gear, and were a way for returning soldiers to work, and in turn, get to work.

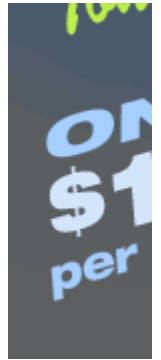
But the Nash Metropolitan--and infinitely more successfully, the Volkswagen Beetle and the Mini--drove a major nail in the microcar coffin by offering consumers cars that were, in fact, cars, and not converted two-stroke scooters with bodywork. Of course they were small, but they were designed to carry passengers in relative comfort and style.

The original prototype for the Metropolitan was designed by William Flajole, an independent contractor with Nash. The NXI, as it was called, debuted at car shows across the country in 1950. Full-scale production came in 1954.

Economical, yet a joy to drive, it was a car that appealed to an eclectic mix of Americans. At its introduction, it was the first American car that was marketed specifically to women, beating out the Dodge La Femme by a year. Its first spokesperson was Evelyn Ay Sempier, Miss America 1954. Advertisements for the car appeared prominently in *Women's Wear Daily*. Later brochures for the car exclaimed, "The Personal Car for Girls on the Go!" or "It's love at first Ride for Girls On the Go...airline stewardesses, nurses, schoolteachers, secretaries, college students."

The watershed year for Metropolitan production was 1959. That year, 20,435 were produced at Austin's Longbridge factory. Our profile car, a 1961, was one of the slightly revamped models introduced that year. Alongside it, AMC introduced a completely new Rambler American, which could account for the fact that Nash managed to sell a grand total of only 853 Metropolitans that year. That makes this 1961 model somewhat special, but like the final years of the cultish Corvair, there are questions about build quality on cars that were no longer seen as desirable. But if it has made it this long, that's probably a moot point.

Like a lot of Metropolitans that are gussied up for resale, or mainly for display use, our profile Met was the recipient of a pretty smooth, but ultimately quickie exterior respray that missed a lot of the details one would expect in a proper restoration. The trim and chrome were nearly perfect, but the seams were pretty crusty, and the door jambs were definitely painted as an afterthought. A newly painted dash and a brand new interior kept the visual interest high, but



a rough-running engine indicated that the "restoration" here had more of an eye toward aesthetics than mechanics.

Like all cult cars, Metropolitans have a dedicated fan base interested in preserving their memory. But those who are truly interested in these cars know exactly what they should pay for them and would never pay \$13,700 for a cosmetically restored car. On the other hand, their quirky nature means that they have unlimited appeal for well-heeled collectors looking to add a little funk to their collections.

Given the money paid for this example in the relative hinterland of Tulsa, Oklahoma, we figure that description probably fits the buyer.

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