

“Schnozzola”

By Jeff Kinzler



Jimmy Durante, (1893-1980) the late, great 20th century comic, singer and entertainer, was known for his funny songs, malapropisms and his trademark large nose, which he referred to as **“the Schnozzola.”** When you saw a portrait of that smiling fellow with the prominent nose, you just knew it was Durante.



While we might think of a person’s nose as a distinguishing mark of identity, it is not a far leap to think of the front of a car as a face and to think of the car’s features as human. **Anthropomorphism**, or the attribution of human characteristics to inanimate objects, seems to be deeply rooted in our psyche. The headlamps are analogues of our eyes and the front grille or hood suggest the nose and mouth. Illustrators and cartoonists have long imbued their depictions of autos with human-like qualities. And automobile designers have long understood that the “face” of a car is probably one of the strongest markers of identity that people associate with a particular brand.



Early automobile-themed sheet music

What classic auto enthusiast cannot easily recall the distinctive front end of the coffin nosed 1937 Cord, or of the 1940 Lincoln Continental as examples of famous car “faces”?



1937 Cord



1940 Lincoln Continental

By now you are probably wondering where this story is going. Well, it seems that Cadillac determined that their car would have to have a distinctive “face” that would help people recognize that they were looking at a Cadillac, and not some lesser automobile. This design developed from the continuous narrowing of the grille from about 1933 through 1940 until 1941, when the headlights were set into the front fenders, and the dome of the alligator-type hood was shaped into a rather sharp ‘beak’ or nose that extended downward to meet the upper horizontal grille bar that aligned with the headlights. This theme was carried forward, with a few exceptions, through the 1980s.

The photos below illustrate the evolution of Cadillac’s front styling that culminated in the new look for 1941.



1933



1934



1936



1938



1939



1941

Many consider the front styling of 1941 to be one Cadillac’s most distinguished and beautiful efforts. Although other makes were adopting similar designs around this time, Cadillac’s new face for 1941 established a strong identity and remained a principal styling theme for many years to come.

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