



ABOVE: THE ORIGINAL 1953 CADILLAC ELDORADO WAS A LIMITED EDITION SPECIAL, OF WHICH JUST A FEW HUNDRED WERE SOLD
BOTTOM: THE ELDORADO RETAINED MUCH THE SAME OVERALL LAYOUT FOR 11 YEARS, LATER MODELS USING THE INCREDIBLE 500CU.IN. (8.2-LITRE) V8. IT WAS EVENTUALLY DOWNSIZED AFTER THE 1978 MODEL YEAR. IT WAS THE VERY EPITOME OF AMERICAN EXCESS – A VAST ENGINE IN A HUGE, HEAVY CAR THAT ONLY HAD TWO DOORS!

several changes during its lifespan, but by 1962 a decision that would result in the most significant Cadillac of that decade had been reached; the new Cadillac would be driven by the front wheels. With that monumental decision accepted by the top brass the first prototypes were built utilising FWD technology.

At the same time as the designers and engineers were working on the new style and drivetrain, the marketing team were considering what to name the new Cadillac. The team considered reprising the old LaSalle nameplate, which was last affixed to what we would now call an 'entry level' model, but was then known as a 'companion car', e.g. one that could be sold cheaply without detracting from the upmarket image of the luxury models.

That nameplate was rejected after market research, but Cadillac was still going to go back to the history books to name its new model. GM was ready to roll out the front-wheel-drive platform a year ahead of Cadillac when the 1966 Olds Toronado hit the showrooms. The front-wheel drive Olds was a big hit, well received by both the press and the automobile buying public. Its handling and styling won much praise and Cadillac, who were determined to refine the package even further for their front-wheel-drive luxury liner, closely studied its year in the marketplace and subsequent shakedown on the freeways of American.

The fact that Cadillac took such a radical decision in releasing the Eldorado in the late Sixties is made all the more intriguing as the GM division was comfortably outselling its main rival Lincoln, with Caddy racking up sales of 200,000 to Lincoln's 34,333. Many car companies would have been happy to keep on producing exactly



the same cars that were filling their showrooms and the driveways of affluent Americans in such numbers, but Cadillac's decision to break with tradition was well researched and, buoyed by the success of the 1966 Olds, the new Cadillac debuted in 1967.

In keeping with their reserved image Cadillac's Eldorado launch was a fairly low-key affair. Period ads reassured nervous executive buyers that 'yes it's still a Cadillac', while extolling the many virtues the front-wheel drive package, offered.

Although the 1967 Eldorado was to be one of the most radical Cadillacs built to that date the division had looked back into its history books to choose the name. The Eldorado nameplate first appeared in 1953 as a limited edition model, with just 532 being built. Priced at \$7750 the Eldorado was then the most expensive domestic built car in the USA.

The 1953 Eldorado was, in keeping with its radical replacement, a very striking car. It featured a custom interior and a special cut-down panoramic windshield. The convertible top was hidden behind a metal boot, a styling clue that would later surface on the retractable hardtops of the late Fifties.

As mentioned Cadillac Division reaped the benefits of studying the Oldsmobile Tornado's year in the marketplace. As a result the Cadillac Eldorado won praise for refining the drive and ride quality of the front-wheel-drive Oldsmobile without sacrificing its road-holding capabilities.

THE 4600LB ELDORADO REQUIRED A LARGE POWERPLANT TO DELIVER THE KIND OF EFFORTLESS CRUISING DEMANDED BY THE LATE SIXTIES' CADILLAC BUYER. TO THAT END A 429 CUBIC INCH V8 WAS DEEMED FIT TO PROPEL THE RADICAL LUXURY LINER.

Road holding and Cadillac are not two words that usually appear in the same sentence, particularly when one is dealing with mid- to late-Sixties Cadillacs. While it is true to say that the FWD Eldorado would not outcorner an MG on the Pacific Coast Highway, the Caddy did deliver a different level of handling than the average Madison Avenue executive had ever experienced from the GM luxury division.

The 1967 Eldorado rode on a relatively compact (remember we are talking Sixties American automobiles here) 121-inch wheelbase. The luxury liner's front suspension consisted of torsion bars, A-arms and telescopic shocks. At the rear the suspension comprised of semi-elliptic leaf springs, coupled with four shock absorbers. Contributing greatly to the Eldorado's handling was a self-levelling control system.

The Cadillac Eldorado also featured a perimeter frame that was fully boxed in its entire length. The frame also featured hidden bulkheads, which added to the car's torsional rigidity. Naturally, the Eldorado featured a frame specially designed for its front-wheel drive and front and rear suspension set-ups.

A contemporary road test of the time pitted the Cadillac Eldorado against three 'leading European luxury cars'. According to the testers the Eldorado led the pack for 'ease of handling'. No doubt the Eldo was a better handling automobile than most US-built cars on the showroom floor in 1967, but it is worth remembering that the highly biased US auto writers of the day were generally in the habit of praising the most mundane domestic automobiles' abilities against foreign models.

The 4600lb Eldorado required a large powerplant to deliver the kind of effortless cruising demanded by the late Sixties' Cadillac buyer. To that end a 429 cubic inch V8 was deemed fit to propel the radical luxury liner. The 429 delivered 340 horsepower and developed a stump-pulling 480ft.lb. of torque. The engine featured some refinements including aluminium alloy slipper-type pistons,