

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1963 Studebaker Avanti R2 Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1963 Studebaker Avanti R2

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Model	Studebaker Avanti R2 1963 Body Fiberglass coupe, 109-in wheelbase Engine Paxton-supercharged 289 (~289–290 hp)
Transmissions	3-spd manual, T-10 4-spd, Powershift auto
Notable	Std front disc brakes; *totals disputed Every specification in this guide was checked against factory literature, marque references, period road...
Production	1964 R2: 281 (total R2: 1,833 or 1,883*)

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Single-year coverage. Factory-correct specifications. No guesswork.

SAMPLE EXCERPT — full guide available at the link on the cover sheet



The chapter order follows the RestorationEssentials house standard: history first, then year-specific identity, then the technical chapters you will use at the car.

- Chapter 1: Studebaker: The Gamble on Tomorrow
- Chapter 2: The Avanti: Loewy's 40-Day Miracle
- Chapter 3: What Makes the R2 — and THIS Year — Different
- Chapter 4: Serial Numbers and Body-Tag Decoding
- Chapter 5: The R2 Engine: Paxton's Supercharged 289
- Chapter 6: Transmissions
- Chapter 7: Axles, Brakes, Suspension, and Wheels
- Chapter 8: Paint, Trim, and Factory Markings
- Chapter 9: Production Numbers and Rarity
- Chapter 10: Rust-Prone Areas and Inspection Guide
- Chapter 11: Restoration Sequence
- Chapter 12: Engine Specifications at a Glance
- Chapter 13: Paint and Trim Code Reference
- Chapter 14: Options, Accessories, and Factory Details
- Chapter 15: Buyer Inspection Checklist
- Chapter 16: Electrical System, Date Codes, and Factory Markings
- Chapter 17: Parts Interchange: What Fits and What Doesn't
- Chapter 18: Reproduction vs. Original: Tells That Matter
- Chapter 19: The Paxton Supercharger: Care and Feeding
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Chapter 1 — Studebaker: The Gamble on Tomorrow

By 1961 Studebaker was surviving on the Lark, and president Sherwood Egbert knew survival wasn't enough — the company needed a halo. His answer was the Avanti: a personal luxury sports coupe designed in 40 days by Raymond Loewy's team working in a rented Palm Springs house, built with a fiberglass body to avoid the cost of steel dies, and aimed squarely at the Thunderbird. It was the boldest gamble an American independent ever took — and, for one shining year, it worked.

The Avanti's timing was cruel. Fiberglass-body production problems delayed deliveries for months; by the time cars flowed freely, the market had moved on. Studebaker ended South Bend production in December 1963, and the Avanti died with it — officially. In truth it refused to die: the Avanti II continued in low-volume production for decades, making the Avanti the longest-lived American sports-car design ever.

For the restorer, the Studebaker Avanti is a unique proposition: a fiberglass body (no body rust, ever), Studebaker mechanicals shared with the Hawk and Lark (parts findable), production in the low thousands (trim made in tiny runs), and factory records preserved at the Studebaker National Museum. The R2 — the supercharged car — is the one collectors chase.

Chapter 2 — The Avanti: Loewy's 40-Day Miracle

The Avanti was styled in a legendary 40-day sprint in the spring of 1961: Loewy, John Ebstein, Tom Kellogg, and Bob Andrews working around the clock in Palm Springs while Studebaker's future hung in the balance. The result — a Coke-bottle coupe with no grille (air entered under the bumper), an aircraft-style cockpit, and a fiberglass body — looked like nothing else on earth and still stops traffic sixty



Under the exotic skin the Avanti was pure Studebaker: the 289 V8 in R1 (240 hp, four-barrel) and R2 (Paxton-supercharged, ~290 hp) tune, Borg-Warner transmissions, Dana 44 rear axle, and — a first for an American production car — standard front disc brakes. The chassis was a modified Lark convertible frame on a 109-inch wheelbase. Even rarer were the R3 (supercharged, larger-displacement) and R4 (dual four-barrel) engines — factory options built in tiny numbers for 1963–1964.

For the restorer, the Avanti's fiberglass body changes every rule: no rust in the panels, but stress cracks, delamination, and prior repairs are the inspection points. The mechanicals are Studebaker-standard and well supported; the Avanti-specific trim, glass, and interior were made in the low thousands and are the hunt.

Chapter 3 — What Makes the R2 — and 1963 — Different

The 1963 Avanti is the debut year — the car the world met at the 1962 auto shows and the one that made Studebaker briefly the most talked-about company in America. The R2 option — the Paxton-supercharged 289 at approximately 289–290 horsepower — made the Avanti one of the fastest American cars of 1963, with documented 130-mph-plus capability.

The 1963 production was defined by the fiberglass-body crisis: supplier problems delayed deliveries for months, and early cars went to the most patient buyers in America. For the restorer, 1963 details — trim, badging, and interior patterns — are first-year specification; the 1964 cars revised details.

The R2's 1963 significance: it was the performance Avanti from day one, the engine that put Studebaker on the muscle-car map years before the GTO. A documented 1963 R2 — especially a four-speed — is the blue-chip Studebaker.

Chapter 4 — Serial Numbers and Body-Tag Decoding

The Avanti carries a Studebaker serial number plate and a body tag; the engine number is stamped on the block. R2 cars carry the R-series engine designation, and the supercharger installation is documented in the factory records. The Studebaker National Museum's production order copy — the factory's own build record — is the authentication standard: it lists the engine number, paint, trim, options, and shipping destination.

R2 authentication. A genuine R2 is verified by the combination of: the serial number's model-year and sequence, the engine number matching the production order, the Paxton supercharger installation with correct brackets and plumbing, and the R2-specific components (carburetor, distributor, fuel system). An R1 with a bolted-on supercharger is a tribute — the production order is the difference.

What to verify

- Serial plate vs. title: numbers must match; check for undisturbed factory fasteners.
- Engine number vs. production order: the block's stamped number must match the factory record for a matching-numbers claim.
- Supercharger: the Paxton unit's serial number and the installation's correctness — brackets, pulleys, carburetor enclosure, and plumbing are R2-specific.
- Body tag: paint and trim codes consistent with the car; decode against a year-specific Studebaker chart.

Chapter 5 — The R2 Engine: Paxton's Supercharged 289

The R2 is a Studebaker 289 V8 — 3.5625 x 3.625 inches — with a Paxton centrifugal supercharger blowing through a four-barrel carburetor in a sealed enclosure. Compression is approximately 9.0:1;