



Fierogenesis

Paper to plastic in four years flat

When you look at the portfolio of any student of automobile design, whether it's the Pasadena Art Center College of Design, the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit, or London's Royal Academy of Art, one thing becomes immediately obvious: Car designers love to do sports car, especially mid-engined ones. Unfortunately, one of the cold realities of working for a car company that sells "volume" products is that the opportunities to work on a sports car design program are few and far between. Let's face it, most of your time is spent on reworking the nose of last year's Blastmaster GRX to make it into next year's.

by Jim Hall

ILLUSTRATIONS AND PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY IRV RYBICKI AND CHARLES M. JORDAN, GENERAL MOTORS DESIGN STAFF

Late in the fall of 1978, the crews at the General Motors Design Staff Advanced and Experimental Studio and the operation's Advanced III Studio were tossed a rare sports car design assignment from an unlikely source—Pontiac. It seems the Indian Division was interested in developing a 2-passenger, mid-engined sports car to sell for under \$10,000.

Armed with an engineering package from Pontiac, the Advanced III Studio

quickly came up with an initial styling concept that was rendered as a full-sized tape drawing for presentation to management. By the middle of February 1979, the studio had readied several 1/5-scale clay models for wind-tunnel testing. Following that preliminary aerodynamic testing, Pontiac gave the signal to move on to a full-sized clay model to be shown to GM's board. This presentation model was completed the second week of March '79 and was called the Sprint.

Over the next year, the shape was defined with some details like the disappearance of the louvered hood and horizontal slat-style air intakes ahead of the rear