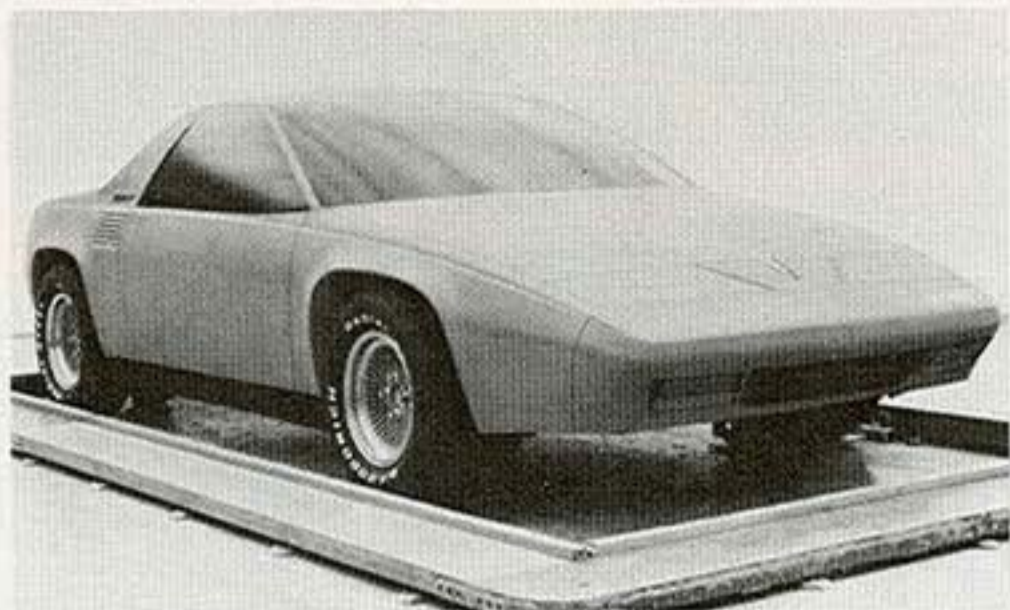
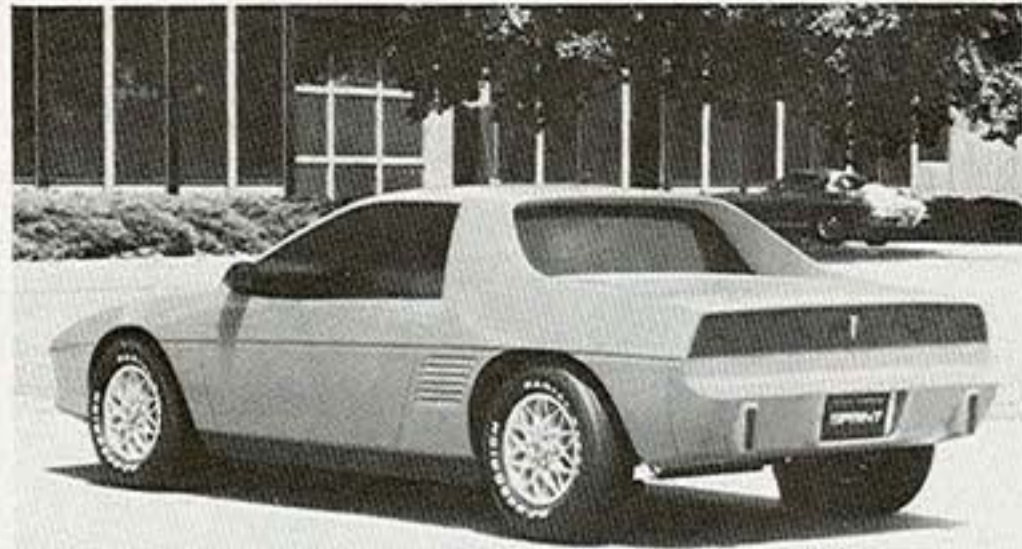


# Fierogenesis



The first full-sized clay model of the P-car, finished early in March 1979, established the dropped nose and close-coupled upper that would be carried through to the production Fiero.



By June '79, the original P-car design had been reworked to incorporate a nose-to-tail beltline halfway up the body. This design element was added to provide a way to hide several of the "break lines" of the body panels.



The Advanced III Studio rolled out this revised P-clay model very late in August 1979. Still carrying the Sprint name, this is actually the third version of the original P-car proposal and features a split-lamp rear fascia, vertical lower body air intake, and a window-like trim panel in the C-pillar.



The addition of a bubbleback window and glass quarter window visually changed the first-generation Sprint substantially. The glass quarter window would have to be abandoned since in December 1979, when this model was completed, the P-car's metal substructure was finalized and the near-vertical C-post could not be thinned in time for production.

wheels, while the basic form stayed essentially the same. We say *essentially*, since Ron Hill, the Advanced III Studio's chief designer, was considering revising the P-car's profile with the addition of a bubbleback rear window. However, the fastback never got to the final proposal stage due to problems of engine accessibility and increased production costs. By the time of the car's final presentation to GM corporate management types in April 1980, the development program had already been switched off and back on by the General, yet the P-car design concept remained as fresh as the day it was first laid down.

During the third week of April 1980, GM's corporate management gave Pontiac the green light to ready the P-car for production. A couple of days later, responsibility for the P-car's design development was reassigned to John Schinella's Pontiac II Studio. Under Schinella, every exterior body panel was revised, with the result yielding a more aggressive automobile. Once started, the Pontiac II studio crew refined the concept car into a buildable mid-engined sports car with an immediately identifiable Pontiac look. Compared to the early Advanced Studio version, the Pontiac II P-car features a more pronounced wedge shape as well as a fuller stance.

Under Schinella, the seating position was moved forward in order to accommodate a V-configuration engine. (No, it's not available yet; maybe next year.) With the seating position closer to the front axle centerline, the windshield rake was increased by 4° to 63°, just a single degree "slower" than the Corvette's much-touted front screen. With no visible air intake, the P-car, as interpreted by Hill's Advanced

## In April 1980, Pontiac got the green light to ready the P-car for production

III Studio, lacked a Pontiac "face." This was quickly remedied by Schinella with the addition of two large, black bumper pads that conspire to create a look not unlike that of the traditional Pontiac split grilles, and strongly reminiscent of the Firebird.

While things were going smoothly for Schinella on the body design front, the studio was also responsible for coming up with an emblem for the P-car. Normally this would pose few problems for a design group as talented as Schinella's, but the ve-

hicle was still unnamed at the time. Not that there was a shortage of proposed names floating around for the mid-engined Pontiac. Fiamma, P1000, Sunfire, Pegasus, P5000, and even—are you ready?—Hummingbird had been knocked around for months. Of all the names being tossed about, Schinella (and this writer) believed Pegasus was the most appropriate name for the 2-seater. Pontiac management seemed to favor this choice as well, and Schinella & Co. worked up a winged horse logo for the P-car. Although the Pegasus name never made it, losing out to Fiero at the last instant, the winged horse emblem will adorn all production P-cars.

Very late in the P-car's design gestation period, fall of 1981, GM corporate pulled the plug on the vehicle's development. For the third time in as many years, the General switched off the P-program in mid stride. This time the reason was "corporate review of 2-place vehicle market of the '80s." Classic GM Non-Speak at its best. The exact reasons for the various P-car postponements will never be known, but one of the rumors makes interesting reading. A frequently reported reason for the on-again-off-again status of the P-car has been the claim of "unfair" from Chevrolet, which believed the little mid-engined 2-