

Fierogenesis



The final version of the glass-back P-car was completed the first week of February 1980. Employing a solid C-pillar, this proposal was rejected due to the additional problems of engine accessibility posed by the large, lift-up backlight. This was also the last full-size clay that would be submitted by the Advanced III Studio staff.



Development of the P-car was passed from GM's Advanced III Studio to the Pontiac II production studio in April 1980. In just two months, the Pontiac II crew had completed this full-sized proposal that is almost identical to the final production car. Here the Pontiac II modelers are putting the final touches on a presentation model.



Two days after the studio photo (above) was taken, the Pontiac II model was presented to management for approval. Even though this model looks like the final Fiero, the front bumper, side air intakes, and rear taillamps are still not yet production-ready. At the time of the presentation, the P was no longer called the Sprint; the model carries P5000 identification.



During the third week of January 1981, the Pontiac II Studio nailed down the final design of the still-unnamed P-car. The on-again-off-again side intake vents were off when the final vehicle presentation was made. Further engineering studies ultimately revealed the need for the vent, but only on the driver's side.



A Fiero of the future? This P-car roadster was displayed for the first time in June of this year. Designed and built in less than seven weeks, the open Pontiac has neither side windows nor a top at this time. And while the division says it has no plans "at the moment" to build the mid-engined speedster, the car will likely be used to gauge public interest in a production version of such a model.

seater might dilute the market effect of Chevy's America's-Only-Sports-Car claim for the Corvette.

Be that as it may, by late summer of 1981, the P-car was back on the front burner and Schinella's team was hard at work putting the finishing touches on the petite P. Aside from fiddling with the car's taillamps, tape logos, and color and trim selections, the 2-seater was pretty much nailed down from a design standpoint as long as no "fires" had to be put out. Late in April of this year, one of those fires flared up. The P-car development engineers determined a cold-air inlet had to be added to the engine compartment, and the best place for such an inlet would be just aft of the driver's door. The Pontiac II design team burned the midnight oil, and the

There was no shortage of names: Fiamma, P1000, Pegasus, and even Hummingbird were proposed

fruit of their labors is a single, discreet, and functional black rectangular grille below the body rub strip and ahead of the driver's-side rear wheelhouse.

Although Schinella's group is finished with the 1984 Pontiac Fiero coupe, the Pontiac II boys aren't done with the P-car by a long shot. In addition to a flared and spoilered Fiero, the design team has also

finished a P-car roadster. The open Fiero is, in this writer's opinion, the single most appealing car to come out of Detroit since the late '30s. Pontiac P.R. and engineering types say the P-roadster won't be built because of "structural problems," but that could just be GM-ese for "wait a couple of years."

Ragtop or not, GM Design Staff's Irv Rybicki and Charles M. Jordan (vice president and director of design, respectively) have a lot to be proud of with the production P-car. While the vehicle's mid-engined configuration will motivate the buyer with gasoline in his veins, it will be GM's design execution that will provide Pontiac with the majority of Fiero buyers. And in the end, that may be the most important contribution any designer can make. 