



# Forging the Fiero

*The pride of Pontiac design.*

BY JEAN LINDAMOOD

• General Motors design-studio chiefs Ron Hill and John Schinella have seen the dream of a lifetime come true. They have designed a sports car for the masses.

The Pontiac Fiero started life, however, with an altogether different mission. In December 1978, when the project was assigned to Hill's ten-member GM Advanced Design Three studio, the P-car was to be a high-mileage commuter car that would showcase a nonsheet-metal skin and revolutionary construction methods. Hill's team did not have

an all-new sports car to design, but it did face the challenge of creating a new and completely different kind of vehicle. "We weren't making a new Corvette or a new Firebird," explains Hill, a 28-year veteran of GM design, "so there were no family-identity problems. It was a completely new thing; therefore, we were able to put it together relatively unbiased and without a lot of people around with their fingers in the pie."

The Fiero was especially exciting to Schinella and his staff of fifteen designers, clay modelers, and engineers at the

Pontiac Two studio, whose job it was to give the Advanced Three study a distinct Pontiac identity. This was one project that would not be shared with any other GM division.

GM's design staff apparently does its best work when there are only a few fingers in the pie. It took the two studios just thirteen months to roll out a running prototype, and in another two and a half months the production design was completed. In comparison, Firebird/Camaro gestation lasted six years.

When Advanced Three first got the



Advanced Design Three's early Fiero model posed outside of the GM Design Center with the competition in 1979: a TR7, an X19, and an RX-7.