

Gull Wing Doors Spark Corrida Styling

By Eoin S. Young

When Ford's Ghia Operations division of Turin showed a futuristic small car, the Corrida, at the recent Italian Motor Show, many people felt that this was more than just a fantastic styling exercise. One could see real possibilities in it as basis for a futuristic small car.

Chief feature of Corrida is the use of gull wing doors, top hinged and folding along the center line. Leyland stylist David Bache has expressed the opinion that it is just a matter of time before this kind of door is adopted for a production car, and has revealed that his firm at one

More On:

Slowdown

Continued From Page 1

Nov. 22-Nov. 28, but announced it expected to reopen the following week.

Other plant closings in response to excessive inventories include a Chrysler shutdown of its Hamtramck, Mich., compact-car assembly plant, where 9800 workers were scheduled to be idle from Nov. 29-Dec. 5. Chrysler also said it would close a small recreational-vehicle plant in Warren, Mich., from Nov. 29-Dec. 12, idling only about 50 employees.

In addition to the temporary layoff of 1770 workers at the Chevette plant in Wilmington, GM has closed the doors of a small-car plant in Lordstown, Ohio, for the same week. That plant normally is staffed by 2700 hourly workers. For the week of Dec. 6, GM plans to close most of its medium- and heavy-duty truck operations at its Pontiac, Mich., plant, idling about 3500 hourly workers.

Ford joined AMC in announcing a mid-November sales decline, at a drop of about 13% from the year-earlier figure. Ford blamed much of its sales loss on the continuing effects of the strike by United Auto Workers union.

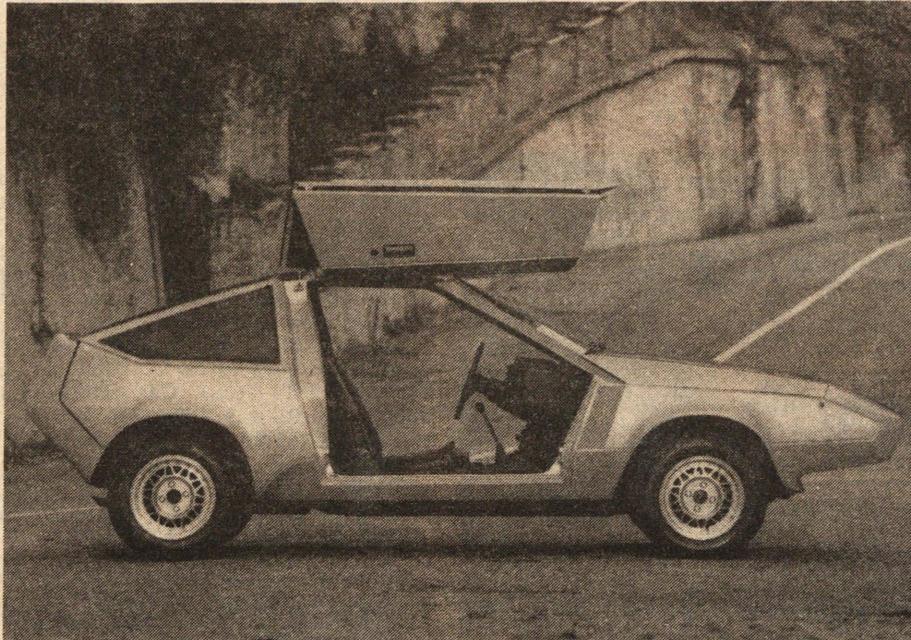
A breakdown of the new-car sales figures for the period of Nov. 11-Nov. 20, 1976, as compared with the same period last year, follows.

General Motors Corp.: Chevrolet division, -1.3%; Pontiac Division, +45.9%; Oldsmobile Division, +14.4%; Buick Division, +6.1%; Cadillac Division, +11.7%; Total cars, +9.8%.

Ford Motor Co.: Ford Division, -14.5%; Lincoln-Mercury Division, -9.2%; Total cars, -13.2%.

Chrysler Corp.: Chrysler-Plymouth Division, +0.6%; Dodge Division, +1.0%.

American Motors Corp.: Total cars, -27.9%.



Based on the Fiesta, Ford's experimental Corrida is imaginatively styled, to say the least.

time intended to fit gull wing doors on the new Rover 3500.

In the Corrida they are strongly spring-loaded, so that it takes the merest effort to open or close them. The advantage appreciated is that a generously long opening is provided, making for easy access. When the door is up it is well within the width of the car at waist level, so there is no need to duck to get underneath it. Once inside, it seems a more natural movement to pull the door downwards than it does to reach out and pull a conventional kind of door towards you. Also, because the gull wing type of door follows the body

contour so closely, it makes it much easier to get in and out in confined spaces, or when parked hard against a wall, than is the case with the conventional front-hinged door.

A drawback of the arrangement is that center hingeing makes it impossible to have a wind-down side window, and in fact the windows of the Corrida are fixed. This problem would not apply with a one-piece door.

The Corrida is based on the new Ford Fiesta, and therefore would have only two doors anyway. In a larger car, however, the gull wing arrangement offers an even

bigger advantage because there would be no need for duplication. One door each side would be adequate even for a long opening. In the Corrida, Ford uses the hinge mechanisms to give additional strength to the roof structure, and pneumatic pistons built into the B-post are used for counterbalancing.

In comparison with the Fiesta, the Ford Ghia Corrida has an elongated snout in which the headlamps are set well back—an arrangement that probably would not be legally acceptable in most countries. But the system for fairing-in the lamps is ingenious, and also has future production possibilities. The lamps themselves are fixed, and the covers are front-hinged. When the lamps are switched on, the covers drop down to the horizontal, exposing the headlamp units at their rear ends. Ford says that as well as keeping the lamps clean and protected from stone damage, flaps of this kind would give better pedestrian safety in event of an accident.

There is more ingenuity in the rear treatment of the Corrida, as well. A wide, top-hinged rear window glass opens upwards for loading up; in addition, the swept up back end of the car, complete with tail lamp units, is hinged at the bottom and swings rearwards and downwards. It can be locked in the open position, and side pieces plus a clip-on top cover make it possible to drive Corrida with the rear "boot" open for additional luggage capacity.

In other respects the Corrida is fairly conventional, with the normal Fiesta transverse engine and front wheel drive. The seats are deeply contoured and the rear seat folds down as part of the luggage space in the same way as it does with Fiesta itself. The styling of the body, with its large glass areas and aerodynamic-looking shape, gives some ideas of how the small car of tomorrow may develop when it shakes itself out of the current trend of squared-up boxy styling.

Association Will Go To Brazilian GP

LONDON—The Formula One Constructors Assn. has made it clear in the wake of the cancellation of the Grand Prix of Argentina that it plans to be on hand for the Grand Prix of Brazil, and for subsequent F1 races next season.

The F1CA opted out of the Argentine race last week after it said promoters there had failed to produce the bank guarantees necessary for shipment of the cars to Argentina. In a statement aimed at clarifying its position, the F1CA said:

"By a letter dated July, 1976, the Automobile Club of Argentina granted Ceni SA, Coninter SA and Mexas the right to organize the 1977 Argentine Grand Prix, vesting them with full responsibility for

organization and finance. On Oct. 10 the organizers signed a contract with the Formula One Constructors Assn. which secured the participation of all leading teams in the race.

"A short time later, for reasons which are not yet entirely clear, the ACA told the organizers to repudiate their contract and rely on a recently formed Monaco-based company called World Championship Racing to arrange a new contract with the F1CA. The club threatened to annul the Championship status of the race unless its instructions were carried out. When this had no effect, they cancelled the organizers' authority to hold the race at all.

"Because of the action of the ACA the organizers did not produce certain bank guarantees required by the contract. These guarantees were required to cover F1CA liabilities incurred in chartering aircraft to move cars and equipment to Argentina. It will be recalled that last year the ACA cancelled its race on Christmas Eve only 18 days before it was due to be held, leaving the F1CA and the organizers to face severe penalties under the charter agreements.

"Accordingly when the 1977 charter

agreements became overdue for signature and no bank guarantees were forthcoming, F1CA was obliged to inform the ACA, the organizers and the CSI that its members were no longer able to participate in the 1977 race.

"F1CA has been advised that it has overwhelming grounds for legal action against the ACA and others who helped procure the breach of contract for wrongful and unwarranted interference in a legitimate commercial contract. The Association is at present considering which of the courses open to it would best serve the interest of the sport.

"The Brazilian Grand Prix will go ahead as planned, its promoters TV Globo, having apparently persuaded the Brazilian national club, the BCA, to ignore World Championship Racing. Similar action in the USA has resulted in the American National Club ACCUS formally rejecting the Monaco company.

"Reports that F1CA intends to boycott certain races such as Monaco and Monza are untrue. On the contrary, F1CA seeks the maintenance of existing contractual commitments and will resist any attempt to induce breaches of its agreement with race organizers."

Four Renaults At LeMans?

Renault Competitions Director Gerard Larrousse added new detail in a London press conference to the previously announced three-pronged attack on world auto sport by the giant French carmaker, which will be going full force next summer.

Four cars may be entered at the Le Mans 24-hour race, Larrousse said, instead of the originally planned three. Work is concentrating on the engines, gearboxes and brakes of the A442 Renault Alpines being readied for the June 12-13, 1977 race.

At this stage of planning, Renault has no interest, Larrousse added, in running the new Group 5 World Championship for Makes "Silhouette" series, in which there was some speculation that the company might enter a Renault Alpine A310 turbocharged V6 engined car.

One reason for this is the major Renault involvement in open-wheeled, single-seater racing. For Formula one, one car is still envisioned for mid-1977—perhaps debuting at the July 3rd French Grand Prix at Dijon—and a two-car team is planned for 1978, Larrousse said.

Jean-Pierre Jabouille, already signed as Renault's lead GP driver for both seasons, continues to test a revised "laboratory" F1 car. Work on the 1977 racer itself has been postponed until January to work out some new design concept.

This will prevent being in GP racing before that eighth race of the 17 on the schedule now.

Larrousse speculated that the only real problem in this new GP effort—Renault's first involvement in the "purest" form of

Continued On Next Page

LATE NEWS

Continued From Page 1

● NASCAR's Rookie Of The Year struggle remains very close indeed, with NASCAR officials doing a recount of starts and finishers of both Skip Manning and Terry Bivins.

● Rumor Of The Week: March Engineering's Formula One entry for the 1977 season will be the six-wheeled, four-wheel-drive car mentioned in these pages a few weeks back. The car supposedly has four rear wheels, all of which are driven by two separate gearboxes and differentials.

● And speaking of March, the partnership between March and BMW, wherein that team used BMW's engines in its Formula Two efforts, has been dissolved. No word on whether or not March will be in F2 next season, and if so, which engines it will use.

● NARA's Pirelli Mendocino Forest Rally Nov. 26, 27 was won by Danny Goodwin and Randy Hensley in the Alaskan Brands Mazda pickup, with Scott Harvey taking second place. Full report next week.

● Lennie Pond has lost his NASCAR Pepsi Cola sponsorship after running under the Pepsi banner for just one year. No word on Pond's plans for next year.

● Vittorio Brambilla has done a total of 600 test miles in the Surtees TS19 and says he's delighted with the car. He turned a lap at Ricard in the Surtees considerably faster than any he's done in the Beta March. Brambles is a good bet to sign with Surtees, although choice of a second driver still is up in the air.

● Andrew Ferguson will replace Peter Warr as team manager for Team Lotus next year.