

PRELIMINARY SKETCH OF POSSIBLE DESIGN FOR THE '57 PLYMOUTH WHICH, THOUGH REJECTED, HAS SOME DESIGN FEATURES USED IN '57.

A Study of CHRYSLER Styling

By KEN FERMOYLE

Introduction of Chrysler Corporation's 1955 "Forward Look" cars marked the end of one era and the beginning of another. They were products of a new styling philosophy, a new attitude which has culminated in the striking designs of current models. What is this new philosophy and why was it born? What part did the past play in forming it and what will it mean in the future?

THE Forward Look tag Chrysler put on its 1955 models was an apt one. Not only did they embody design ideas which were to evolve even further in the future—as we've seen since—but they represented a break with the past. With them, Chrysler began to look ahead, not back. Gone was the "wider on the inside, narrower on the outside" concept.

Prior to 1955, it always seemed that engineering considerations came first and styling was considered of mere secondary importance in preparation of new Chrysler Corporation cars. (Of that, more later.) This notion had already

been scrapped by Chrysler's competitors, who recognized that buyers had become more style-conscious, were demanding more than just good engineering and mechanical excellence—which they had come to expect as a matter of course.

As a result of Chrysler's engineering-slanted product planning, the basis of the company's styling philosophy has always been that "form should follow function." And, Chrysler stylists say, this is still one of their guiding precepts. You might quarrel with that statement in the light of current designs, but it does have some arguments to back it up. At any rate,

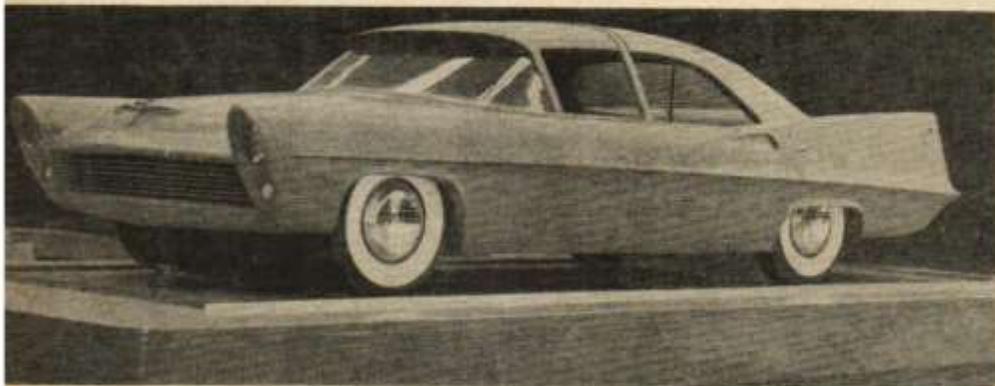
let it stand for the moment while we go deeper into Chrysler Corporation styling and some of its characteristics.

First, there has always been a strong family resemblance between the different cars in the Chrysler family. This is still true today. There are a number of reasons why—the sharing of body shells in several lines, a well-integrated styling organization, the carry-over prestige which accrues to the volume selling lines and, perhaps, tradition.

We can see this very plainly in the basic dart-shaped lines shared by all 1957 Chrysler-built cars. Much has been made of this design theme this year. There are a lot of interesting reasons why Virgil Exner and his styling team elected to go this route.

Streamlining "for greater freedom in motion" has been advanced as one. Exner himself has used the term. Just how valid this reason for the dart shape is, however, is debatable to some extent. And just what "greater freedom in motion" means is somewhat hard to pin down. It's true that wind tunnel tests have shown the high, flaring fins which are a necessary adjunct of the dart shape *do* contribute to stability on the highway. This is reportedly the case even at normal cruising speeds. Engineering tests at the University of Detroit, for example, show the fins can reduce steering effort by as much as 20 per cent in strong crosswinds.

"Big fins exert a stabilizing effect much as do the tail fins on airplanes . . . they present larger surfaces which direct the force of the sidewind so that it helps keep the vehicle moving in a straight line," says Paul C. Ackerman, Chrysler's director of engineering. "At the same time, the streamlined design of the body and



SCALE MODELS like this one are used by designers of all companies to test design ideas before they are put into production. It gives them the chance to check form, balance, continuity of line and proportions not evident in the standard two dimensional drawings.