

MODERN RACING CAR like the D-Jag follow the wedge shape appearance and it is the opinion of Chrysler stylists that most people like to be associated with the spirit of the times and want to see such things reflected in the automobiles they buy for themselves.

are dependent to some degree on sales departments and product research groups to furnish accurate information as to what the public wants and is willing to accept.

More than anything else, however, it shows that developing new automotive designs is essentially a matter of compromise. This is inevitable in working for a mass audience such as the automobile-buying public.

Now, what has been the reaction to current products of Chrysler's styling philosophy?

Sales of 1957 Chrysler Corporation cars were running ahead of 1956 sales for the same period as this was written. Plymouth came close to overtaking Buick in the third best sales slot during one month, for example.

This would indicate that the public is accepting the new Chrysler lines. Experts caution that it is still early to know for sure, however, since the early months following introduction were hot selling months for most companies. Interest stirred up by the appearance of so many cars with major changes apparently put people in a car buying mood. The true test of popularity will be how sales go about the time you're reading this—and then again next summer.

In private off-the-cuff interviews, a number of stylists and engineers from other companies—mostly automotive in nature—expressed some of their views on the new Chrysler cars.

Their general reaction seemed to be that "the boys over in Highland Park (where Chrysler administration, engineering and styling offices are located) did a pretty darn good job." The feeling was that the '57s are "the best-looking cars Chrysler has built in years."

There were reservations, however. One stylist, whose company follows a strict evolutionary process in making changes in its cars, said something to this effect:

"When we first saw the new Chrysler lines we were pretty impressed. Since we've had a few models for study and have grown accustomed to them, some of the novelty has worn off and we're becoming more critical. It will be very interesting to us to see if the public reacts in the same way."

He had a good point, of course, but the same holds true in a good many cases

with new models. What seems sensational at introduction time becomes less so as we see more of it. The test is; does the basic design have enough *lasting appeal* to continue to look good after we become familiar with it?

One industrial designer pointed out that Chrysler styling was running "against the trend" in many respects with its soft, rounded lines. "Look at the new refrigerators, radios and other appliances—yes, and at many of the other '57 cars. Note that many feature sharp, crisp, clearly defined lines."

He definitely was not critical of Chrysler's styling approach. He just noted as a point of interest that it is somewhat different than is being done elsewhere.

Any discussion of Chrysler's styling philosophy would be incomplete without some reference as to what it might mean in the future.

It appears that the company is committed to a continuation of its present design themes. Its most recent dream cars, the Dart and Norseman, lost in the Andrea Doria disaster, demonstrate this. The Dart represents a further extension of the wedge shape, has a sliding roof panel that telescopes into a compartment behind the rear seat. (Only one indication that other companies are preparing to follow Ford's lead in offering retractable hardtop models.)

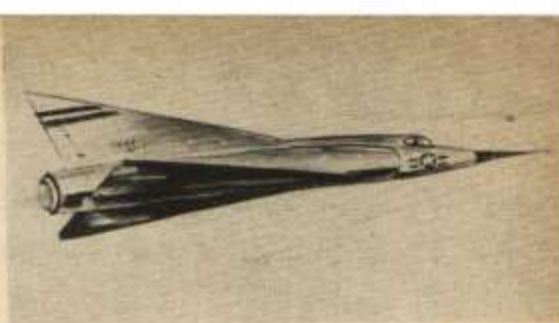
Chrysler appears to be very sincerely interested in improving aerodynamics of automobiles and the Dart has been undergoing a series of tests to provide information on the subject.

Stylists naturally hesitate to say much about the future for fear of tipping their hands to competition. Reynolds, however, has said informally that he believes present sizes of the various Chrysler cars are close to an optimum for their respective price classes.

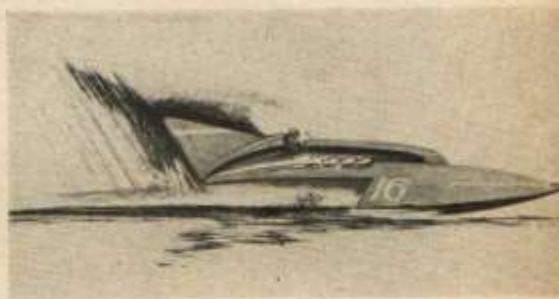
From this we can assume that Chrysler looks for no great changes in overall size of cars in the near future.

Reynolds has also pointed out that current cars are near the minimum as far as overall height is concerned. He feels that standard passenger cars can't be made much lower than they are now unless we go to a basically different layout—front engine/front drive or rear engine/rear drive, for example.

Of course Chrysler undoubtedly has a



JET AIRCRAFT probably express the flying wedge shape at its utmost development. This feeling is much sought after by designers.



WEDGE SHAPE is not limited to aircraft or automobiles. Racing boats of the Gold Cup class are designed around this proven shape.

few tricks up its sleeve which would permit slight reductions in height in the next three or four years, but it's difficult to see how they could match the lowering job done in the past three or four.

Both Exner and Reynolds have stated on several occasions that they foresee the possibility of three different types of specialized vehicles replacing the current all-purpose passenger car sometime in the future. The three types would be:

- *A high-speed, long-distance cruiser* designed specifically for travel on super highways of tomorrow. Such a vehicle would have electronic controls which would "lock in" once on the highway. The electronic controls would feature various built-in safety devices and would practically free the driver of responsibility for "driving" the vehicle in the sense we now use the term. "It might become known as a living room on wheels," Reynolds suggested not long ago. "Comfort for possibly six to eight passengers would be the keynote of its interior design, with air conditioning, swivel lounge chairs and television among the probabilities."

- *A Suburban runabout.* This might evolve from current station wagons, although it presumably would not have to be as large as wagons we now have.

- *A sports-type car.* This would be a compact, maneuverable car designed for driving to and from work and for "fun" driving over secondary roads etc. It would not therefore need to have a large passenger capacity.

Increasing popularity of wagons, and sports cars lends credibility to the idea.

Only the future will prove whether or not this will come about—just as only the future will reveal the success or failure of Chrysler's styling philosophy. •