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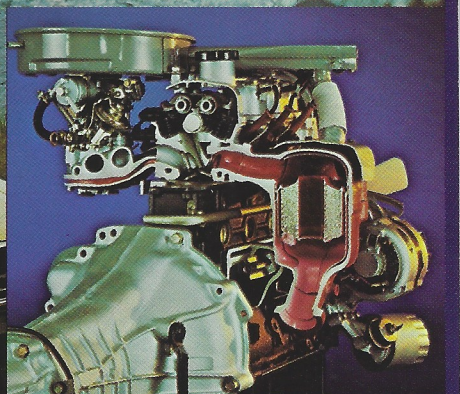
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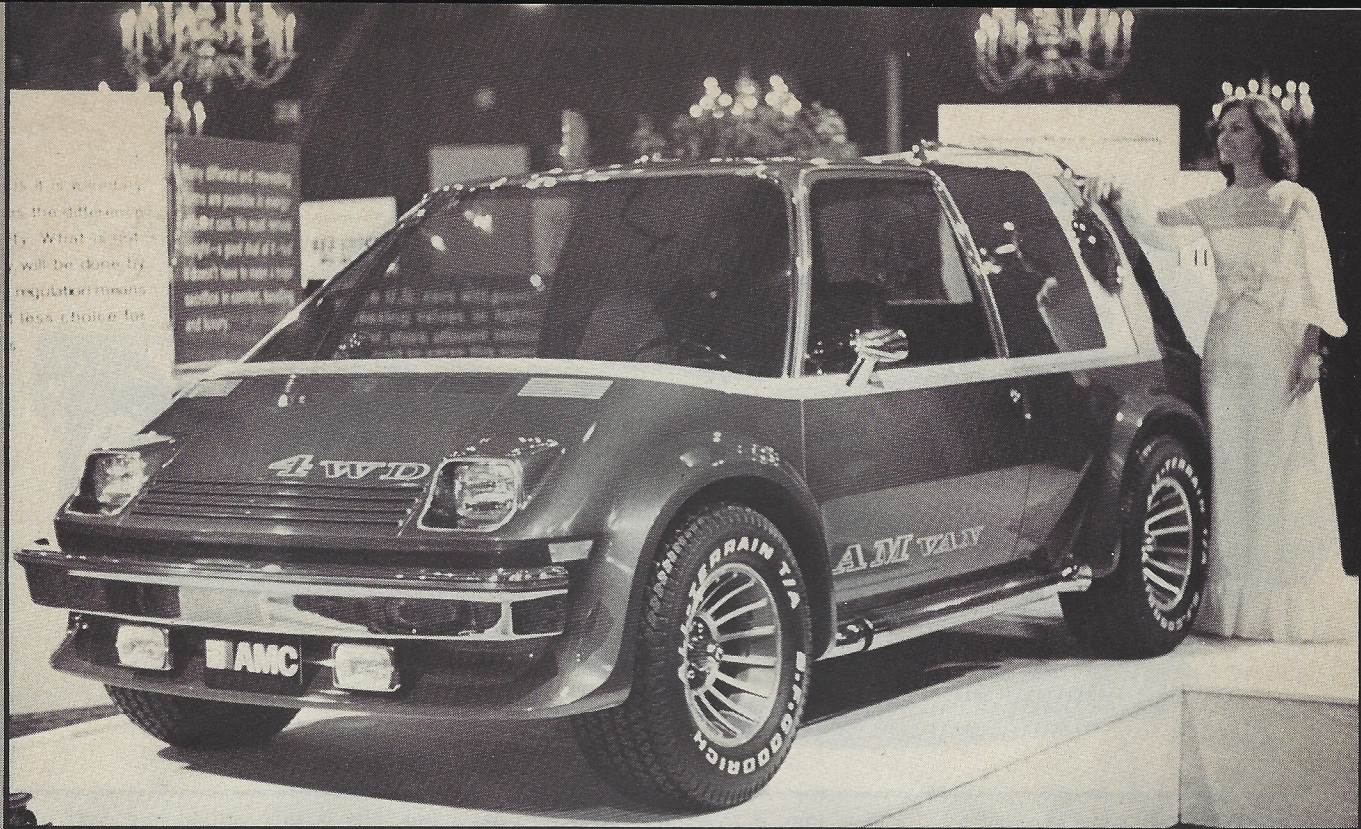


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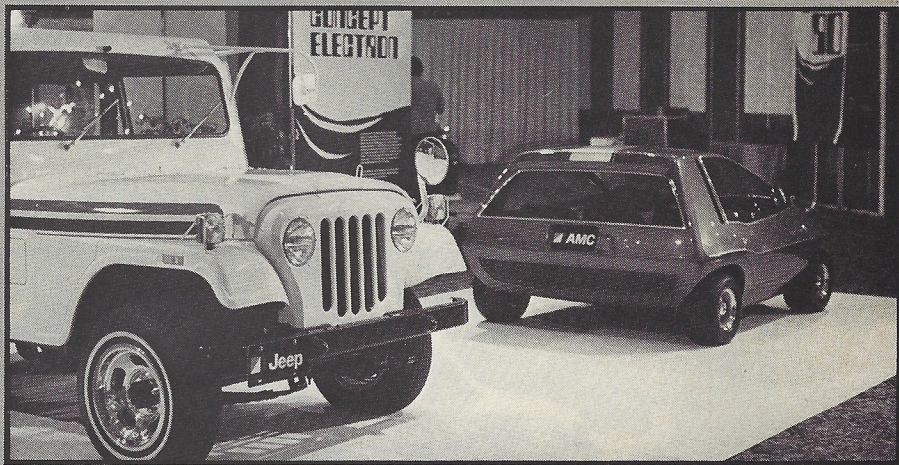
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CONCEPT 80

AMC'S Look Ahead

by GARY WITZENBURG



The American public will move to smaller cars, but they will want the convenience, the comfort and performance that they enjoy in their present automobiles.

So states one of the high-style signboards that are part of American Motors' traveling road show, Concept 80, which debuted in Detroit late last May.

Energy waste is a demon that is everywhere in this country. We are squandering millions of tons of raw materials and millions of barrels of oil each year, and we are mortgaging our future in the process, warns another.

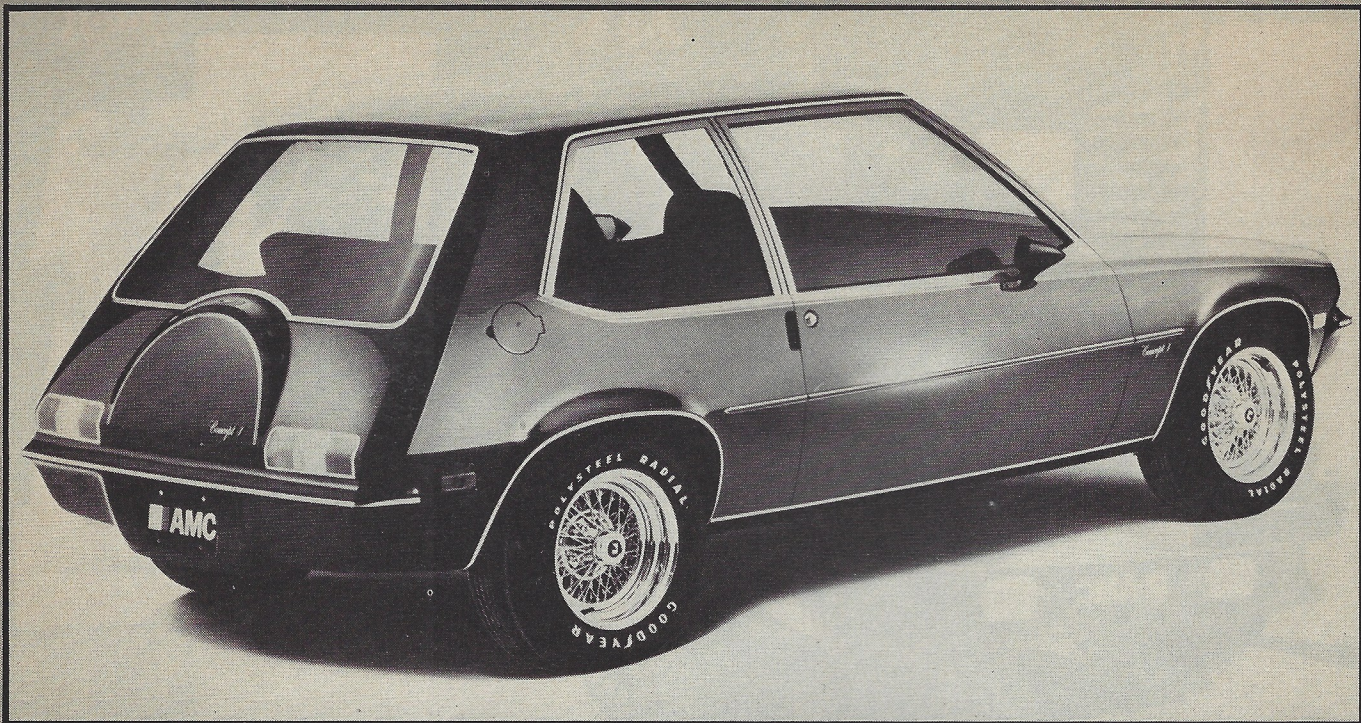
The point of the show is that small cars need not be austere, cramped and uncomfortable, and "small-car expert" AMC is demonstrating this point via a sextet of concept vehicles combining both style and design efficiency.

The deeply entrenched idea that big cars are better cars has become one of the most senseless notions we have in this country. The psychology of bigness, of more is better, must yield to common sense—to recognition of the true needs of the times.

As AMC Chairman Roy Chapin sees it, the 1980s car market will be

dominated by vehicles the size of today's compacts and subcompacts, with smaller "minis" taking 10% to 20% at the low end and larger cars an equivalent amount at the high end of the scale. That means a volume of 6 to 8 million cars per year in the size category where AMC will continue to specialize. The ideas expressed in Concept 80 graphically show the kinds of things AMC has up its sleeve to profitably cash in on this fast-growing market segment.

Future U.S. cars will provide increasing values in lighter, smaller, more efficient vehicles designed to serve the special driving needs of



Americans. They will have the performance that's right for American highways, along with the economy that satisfies the need for fuel savings.

Of course, AMC hopes its Concept 80 show will spur sales of today's home-built small cars as well as tomorrow's, particularly since it is about to introduce a new line of Hornet-based luxury compact entries called "Concord" into a still-sagging econo-car market.

If the 10 million cars purchased in the U.S. last year had each weighed 500 lb less, the energy savings in terms of natural gas would be enough to heat 750,000 average northern U.S. homes for a year.

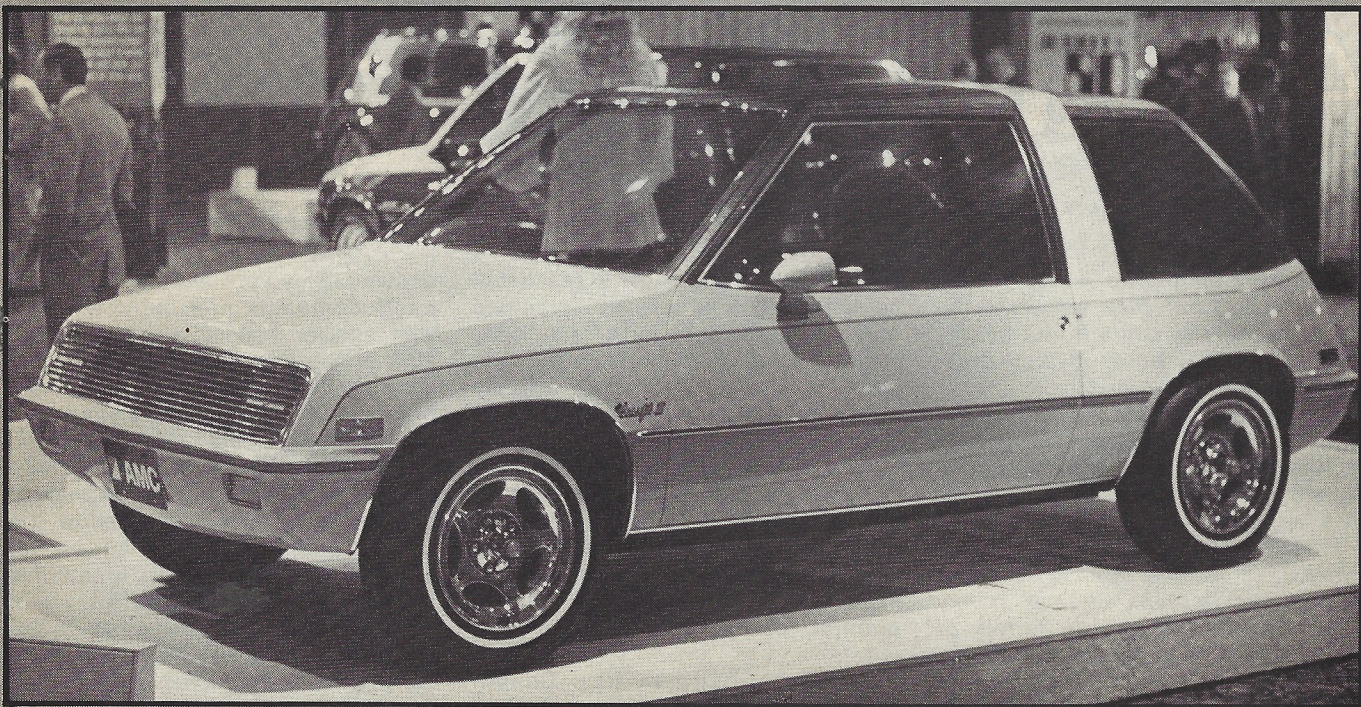
The idea is to attract American buyers into smaller packages rather than trying to force them. The government has effectively determined where the small-car/big-car mix will be for years to come with its fleet economy law, but not an ounce of fuel or materials will be saved if people refuse to give up their inefficient older cars for more sensible new ones.

In a time of crisis it is voluntary effort that makes the difference in a free society. What is not done voluntarily will be done by regulation. More regulation means more cost and less choice for the car buyers.

So the task facing America's car-makers as we ease cautiously into

the '80s is to produce and market a new breed of efficient personal vehicles that are every bit as attractive and pleasant to drive and ride in as the ones people now own, and perhaps a bit more fun as well. And that's what the six Concept 80 creations are all about.

While AMC is carefully gauging public reactions to these "idea" vehicles, it is quick to point out that none represents an actual prototype of something already planned for production. But we're betting they're damn close to what we'll see in the company's showrooms in the next few years, at least in terms of how the metal might be bent around the





company's anticipated future interior packages.

Adds newly-elected AMC president Jerry Meyers: "A host of interesting things is possible. If government-mandated designs don't interfere, then the small-car age in this country will be exciting. Car buyers may have little to sacrifice. They will only have to give up some old habits anyway."

In case you missed Concept 80 or it didn't get to your area, here are the vehicles and their features:

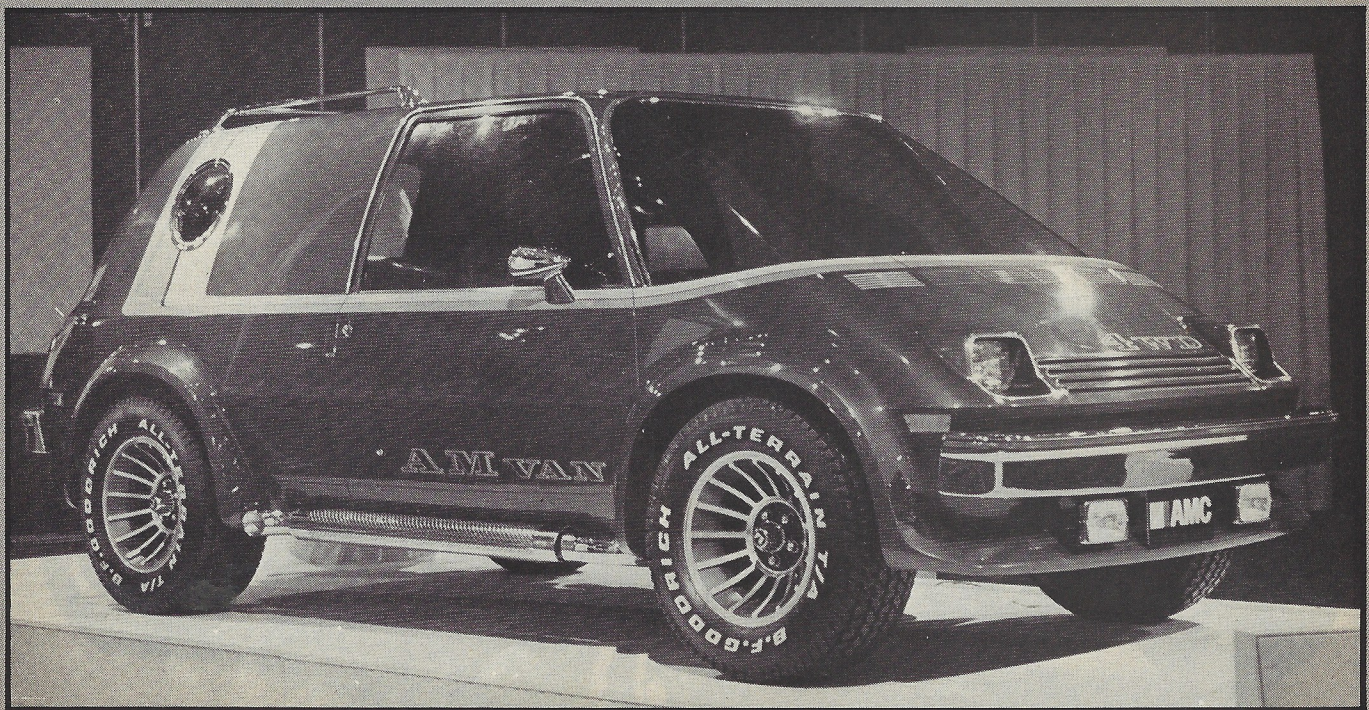
Concept I—Intended to blend styling and function on a 95 in. wheelbase (compared to the current Gremlin's 96 in. and Pacer's 100 in.), Concept I features comfortable 6-passen-

ger seating partly accomplished through "thin but solid" doors and "minimal metal overhang." Styling is Gremlinesque but with the slim pillars and large windows for good visibility, rectangular headlamps and real wire wheels for a sporty look. Overall length is 153.3 in., width is 68 in. and height is 52 in.—smaller all around than a Gremlin except for height, while the rear tread is 57 in. compared to the 55.5 in. front tread.

Concept II—Looking like what the Pacer should have been, Concept II is dimensionally similar to Concept I but has a shorter hood, integrated soft bumpers front and rear, concealed headlamps, expanded glass

area and a structural "roll band" over the roof.

Concept Grand Touring—A four-passenger "sporty hatchback", Concept Grand Touring is essentially a well-disguised 96 in. wheelbase Gremlin with Hornet contours, and its appearance features probably provide a bit of a sneak preview of next year's Concord. Dimensions are identical to today's Gremlin at 166.8 in. long, 70.6 in. wide and 51.6 in. high, but the U.S.-style luxury theme prevails with leather and "cord-texture" bucket seats, ankle-deep carpeting, a unique opera window and roof treatment, wire wheels and "rallye-type road lights" in the grille.





Concept—Probably the most visually interesting vehicle in the show, Concept AM Van carries the custom van theme into mini proportions. With the same 96 in. wheelbase as a Gremlin, its 161 in. overall length, 68 in. width and 62 in. height make it both shorter and higher. Concepts I and II, and 4-wheel drive makes it a go-anywhere fun vehicle. Features include large wheel flares front and rear, an integrated front air dam, recessed rectangular headlamps, "sidewinder" side pipes and twin Cibie driving lamps. It could be a preview of the Pacer-based mini-van AMC is thinking of producing this fall.

Concept Jeep II—Conceived as a weight-saving smaller version of

Jeep's popular CJ-5, Concept Jeep II preserves the appearance and character of the traditional Jeep in a much smaller package. At 76 in. its wheelbase is eight inches shorter, while overall length is two feet shorter and height is nine inches less than the CJ-5.

Concept Electron—A three-passenger, short-trip commuter-car proposal, Concept Electron is based on previous development of the AMC Amitron, which was powered by a lightweight lithium battery system. It is only 85 in. long, 69.5 in. wide and 46 in. high on a 60-in. wheelbase, and its clamshell-type roof swings up and back for entry and exit. The tiny electric car is dwarfed by an example of the Jeep-based electric delivery

vehicle (29) currently produced by AMC's AM General subsidiary for the U.S. Postal Service.

Also part of the show was a very revealing visual demonstration (16, 18) comparing interior and exterior dimensions of an AMC Pacer to those of a grossly inefficient Cadillac Eldorado. Called "An Unfair Comparison," it should help convince a skeptical public once and for all that it doesn't really need acres of sheet-metal to have a roomy and comfortable interior.

But then style, elegance and class are other important considerations, and AMC's Concept 80 hopefully shows that smaller cars can offer those things as well as space, efficiency and economy of operation. 