

Contact:

## 2001 Chrysler PT Cruiser Turns Heads, Collects Fans and Busts Segments

Those who see it for the first time envision it on a California beach with Frankie and Annette, on a Chicago street with Elliot Ness battling Al Capone or on the strip in the film *American Graffiti*.

But eventually, most want to see it in their driveway.

"It" is the 2001 Chrysler PT Cruiser and few vehicles in recent history have created this level of emotion and excitement among media, consumers and the entire automotive industry.

The PT ("Personal Transportation") Cruiser is yet another breakthrough vehicle for the Chrysler brand. It combines the romance of American automotive heritage with tremendous versatility to satisfy both the emotional and practical needs of any consumer. It is heralded as a true segment buster that defies an easy or immediate categorization.

"PT Cruiser can be whatever the individual owner wants it to be," said Tom Gale, Executive Vice President -- DaimlerChrysler Product Strategy & Design & General Manager -- Passenger Car Operations. "It fits any lifestyle: Some may see it as a tribute to the classic era; some as a street rod; others as a multi-faceted and functional light truck in a class of its own. There is really nothing like it on the road today."

### Making History

The Chrysler group has a long history of creating important new vehicle segments, most notably with establishing the SUV market through Jeep, the pick-up with the Dodge Ram and the minivan in 1984. Among convertible lines, the Chrysler Sebring Convertible redefined the marketing offering the open-top fun and excitement of a convertible with the year-round practicality of a primary car, with full-size back seat and trunk.

That history in mind, when introduced in Geneva in 1998, the two-door Chrysler Pronto Cruiser was a unique combination of American spirit using the "form follows function" design philosophy. It was a unique combination of American spirit and passion for automobiles, with efficient packaging for passengers and cargo.

"We just about hid the idea for such a vehicle in plain sight," said Gale. "The reaction, for example, to Pronto Cruiser was extremely strong."

Further exploring the use of different materials and technologies, the Chrysler Pronto Cruiser AWD, which debuted at the 1999 North American International Auto Show, was a further step in the concept-to-reality process -- like Viper and Prowler before it -- that led to the 2001 Chrysler PT Cruiser.

One of the goals met by the PT Cruiser was to provide a vehicle that would keep the overall exterior length of a small car, to address global market needs-- another Chrysler Group maxim -- yet provide the inside space and function of a larger vehicle.

At 168.8 inches (4288.5 mm), the overall exterior length of the PT Cruiser is 5.3 inches (134.6 mm) shorter than the Ford Focus, yet its EPA interior volume of 120.2 cubic feet (3.41 cu. meters) rivals that of a full-size sedan.

"We kept the overall exterior length of a small car, yet provided the inside space of a much larger vehicle by paying close attention to packaging, and providing a command-of-the-road feel for the driver," said Larry Lyons, Vice President, Small Car Platform Engineering.

### A Healthy Tension

Much of the initial work on the PT Cruiser's development was conducted in Europe to ensure the demands of a global consumer were met. A unique form of research known as Archetype was conducted in France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom and United States. Archetype not only reviews the choices of a study group of subjects but what forces in the past influenced why they made the choice. In the case of the PT Cruiser, it wasn't about just finding out who loved or hated the vehicle, but *why* they did or didn't find it appealing.



The vehicle's design team was involved in the research process to better understand the needs and desires of customers around the world. The result was finding a "love-hate tension" among the subjects similar to what was seen with the first minivans and Dodge Ram pick up trucks.

In addition, the process involved product designers, engineers and program planning representatives to ensure all areas of vehicle development were able to hear what the consumers wanted and to listen to cues that would lead consumers to those things they didn't realize they needed.

"Once we settled on an initial design, there were folks that absolutely loved PT Cruiser when they saw it," said Bryan Nesbitt, Chrysler PT Cruiser exterior designer. "There were others that didn't like it all but, after taking some time to soak with it, fell for it as well. That tension is what gives a glimpse at how popular this vehicle can eventually be because of the similar spectrums of emotion we've seen with such ground-breakers as the minivan and Ram."

### **Technically Speaking with Design and Engineering**

With its design blending contemporary and nostalgic cues, Chrysler PT Cruiser was engineered using highly advanced technologies. These included the most intensive use yet of Computer-Aided Three Dimensional Interactive Application (CATIA), Digital Modeling Assembly (DMA) and Virtual Reality (VR).

CATIA, used by first among automakers by then-Chrysler, links all major disciplines in the development of the vehicle, including suppliers, from the earliest stages of the program, to allow all to keep abreast of the latest updates. Building the experience of other platform teams, the PT Cruiser team relied on CATIA to bring together design, engineering, and manufacturing, resulting in increased efficiencies and higher quality throughout these disciplines. A key benefit of CATIA is to reach optimal design of a part in a much shorter time, leaving more time for validation and testing.

In addition to CATIA, engineers used DMA and VR as design and analysis tools. DMA allows engineers to assemble components with three-dimensional computer analysis prior to the physical prototype to ensure proper fit. Through VR, engineers experienced the PT Cruiser from the perspective of the occupants, allowing them to optimize the interior package and related ergonomics.

"The exterior is such a significant departure from anything that is on the market," said Dan Knott, Director, Vehicle Development, Small Car Platform Engineering. "Because the design is so unique, we used CATIA and VR from the beginning to yield higher quality vehicles right from the start. For example, packaging issues were much easier to resolve on screen prior to building actual parts."

For North America, a new 2.4-liter, DOHC, 16-valve engine available with a four-speed automatic or five-speed manual transaxle powers the front-wheel drive Chrysler PT Cruiser. The primary engine for other markets will be the 2.0-liter version.

### **A Segment Buster That Continues to Surprise**

Head-turns from all that see the PT Cruiser driving on the road have become as standard as headlights. Bryan Nesbitt, Chrysler PT Cruiser exterior designer, says that while it creates a love-hate tension, it is virtually impossible to look away.

"The PT Cruiser means a variety of things to everyone who sees it, whether it's a certain era, image or need," Nesbitt said. "You can't avoid its retro-yet-still-contemporary cues. But, with that, there is a feeling of durability and toughness with a stance that resembles a bull dog."

That combination of images and eras makes the PT Cruiser a draw to a wide range of consumers, with each putting emphasis on a different attribute.

"It is the exterior of the Chrysler PT Cruiser that gets the obvious first notice and gawks on the road," said Lyons. "However, the element that closes the deal in the minds of those who see it is the incredible functionality that comes from the innovative interior."

The seating, for example, can quickly transform the PT Cruiser from a one-passenger to a five-passenger vehicle in a matter of moments with foldable, removable rear seats. In all, more than 25 configurations of the seats are possible, making PT Cruiser truly a "personalized transport" vehicle.



In addition, the attention to detail is apparent. "We have applied a circular theme to the interior that allows it to be elegant in its simplicity," said Jeffrey Godshall, chief interior designer. PT Cruiser features easy-to-read round gauges with chrome surrounds, a ball gear shifter knob on manual transaxle models, a center console that is neat and simple, with an instrument panel and dashboard material that picks up the vehicle's exterior color.

In addition, surprise and delight features include:

Four cupholders, two front (with patented connecting letter slot), one center and one rear (which can store either three CDs or two cassettes) for greater interior storage flexibility

Washable, pop-out coin holder designed to accommodate North American and European coins for a truly international aspect

Air ducts integrated into the rear floor, directing heated air to the feet of rear passengers for added comfort

The chrome door handles shaped like fine sculpture that are user-friendly; with interior handles incorporating the same chrome finish as the exterior cues

Ergonomic combination armrests/pull handles that incorporate user-friendly thumb and finger depressions to provide a solid grip when closing doors

Large map pockets with decorative "see through" hole patterns

Flexible storage bin that has a movable tray in the left quarter panel for the flexibility of storing objects horizontally or vertically

"Inside and out, you can't escape the uniqueness of the PT Cruiser," Godshall said. "It is a vehicle with purpose, practicality and unmatched style. Most importantly, you're only limited by your imagination, certainly not the vehicle's cavernous, flexible interior."

The 2001 Chrysler PT Cruiser is made at DaimlerChrysler's Toluca Assembly Plant in Mexico and goes on sale in spring 2000.

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