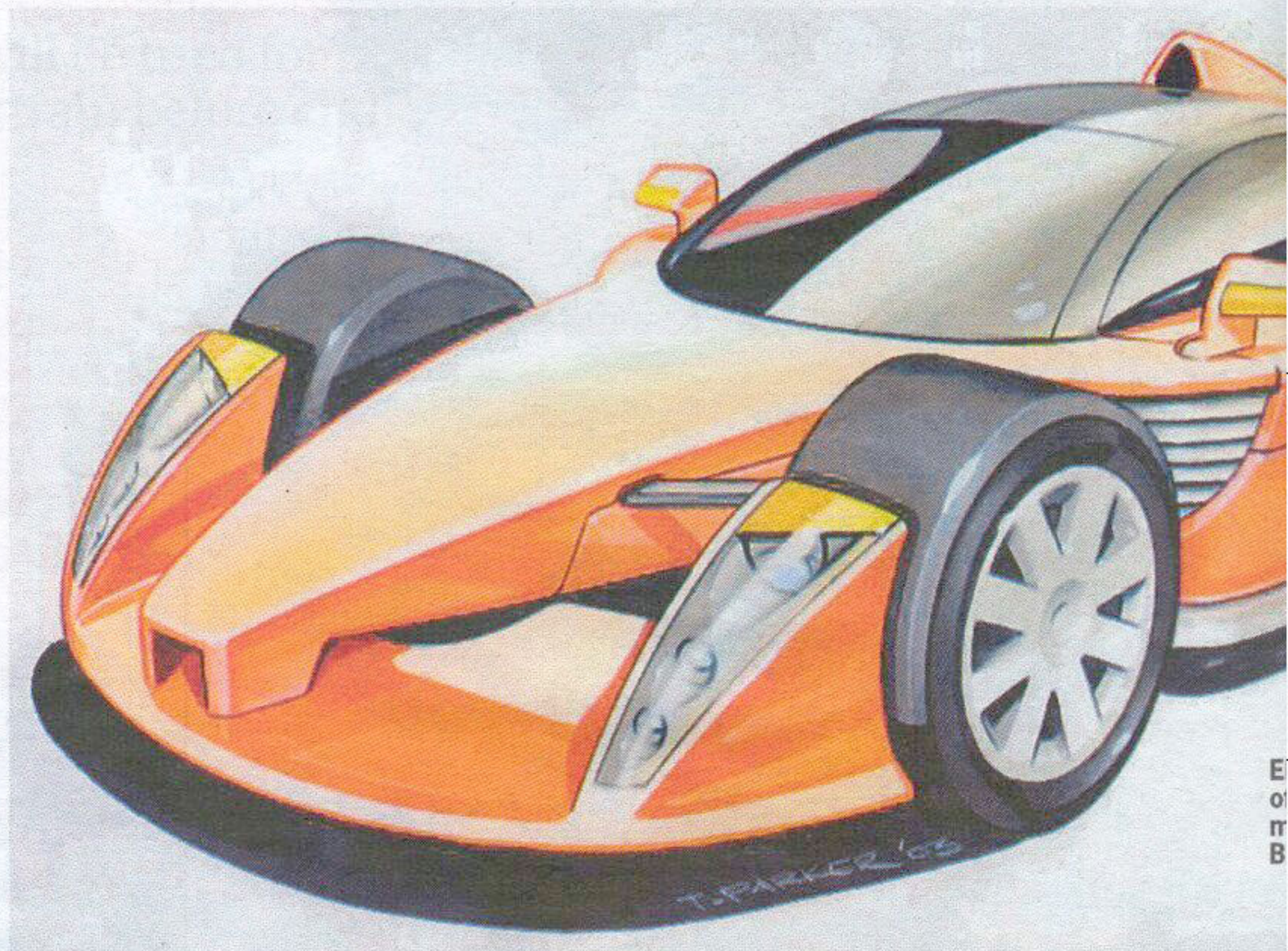


Kiwi supercar called the

First of the V8 range is expected to be unveiled this year, writes
Alastair Sloane



American automotive design legend Chuck Pelly is contributing to the development of a New Zealand range of supercars named after 1967 Formula One champion Denny Hulme.

Californian Pelly, who has had a hand in styling many recent BMW models, including the X5 and Mini, is a frequent visitor to New Zealand.

He has a luxury yacht here and he is involved with Massey University's design department. He believes New Zealand has an untapped pool of design talent.

Hulme project coordinator Jock Freemantle said: "To be competitive in the world marketplace we concluded we would have to have as many international, well-known, and respected suppliers as possible helping us. Chuck is one of those.

"We approached him about becoming involved in the project because of his love of cars and New Zealand and his belief in the design talent here."

Others working on the project include internationally renowned designers and engineers.

Pelly is one of the giants of car design. He designed the Scarab sports cars, the original Chaparral, and Formula One cars in the late 1950s. He invented the original go-kart and in 1972 founded the world-renowned design company, DesignworksUSA.

The company was born out of the cutting-edge vitality of southern California's design and car culture and grew to become internationally recognised.

Designworks USA first attracted the attention of BMW in 1986. BMW became so impressed with Pelly's contribution it bought him out in 1995 and made his company an arm of BMW Design.

Pelly continued as chief designer until his recent retirement. He continues to support the company in a consulting role. He and his partner Joan Gregor are developing The Design Academy, an international multi-disciplinary design consulting and learning network, linking business, academia and research.

Pelly is one of many big names

working on the Hulme project. The list includes BMW, Bosch, Siemens, Recaro, Koni, Hella, and Pirelli.

The Hulme project team works out of a factory in Auckland's Onehunga. It plans to build four two-seater cars, each using a lightweight carbon-fibre body and powered by a BMW 5-litre V8 engine developing around 335kW (450bhp).

The first model is a hardtop to be called the Hulme F1 Champion 1967. It is expected to be unveiled later this year. The second is a street-legal Formula One-type called the Hulme Xtreme. The third is a hardtop two-seater called the Hulme Super GT. "This model will be the basis for our race car," said Freemantle. The fourth model will be a soft-top called the Hulme Spyder.

Said Freemantle: "We have budgeted to build two to three cars in 2004, ten to fifteen in 2005, fifty to seventy-five in 2006, and one hundred a year that. The first car will be ready for sale in late 2005.

"We have spent the last three years working on the project. We have shown the car to many international and NZ motoring people over the last few months and everyone has said, 'It looks fantastic and exciting. If you can build it to the standard you propose you will sell as many as you can build.'"

