



The GT's Medium Beechwood Matrix cloth interior features redesigned bucket seats that promised more thigh and lateral support, a leather-wrapped steering wheel and full instrumentation that also adds the volt and oil pressure gauge pod above the AC outlet.

Purchased from Courtesy Pontiac in Longwood, Florida, this particular Fiero GT included the three-speed automatic transaxle, sunroof, rear deck lid spoiler, floor mats and an option group that was comprised of A/C, cruise control, power mirrors and door locks, and visor vanity mirror. Said three-speed automatic featured a lock-up converter and a 3.33:1 final drive ratio. Base price for the 1988 Fiero GT was \$13,999. With options and destination charges, this one cost \$16,558.

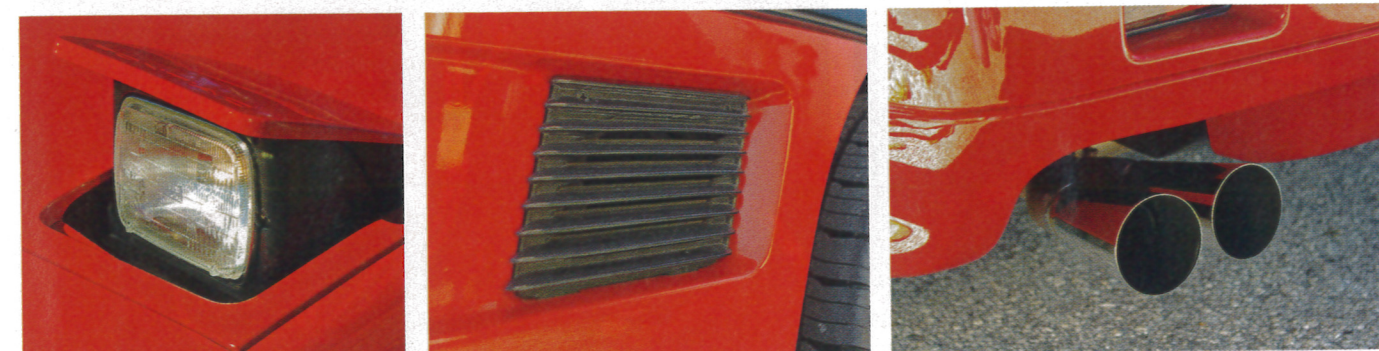
"It was the first really cool sports car that I ever owned," Mitchell confides. "My parents helped with the down payment. I had to keep a job to make payments on it, as well as stay in college, to keep the car." He also cites his Pontiac as being a major force behind his completion of college, as knowing that he was responsible for paying for it kept him focused.

More satisfying than paying it off, was, of course, spending time behind the wheel. The Pontiac had a way of even making the daily commute pleasurable. "I love the way my Fiero GT

drives. With the sound of the engine running behind you and the complete connection to the road, there is nothing like it. I liken it to a large go-kart with A/C and a radio," Mitchell quips. "It has no power steering, so at slow speeds it's hard to turn, but it handles like a dream. I have participated in Run For the Hills, which is a weekend of driving switchback roads at a high rate of speed in the mountains. My GT showed me what its capabilities really were."

Undoubtedly, Pontiac chassis engineers would be pleased with Mitchell's sentiments, as the suspension revisions for 1988 were extensive and expensive—to the tune of about \$30 million. According to Pontiac, it began with combining "reduced spring rates with higher damping control shocks and struts...[to increase] wheel control, while maintaining ride quality...."

In front, overall suspension travel was increased. Wheel spindles were 30-percent shorter: scrub radius was 30-percent



Concealed headlamps and the side-mounted air inlet came with all Fieros, but dual twin-port exhaust was standard for GTs and Formulas.



smaller; anti-dive was increased by 40 percent; upper control arms were 20-percent longer and lower control arms were 25-percent longer. Revised pivot points improved steering, and the turning radius was cut by 12 percent. In the rear was a new tri-link layout with struts that improved anti-lift and anti-squat qualities, and the rear wheel travel was increased to better absorb road imperfections.

Additionally, the GT was enhanced with the WS6 Special Performance Suspension, featuring a 16:1 quick-ratio rack-and-pinion steering rack; added 22mm rear anti-roll bar to complement the existing 23mm front bar, reducing understeer and body lean in cornering; specific springs, shocks/struts and bushings; 15x6 front and 15x7 rear Diamond Spoke aluminum wheels; and 205/60R15 front and 215/60R15 rear Eagle GT+4 tires enhancing all-weather performance. The four-wheel disc brake system was improved by using upgraded calipers and vented rotors.

While driving his GT has provided years of

satisfaction, Mitchell has also enjoyed showing it since 1999, and it continues to win awards today. "I like the fact that every time I go to car shows or cruises, I am the only one with a Fiero," he says. "It seems like everyone once owned one or knew someone who did. I always have a great time talking with people about the car and how different it really is."

The problem with exclusivity is that parts can be difficult to source. Because 1988 was the only year of production for the suspension, stock replacement parts for it and other one-year-only items can be a challenge to find.

A member of the Central Florida Fieros club, Mitchell relates, "My wife and I have done so much over the years in this car, including participating in large Fiero shows all over the country and in local events, that it has become a part of our history together as well. The 1988 model was the Fiero that GM should have built in the first place, and like most people say, GM got it right and then killed it."

For that final model year, approximately 26,400 1988 Fieros were built, and a mere 6,848 (or 6,849, depending upon the source) GTs were produced. The sales slide from 1985 through 1988 was likely precipitated by a combination of issues, not the least of which was the fact that earlier models were more commuters than performers. And then there was the highly publicized recall related to some engine fires in earlier four-cylinder models. Nevertheless, the Fiero did not return for 1989, despite the existence of a stunning 1989-'90 prototype.

Regardless of the reasons for its ultimate demise, generally the Fiero improved in some ways with each successive model year. Today, they enjoy very active and loyal owner and club support, and they are a favorite for modifications, which means that the attributes of this 1988 model won't soon be forgotten by those who appreciate Pontiac's precious P-car. 🚗



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