

PONTIAC FIERO GT

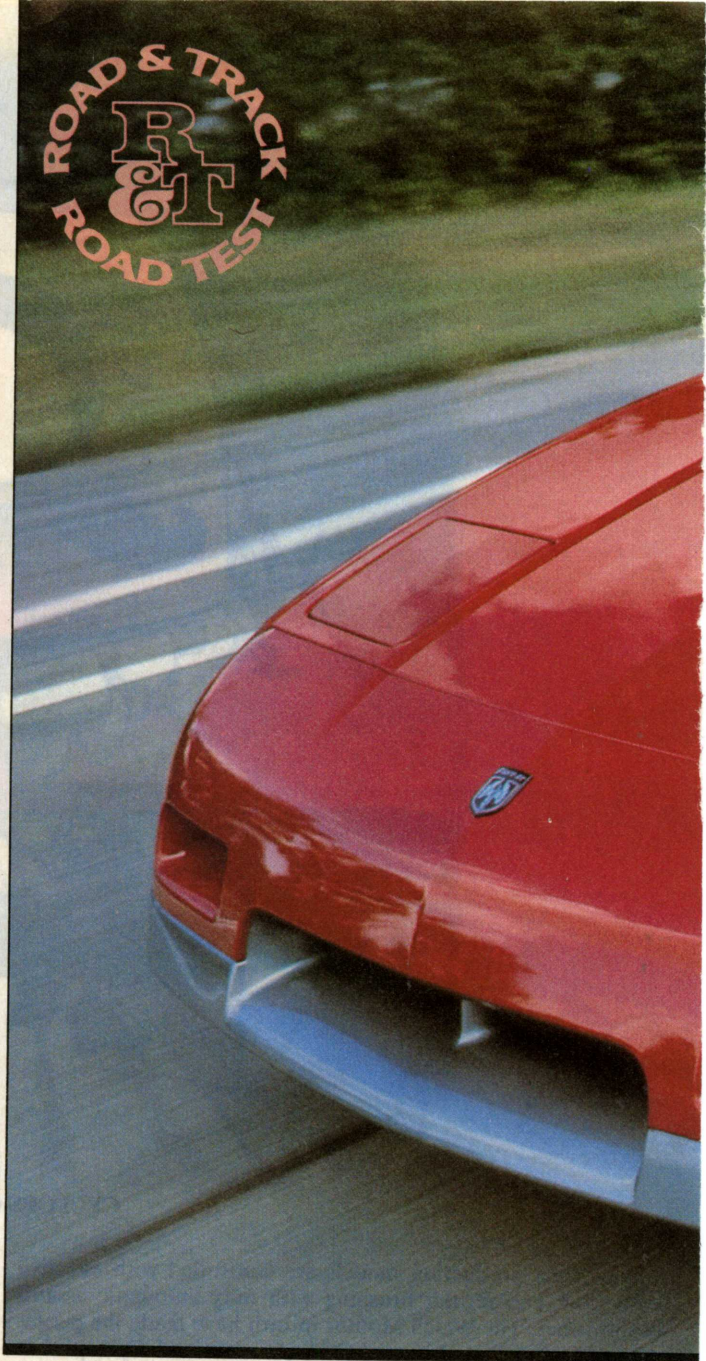
Sleek, slick and powerful



AHH . . . HAPPINESS is a Fiero with V-6 power. Since Pontiac's cute 2-seater hit the market a year ago, we have learned to love most facets of the car's warm personality. But we had to bide our time in anticipation of the performance that a more powerful engine would provide. Yet, in its first year on the market the Fiero achieved everything Pontiac expected and more. It attracted international acclaim for its unique design and manufacturing process, and it is selling well ahead of Pontiac's first-year projections. So it doesn't seem to matter that the car's performance was somewhat limited by its venerable 2.5-liter inline-4. But nestling a V-6 into the engine compartment has transformed the Fiero in a major way.

That transformation has come via Chevrolet's 2.8-liter 60-degree V-6 that Pontiac tailored to the Fiero's mid-engine configuration. The intake and exhaust manifolds as well as the calibration of the port fuel injection system are unique to this installation. Besides providing a high-tech profile, they are there to do a job. The cast aluminum intake manifold features individually tuned runners, as does the stainless steel exhaust manifold. All told, the engine (designated the L44) develops 140 bhp at 5200 rpm and 170 lb-ft of torque at 3600 rpm, a considerable step up from the 92 bhp and 134 lb-ft of the 2.5-liter four. Nicer still, the dual exhaust ends in two Ys and four resonators, which provide a pleasantly restrained growl when you put your foot down. Yet it idles with a mellow burble.

The V-6 engine is available as an option in the Fiero S/E and comes standard with a new model, the GT. The GT features the soft nose that first appeared on the Indy Pace car, a new rear panel (for the dual exhausts) and rocker panel extensions. There

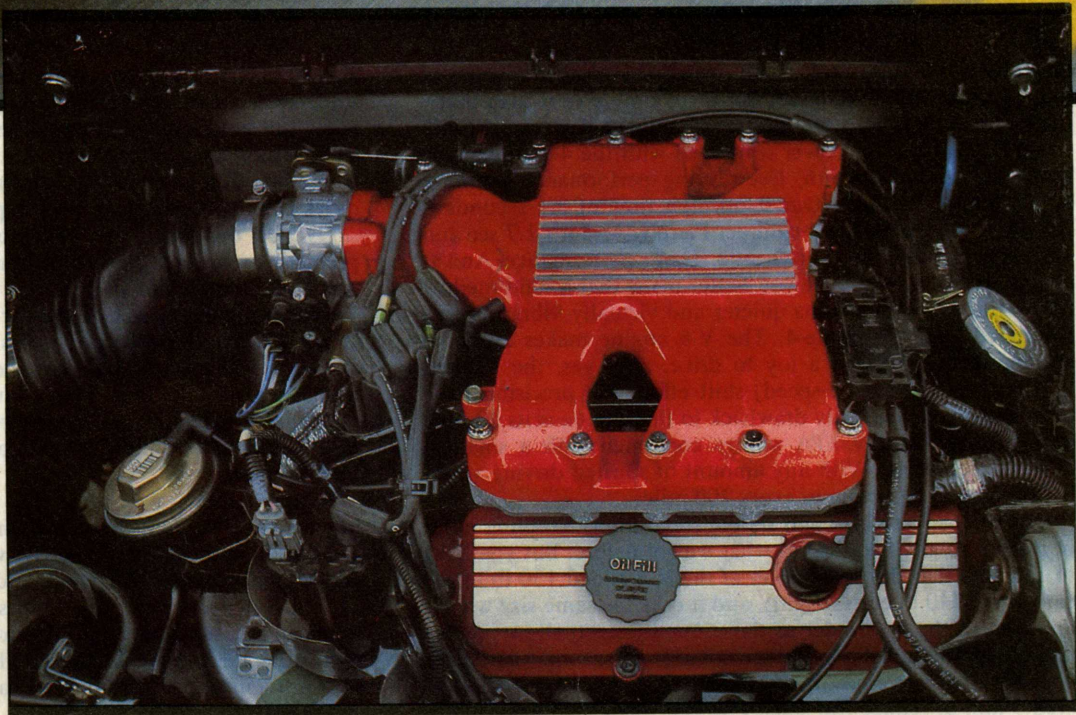


AT A GLANCE

	Pontiac Fiero GT	Mazda RX-7 GSL-SE	Nissan 300ZX
Price, base/as tested	est \$11,200 est \$13,500	\$15,295 \$16,295	\$16,199 \$16,199
Curb weight, lb	2740	2640	2990
Engine/drive	mid/rear	front/rear	front/rear
Transmission	4-sp M	5-sp M	5-sp M
0-60 mph, sec	8.4	8.5	8.2
Standing 1/4 mi, sec @ mph	16.5 @ 84.5	16.4 @ 84.0	16.4 @ 84.0
Stopping distance from 60 mph, ft	158	157	148
Interior noise at 50 mph, dBA	67	70	67
Lateral acceleration, g	0.817	0.858	0.822
Slalom speed, mph	60.3	61.1	62.3
Fuel economy, mpg	est 22.0	18.5 ¹	18.0 ¹

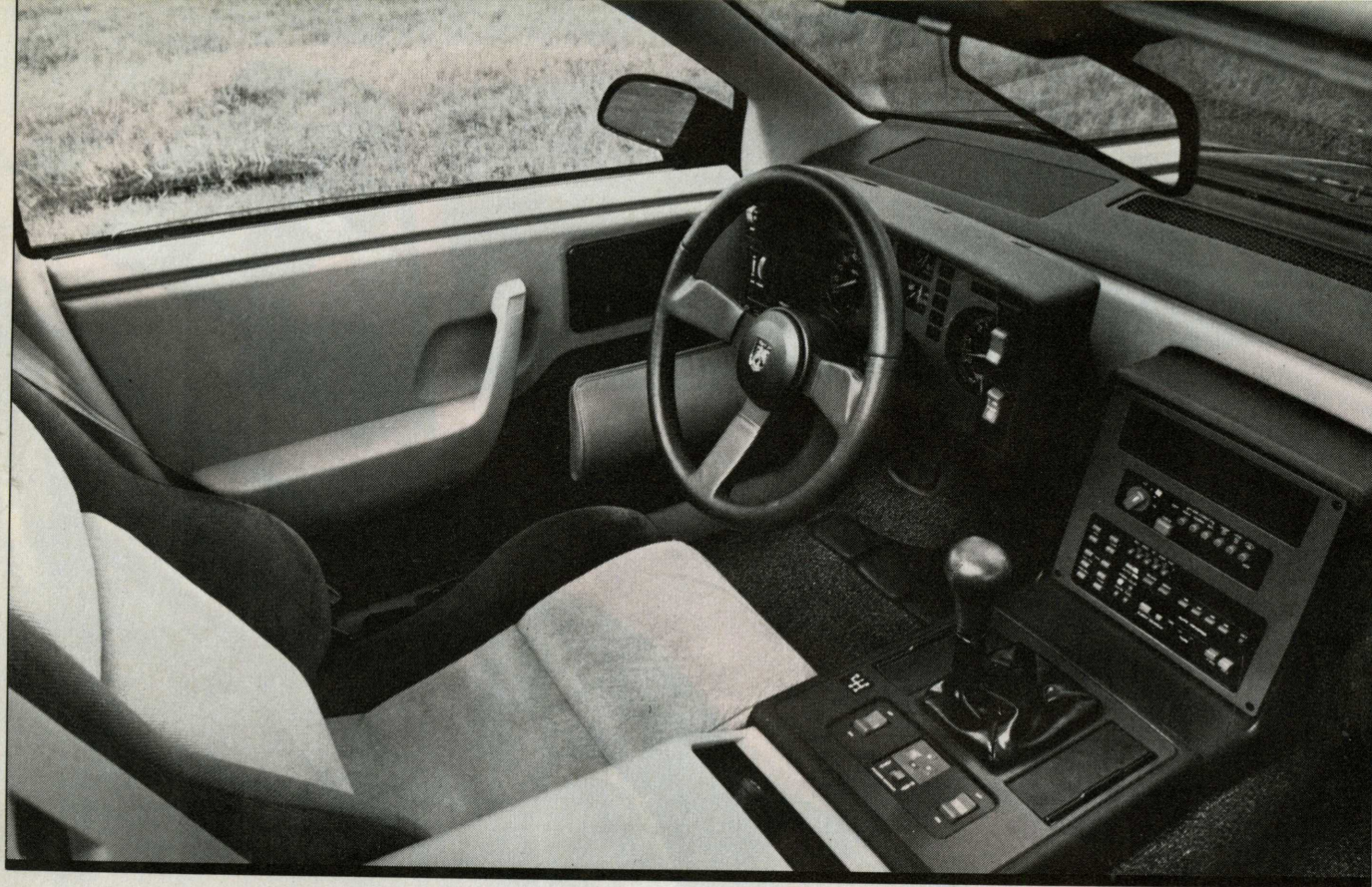
Fiero GT: V-6 power means a Fiero with performance to match its looks.
RX-7 GSL-SE: Nimble handling and more power rejuvenate an old friend (3-84).
300ZX: With power and poise, the latest Z is the most refined yet (3-84).

¹ trip fuel economy



PHOTOS BY JOE RUSZ





is also a rear deck bulge to help clear the V-6, but this will be a standard feature on all Fieros. Some of us liked the GT's revised styling and some of us didn't. But we all agreed that it comes closer to looking like a real race car than just about any other car on the market . . . and it's sure to generate excitement. The wing? How did we forget? It's an option.

For those aerophiles among our readers, the following will be of more than passing interest. The original Fiero with 13-in. wheels and tires has a C_x of 0.377; add 14-in. wheels and tires and that figure climbs to 0.406. With the pace car nose and 14-in. wheels and tires the coefficient of drag drops to 0.372 and falls still further to 0.350 with the addition of the rocker panel extensions and the rear wing.

So how do the V-6 and the GT work together? Very well and very nicely. The V-6's flexibility allows it to pull slowly but smoothly from 1000 rpm in 4th, which is a good indication of the low-end torque available. But there's more to it than that—the midrange torque is also improved and the V-6 engine (with its 50-percent greater power compared with the 4-cylinder) exhibits the sort of smooth, free-revving performance we have hoped for in the Fiero. Our 0-60 mph time of 8.4 seconds is 2.5 sec quicker than the 4-cylinder Fiero's. And it's 1.7 sec and 12.0 mph faster in the quarter mile. That's performance. And at all speeds but idle (maybe you better make that a loud mellow burble), the V-6 Fiero was quieter and virtually vibration-free compared with the inline-4. The V-6 engine makes even the automatic transmission a joy to drive, and, yes, the manual transmission (still no 5-speed) shift effort and precision have been improved. The only drawback to this engine is its 22 mpg city/26 mpg highway EPA ratings combined with a smallish 10.2-gal. fuel tank. With any amount of spirited driving you'll be stopping to fill up about every 200 miles.

Our skidpad (0.817g) and slalom (60.3 mph) handling numbers are virtually identical to what we got before. But you have to consider that the installation of the V-6 added 150 lb to the car (now 2740 lb curb weight), and it uses the same size wheels and tires as the 4-cylinder so those numbers actually represent an improvement. This was made possible by several suspension changes all Fieros enjoy, including toe links that have been lowered 5 mm to reduce roll steer. (We call them tie rods but Pon-

tiac prefers toe links because of the possible association of tie rods with steering; these links are at the rear.) And this, according to Pontiac, reduces roll understeer from 8 percent down to 1-2 percent, resulting in crisper, more responsive handling in abrupt lane-change maneuvers. In addition, the front suspension lower control arm has been redesigned to provide 0.5 in. more travel. On top of that, the GT's sportier handling package (RPO WS6 on the S/E) includes higher rear spring rates and firmer rear strut valving, which not only reduce body roll but also change the ride frequency, resulting in less pitch.

Whether on the road or track the Fiero GT is in its element. In addition to our full road test we were able to assess its abilities at Waterford Hills, a tight 1.5-mile road course north of Detroit. And we found the GT to be a consistent and predictable handler. The car almost seems to have an intuitive sense of what you want it to do. Turn into a corner at speed and it initially understeers, but as you turn more, you can get the rear wheels to slide. Lift at this moment and it develops trailing-throttle oversteer, which disappears the instant you get back on the power. There just aren't any severe or abrupt transitional changes with quick power on/off inputs. Very impressive (and safe).

Overall, the brakes are well modulated, with just a hint of premature rear lock. And panic braking distances are better: 9 ft less from 60 mph and 19 ft shorter from 80.

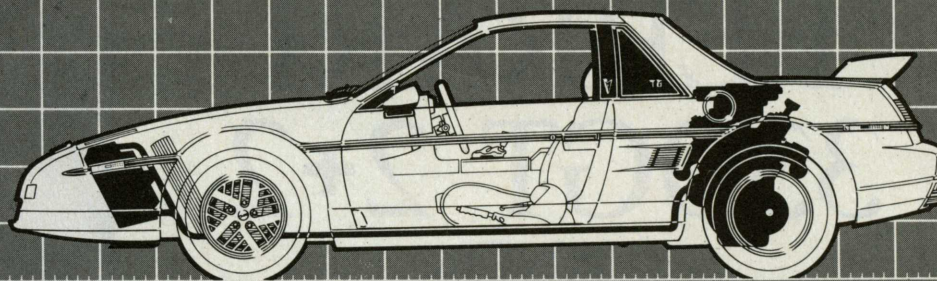
One annoying aspect of the car is an inordinate amount of steering kickback on bumpy roads and hard turns. Even more annoying was how the steering wheel would rattle in this situation. We also think most Fiero drivers would appreciate an increase in steering quickness and a reduction in low-speed effort. Both could be accomplished with power assisted steering. Hint, hint, Pontiac.

Where Pontiac will price the Fiero GT hasn't been announced at this point. Nor do we have any indication what the V-6 option in the S/E will cost. We would estimate that the GT's added performance will command a price increase of about \$1500. But if our road test results and the car's current sales pace can be used as any sort of barometer, you better get in line right now. Let's make it official. The debate is over. The Fiero isn't just a nice, 2-seat commuter car anymore. It's a world-class sports car.





ROAD TEST PONTIAC FIERO GT



SCALE: 10 in. (254 mm) DIVISIONS
DRAWING BY BILL DOBSON

PRICE

List price, FOB Detroit.....est \$11,200
Price as tested..... est \$13,500
Price as tested includes std equip. (V-6 engine, GT bodywork), air cond (est \$730), AM/FM stereo cassette (est \$450), sunroof (est \$250), rear wing (est \$250), elect. window lifts (est \$185), cruise control (est \$175), rear-window heat (est \$135), central locking (est \$125)

MANUFACTURER

Pontiac Motor Division, One Pontiac Plaza, Pontiac, Mich. 48053

GENERAL

Curb weight, lb/kg2740..... 1244
Test weight2910..... 1321
Weight dist (with driver), f/r, %43/57
Wheelbase, in./mm93.4..... 2372
Track, front/rear57.8/58.7..... 1468/1492
Length165.1..... 4194
Width68.9..... 1750
Height46.9..... 1191
Ground clearance6.0..... 152
Overhang, f/r41.0/30.7..... 1041/780
Trunk space, cu ft/liters6.8..... 192
Fuel capacity, U.S. gal./liters10.2..... 39

MAINTENANCE

Service intervals, mi:
Oil/filter change7500/7500
Chassis lubenone
Tuneupna
Warranty, mo/mi12/12,000

ENGINE

Typeohv V-6
Bore x stroke, in./mm3.50 x 2.99..... 89.0 x 76.0
Displacement, cu in./cc173..... 2837
Compression ratio8.9:1
Bhp @ rpm, SAE net/kW140/104 @ 5200
Equivalent mph / km/h121/195
Torque @ rpm, lb-ft/Nm170/230 @ 3600
Equivalent mph / km/h84/135
Fuel injectionGM multi-point
Fuel requirementunleaded, 91-oct
Exhaust-emission control equipment: 3-way catalytic converter, oxygen sensor, exhaust-gas recirculation, air injection

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission4-sp manual
Gear ratios: 4th (0.81)2.96:1
3rd (1.24)4.53:1
2nd (1.95)7.12:1
1st (3.31)12.08:1
Final drive ratio (rear axle ratio x transfer ratio)3.65:1

INSTRUMENTATION

Instruments: 85-mph speedometer, 6000-rpm tach, 999,999.9 odometer, 999.9 trip odometer, oil pressure, coolant temp, voltmeter, fuel level
Warning lights: oil pressure, handbrake/brake system, check engine, door ajar, rear deck ajar, upshift, seatbelts, hazard, high beam, directionals

CHASSIS & BODY

Layoutmid engine/rear drive
Body/frameseparate; fiberglass panels/steel unit chassis
Brake system9.7-in. (247-mm) discs front and rear; vacuum assisted
Swept area, sq in./sq cm343..... 2212
Wheelscast alloy, 14 x 6
TiresGoodyear Eagle GT, P215/60R-14
Steering typerack & pinion
Overall ratio19.2:1
Turns, lock-to-lock2.9
Turning circle, ft/m38.9..... 11.9
Front suspension: upper and lower A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension: Chapman struts, lower A-arms, tie-rods, coil springs, tube shocks

ACCOMMODATION

Seating capacity, persons2
Head room, in./mm36.5..... 927
Seat width2 x 18.5..... 2 x 470
Seatback adjustment, deg40

CALCULATED DATA

Lb/bhp (test weight)20.8
Mph/1000 rpm (4th gear)23.3
Engine revs/mi (60 mph)2570
Piston travel, ft/mi1281
R&T steering index1.13
Brake swept area, sq in./ton236

ROAD TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

Time to distance, sec:
0-100 ft3.2
0-500 ft8.9
0-1320 ft (1/4 mi)16.5
Speed at end of 1/4 mi, mph84.5
Time to speed, sec:
0-30 mph2.5
0-50 mph5.8
0-60 mph8.4
0-70 mph11.3
0-80 mph14.7
0-100 mph27.0

SPEEDS IN GEARS

4th gear (5300 rpm)est 125
3rd gear (6000)93
2nd (6000)59
1st (6000)35

FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving, mpgest 22.0
Cruising range, mi (1-gal. res)est 200

HANDLING

Lateral accel, 100-ft radius, g0.817
Speed thru 700-ft slalom, mph60.3

BRAKES

Minimum stopping distances, ft:
From 60 mph158
From 80 mph271
Control in panic stopvery good
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop, lb20
Fade: percent increase in pedal effort to maintain 0.5g deceleration in 6 stops from 60 mph20
Overall brake ratingvery good

INTERIOR NOISE

Idle in neutral, dBA53
Maximum, 1st gear77
Constant 30 mph64
50 mph67
70 mph72
90 mph76

ACCELERATION

