



The newsletter of the Motor City Chapter of
Pontiac-Oakland Club International

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Bakers of Milford

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June 2020

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News and Updates

I hope this issue of the newsletter finds you and your loved ones healthy and safe.

By now you would have received word that our annual car show is cancelled. Other shows that we know are cancelled:

2020 Hershey Fall Meet

2020 POCI Convention

2020 Pontiac Nationals (Norwalk, Ohio)

2020 Trans Am Nationals

2020 Sellers Indian Summer Car Show

2020 GTOAA International Meet

2020 Woodward Dream Cruise

Until we can get together, whenever that may be, stay in touch and stay safe!

Gains

POCI 2021 CONVENTION



WICKED FUN IN '21


Mohegan Sun
a legendary meeting destination

Uncasville, Connecticut

July 11 - 15, 2021

Hosted by the Yankee Chapter of P.O.C.I.

Collectible Classic: 1984-1988 Pontiac Fiero

What was and what might have been.

(reprinted from automobilemag.com)

David Zenlea writer Patrick M. Hoey photographer

Dec 17, 2015

Let us pour one out for Pontiac. Think not of the fecklessly managed, watered-down brand that withered away in 2009. Remember instead a time when Pontiac became the nation's third best-selling automotive brand, a leader in innovation, style, and performance. Remember instead the Pontiac Fiero, the company's most ambitious and subversive car, which illustrates both what Pontiac stood for and where it all went wrong.



Pontiac had long pined for a two-seat sports car, only to be rejected by GM management on the grounds that such a car would compete too closely with the Corvette. But as fuel efficiency became a compelling issue in the late 1970s, engineer Hulki Aldikacti successfully pitched management a plastic-body, mid-engine two-seater. The key was that it wasn't a sports car, but a cute little fuel sipper for cost-conscious commuters. "It was kind of a backdoor car," explains Gregg Peterson, an engineer for Pontiac at the time. To avoid raising any suspicions at the corporate level, official drawings of the car showed only a four-cylinder engine aft of the rear seats. "But in every drawing we made sure a V-6 would fit," says Peterson.

An astounding 136,940 examples of the Pontiac Fiero were sold in 1984, its first year. But all was not well. Many buyers expected a sports car but found themselves with a 1970s-style econowedge. Cursed with a tiny engineering budget, Aldikacti had relied heavily on the GM parts bin to get the car built, and the Fiero's plastic body panels and innovative spaceframe construction hid the front suspension and brakes of a rear-wheel-drive Chevette and a rear suspension derived from the strut-type front suspension of a front-wheel-drive Chevrolet Citation. Worse, the Fiero's ancient 2.5-liter "Iron Duke" four-cylinder made just 92 hp, and with 2,600 pounds to move around, its performance was turgid at best. Nevertheless, the Pontiac guys went to work and polished their hairdresser's car into something special. In 1985 the Fiero got a V-6 engine. For 1987 Pontiac introduced a sleek styling refresh. Finally for 1988 Pontiac bolted up a new multilink rear suspension derived from lessons learned from GM's part ownership of Lotus Engineering as well as the Fiero's successful foray into IMSA sports car racing.



Bill Shannon's perfectly preserved 1988 Pontiac Fiero GT shows the payoff of these continuous improvements. Measuring 165.1 inches in length on a wheelbase of 93.4 inches, the Fiero has a relatively spacious cabin for a mid-engine car. The 1980s GM interior pieces, redolent of aging plastic, now evoke nostalgia. More important, the seats hold us snug, and the steering wheel, one of the last of the pre-airbag era, sends out honest sports car vibes.

Shannon's a genial guy, but he drives the Fiero like he stole it, so when it's my turn behind the wheel, I don't hold back. Guess what? This old Pontiac has got game. It adjusts quickly to stabs of the throttle but never gets nervous thanks to its revised rear suspension. The Fiero's unassisted steering provides a reassuring stream of information through the thin leather-wrapped rim. The five-speed Getrag-engineered gearbox, another late improvement, feels crisp.



Not everything is peachy. The wheezy 2.8-liter, 135-hp V-6 riding behind us loudly bemoans the fact that it didn't wind up in a Chevrolet Celebrity like most of its brethren. The plastic exterior panels join the cacophony, rattling loudly as I bash through rutted curves. But with the 1988 Fiero GT, Pontiac at last had a proper sports car.

And yet it was too late. By the late '80s the sports car market was saturated with competitors duking it out for 20,000 sales apiece, not enough volume to justify a car that required 50,000 sales to break even. It didn't help that engine fires badly hurt the car's reputation, especially since GM dragged its heels issuing a recall. And finally, a sweeping corporate reorganization folded Pontiac into a single group with Chevrolet and GM of Canada, which meant a loss of its independence and identity.

Within the joint organization with Chevrolet, there was no room for two low-volume sports cars. Plans were quickly dropped for the next-generation 1990 Fiero with its Oldsmobile Quad 4 engine, a high-tech DOHC four-cylinder. Production halted after the 1988 model, of which only 26,402 were produced. Racer Jim Hall, former Pontiac general manager Bunkie Knudsen, and former Chevy R & D director Jim Musser considered producing the car independently as the "Chaparral," but nothing came of it.



Meanwhile, Bill Shannon is happy to accept his 1988 Pontiac Fiero GT for what it is. Like many Fiero buyers, Shannon was drawn in by the exotic styling. A veteran designer who worked for Chrysler in the late 1980s, he'd been able to tour the Lamborghini factory during Chrysler's ownership of the Italian brand. After a ride in a Countach from famed test driver Valentino Balboni, he returned to the States with a hankering for a mid-engine Italian sports car. The '88 Fiero GT, with its Ferrari-esque fastback body style, was about as close to it as a man of reasonable means could get.

The Info

Years Produced 1984-1988

Number Sold 370,168

Original Price \$13,999 (1988)

Motor City Chapter Officers

President

Kenny Galdes

kengaldes@gmail.com

Vice President

Gains McDonald

gainsmcdonald@gmail.com

Secretary

Ray Santo

rs65GTO@aol.com

Treasurer

Ray Golota

raygolota@gmail.com

Director

Tom Lange

pastor@lhic.org

Activity Coordinator

Brian Dougherty

brian.r.dougherty@live.com

Newsletter Editor

Gains McDonald

gainsmcdonald@gmail.com