

# **Restoration Details for Investment Level Fiero GT**

**The Pontiac Fiero is finally becoming a collector car ... after a decade or more of level value. January 2019 valuations for the Fiero GT models (collector classes 1 and 2) have risen a combined 25% since January of 2014. These data were taken from the HAGERTY VALUATION TOOL website; an authority on classic car values (more on this later).**

**The logic for restored classic cars is as follows: you can drive them on a limited basis, maintain them well and sell them for what you paid for them many years in the future. Your average performance car today depreciates at least \$3,000 per year for the first 10 years and costs a lot more to insure than a classic car.**

**So when does it make sense as an investment to restore, or buy an already restored classic car, and how can you improve the odds that your investment will generate a return at a future date?**

**A good start is to find an emerging classic car and (1) restore it to, or (2) buy it in ... collector car status. Try and do this before the prices escalate. There are numerous examples of emerging classics that have rapidly increased in price. Most Muscle Cars are a good example; the Porsche 914 & 944, Datsun 240Z, and the 6 cylinder Baby or Dino Ferrari are more recent examples.**

**The Fiero is becoming an investment vehicle; values are just starting to rise and many sellers are still pricing their cars at yesterday's values. Even the most desirable examples are still priced under \$21,000 (e.g. a high optioned 1988 GT with a 5 speed manual trans in showroom condition is ~\$20,500).**

**So which Fiero models by production year are most likely to be good future investments? Currently the 1985, 1986, 1987, and the 1988 Fiero GT models with manual transmissions and lots of options are the most valued. The 1988 Formula model and the unique 1984 Indy Pace Car are also sought after.**

**343,766 Fieros were produced in the 5 year model run. The most sought after models listed above represented only 21% of the total 5 year production volumes (these volumes include both manual and automatics). Many of these cars are no longer on the road, increasing the value of those remaining. All models will eventually benefit from these classic car valuation increases.**

**Here are some pictures of restored collectable Fieros that should increase in value in the near term:**

## Restoration Details for Investment Level Fiero GT



1985 Fiero GT – 22,534 total units produced (manual and automatics).



1986 Fiero GT – 17,891 total units produced (manual and automatics).



## Restoration Details for Investment Level Fiero GT



1987 Fiero GT – 15,880 total units produced (manual and automatics).



1988 Fiero GT – 6,848 total units produced (manual and automatics).

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## Restoration Details for Investment Level Fiero GT



1988 Fiero Formula – 5,484 total units produced (manual and automatics).



1984 Fiero Pace Car – 2,001 total units produced (manual and automatics).

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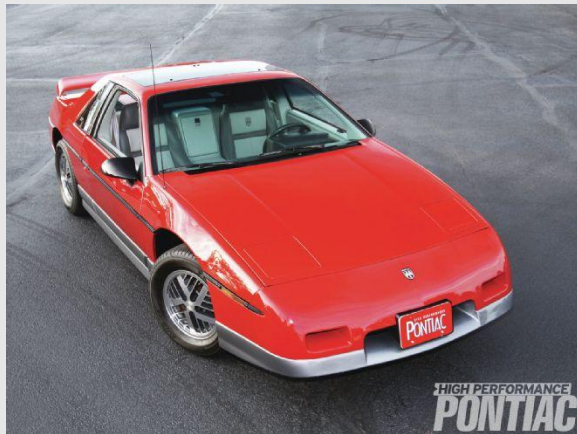
**So what are the range of prices for these sought after Fiero Models?**

# Restoration Details for Investment Level Fiero GT

## HAGERTY VALUATION TOOL:

### 1985 Pontiac Fiero GT

2dr Coupe 6-cyl. 173cid/130hp FI



- #1 Concours \$14,900
- #2 Excellent \$8,400
- #3 Good \$5,800
- #4 Fair \$2,700
- VALUE ADJUSTMENTS: -\$1,000 for automatic

## Value Details:

| Item Name  |              | Jan 2014 | Jan 2015 | Jan 2016 | Jan 2017 | Jan 2018 | Jan 2019 |  | Increase 2019/ 2014 |
|--|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--|---------------------|
| 1985 Pontiac Fiero GT 2dr Coupe 6-cyl. 173cid/130hp FI | #1 Concours  | \$10,700 | \$10,700 | \$12,400 | \$12,500 | \$11,900 | \$14,900 |  | +39.3%              |
|  | #2 Excellent | \$7,700  | \$7,700  | \$9,000  | \$9,100  | \$8,200  | \$8,400  |  | +9.1%               |
|  | #3 Good      | \$5,900  | \$5,900  | \$6,800  | \$6,600  | \$5,800  | \$5,800  |  |                     |
|  | #4 Fair      | \$3,100  | \$3,100  | \$3,500  | \$3,300  | \$2,700  | \$2,700  |  |                     |



# Restoration Details for Investment Level Fiero GT

The other end of the spectrum is the prized 1988 GT models:

## HAGERTY VALUATION TOOL:

### 1988 Pontiac Fiero GT

2dr Coupe 6-cyl. 173cid/135hp MFI



- #1 Concours \$20,600
- #2 Excellent \$13,400
- #3 Good \$8,200
- #4 Fair \$5,100
- Value Adjustments: -\$1,000 for Automatic

## Value Details

| Item Name   |              | Jan 2014 | Jan 2015 | Jan 2016 | Jan 2017 | Jan 2018 | Jan 2019 |  | Increase 2019/ 2014 |
|---|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--|---------------------|
| 1988 Pontiac Fiero GT 2dr Coupe 6-cyl. 173cid/135hp MFI | #1 Concours  | \$14,800 | \$14,800 | \$17,200 | \$16,500 | \$16,500 | \$20,600 |  | +53.7%              |
|   | #2 Excellent | \$12,200 | \$12,200 | \$14,100 | \$13,700 | \$13,000 | \$13,400 |  | +9.8%               |
|   | #3 Good      | \$7,800  | \$7,800  | \$9,300  | \$8,600  | \$8,200  | \$8,200  |  |                     |
|   | #4 Fair      | \$5,300  | \$5,300  | \$6,000  | \$5,400  | \$5,100  | \$5,100  |  |                     |

**NOTE:** The 86 and 87 Fiero GTs are very close in price to the 85 GTs. The 88 Formula models are about half way between the 85 to 87 GTs and the 1988 GTs (see above).

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Other Fiero models, are generally several thousand dollars less than the models detailed above; automatics are similarly \$1,000 less than manuals. For additional pricing details on all models and years ... see [www.hagerty.com/valuationtool](http://www.hagerty.com/valuationtool).

The 88 GT and 88 Formula models had a Lotus derived suspension and were produced in limited numbers compared to the other model years; this added extra value to these cars. The extra value of the 88 GT and 88 Formula models can be partially offset during restoration by parts cost ... some 88 parts are hard to find and/or expensive compared to the earlier GTs that use common GM parts.

A good bet, investment wise, would be to find a previously restored 1988 Class 1 or Class 2, GT or Formula model ... preferably with a manual transmission. If you are planning on driving your Classic Fiero a fair amount, your best bet may be a loaded Class 2 1985, 1986, or 1987 GT that has been previously restored. The cost of buying and maintaining the 1985 through 1987 GTs would be much lower than the cost of buying and maintaining an 1988 GT or Formula.

Generally Class 1s are like showroom new or Concours and Class 2s are former Class 1s that show some minor visual wear and tear due to driving miles; they have generally been completely restored due to age more than miles. Class 2s are still capable of winning a local car show but have some flaws that the casual observer will miss. See [www.hagerty.com/valuationtool](http://www.hagerty.com/valuationtool) ... for full definitions of all four condition classes and prices for all Fiero models and years.

If you already own one of these sought after Fieros, you need to determine the realistic condition of your car before you start a restoration project. For most of us this will be a **class three car at best!** And for many of us, something below a class three. This means that your car has noticeable flaws in one or more of the following areas: frame, paint, interior, seats, exhaust, air conditioning, headlights, suspension, wheels, or some part of the drive train.

Lets take a macro look at the numbers again ... assume you have a 1985 Fiero GT with a manual transmission and it is somewhat below the class 3 price of \$5,800; real worth of maybe \$5,000? And further yet, assume your target is a to build a class two (2) vehicle that can win a local show and has a completed target worth of approximately \$8,400.

# Restoration Details for Investment Level Fiero GT

Do the math: \$8,400 minus \$5,000 equals a potential budget of \$3,400. For most of you this is not enough money to build a good class 2 car even if you do almost all the work yourself. In other words, you will need to be prepared to spend several thousand dollars more than your budget of \$3,400 and at least 100 hours of your own time to complete your class 2 project car.

You may want to consider selling your \$5,000 car and buying a solid class two (2) Fiero GT; from an investment standpoint this is a very attractive alternative. If you out source the majority of the labor hours for your \$5,000 1985 Fiero GT restoration upgrade, you will probably be in the range of \$12,000 to \$14,000 for the total project ... selling your existing car and finding a solid class two for \$8,400 now looks like an extremely good deal!

Buying a class one (show room new) car can also be a problem if you plan to drive the vehicle other than to and from shows. In a few thousand street miles your \$14,900 class one will start to turn into a \$8,400 class two! Paint chips, scratches and visual degradation occurs rather quickly.

Here are the 1985 Fiero GT numbers from earlier in the article as a reference:

- #1 Concours \$14,900
  - #2 Excellent \$8,400
  - #3 Good \$5,800
  - #4 Fair \$2,700
- **VALUE ADJUSTMENTS: -\$1,000 for automatic**

All this is very comfortable to analyze after the fact, but it is far too easy to be way down this road before you are faced with the reality of spending much more than your target amount to finish your class two (2) potential show vehicle. **I speak from experience ... believe me!!**

Here is a detailed history of my restoration efforts on a Red 1985 Fiero GT 4 speed manual that has spanned 12 years. For most of this project I was working at a job that had me traveling Monday through Friday 45 weeks per year. Long story short, I had limited time and usually resorted to outside help to get the car drivable when time was short. I spent approximately \$8,000 out of pocket with about \$5,900 of these costs for outside retail labor and parts prices. If I did most of my own work the \$5,900 would have probably been reduced to maybe \$3,000.

Doing most of my own work, would still have put me well short of breaking even at a \$8,400 total cost. It is very hard to break even on a restoration project no matter what your mechanical skills may be. I'm a decent home mechanic that has previously built and raced an E-Production MGB in the SCCA; but this project still cost significantly more than its current retail value.



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I also had to learn a lot of new skills that were not part of my SCCA experience base; race cars are made to be functional not showroom new replicas. These new skills included: interior refurbishment, headliner installation, seat reconditioning & upholstery, automotive wiring & diagnosis, door & sun roof seal replacement, paint repair & renewal, and more.

Here are some finished pictures of the car and a summary of my 12 year history of project costs:



## Restoration Details for Investment Level Fiero GT





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## Restoration Details for Investment Level Fiero GT

| Date    | Mileage | Description   | Cost    | Performed by  |
|---------|---------|---|---------|---|
|         |         |   |         |   |
| 04/2007 | 50,000  | New: rear brake pads/ rotors/ and both disks resurfaced / new parking brake cable installed   | \$550   | Davis Auto Care   |
| 04/2007 | 51,000  | New alternator installed  | \$401   | Davis Auto Care   |
| 04/2008 | 54,000  | Installed New Stainless Steel Cat Converter and Borla Stainless Steel High Performance Exhaust System (from Fiero Store)  | \$900   | Local Muffler Shop installed the system; good for ~ 7 HP according to Borla   |
| 04/2008 | 54,000  | Oil change with 5-40 full synthetic motor oil / installed triple volume high capacity oil filter / greased all suspension fittings                              | \$50    | Owner Installed   |
| 04/2009 | 57,000  | New: spark plugs / high performance plug wires / coil / and electronic ignition module  | \$150   | Owner Installed : car now runs better than stock  |
| 05/2009 | 58,000  | Installed Hypertech: High Performance Ignition Chip, 175 deg. Fan switch, and 160 deg. Thermostat (all from Fiero Store)  | \$200   | Owner: car runs significantly better and much cooler. No more running close to engine temp red zone on very hot days; adds ~8 HP. |
| 05/2009 | 59,500  | New Ferrari style aluminum wheels / tires /struts / shocks / front suspension components / and alignment front and rear   | \$1196  | Bell Tire package deal: they took ~\$400 off total of individual prices.  |
| 11/2009 | 60,000  | New High Capacity Battery Installed replaced under auto store warranty  | \$0     | Owner Installed   |
| 04/2010 | 60,773  | New air conditioning condenser / had rest of system rebuilt and converted to R134 refrigerant   | \$1,316 | Davis Auto Care   |
| 06/2012 | 61,500  | Installed K & N air filter / oil change with 5-40 full synthetic motor oil / installed triple volume high capacity oil filter / greased all suspension fittings | \$80    | Owner Installed : K & N air filter along with Borla exhaust and new ignition parts improved performance                           |

## Restoration Details for Investment Level Fiero GT

| Date    | Mileage | Description   | Cost  | Performed by   |
|---------|---------|---|-------|--|
|         |         |   |       |  |
| 06/2012 | 61,500  | New drivers side seat belt – safety update (Fiero Factory)  | \$259 | Owner Installed  |
| 06/2012 | 61,500  | New interior headliner / visors / sun roof seals / detailed rest of interior (parts from Fiero Factory)   | \$350 | Owner Installed : interior now looks like new  |
| 05/2015 | 63,000  | Cleaned and re-oiled K & N air filter / oil change with 5-40 full synthetic motor oil / installed triple volume high capacity oil filter / new muffler clamps / greased suspension fittings                     | \$95  | Owner Installed  |
| 05/2015 | 63,000  | Installed two Paul Vargas rebuilt headlight motors and lubed lighting system rotating components / also realigned headlights  | \$143 | Owner Installed  |
| 05/2015 | 63,000  | Installed new head light relays / fixed interior headlight switch and installed lights-up cut-off switch to save headlight motors from future wear (also functions as safety item when working near headlights) | \$100 | Owner Installed  |
| 05/2015 | 63,300  | New front brake calipers and pads / resurfaced front disks / repacked front wheel bearings / new brake fluid / and had whole braking system checked (all to spec.)  | \$615 | Hal's Auto Service   |
| 10/2015 | 64,014  | Car fully detailed: interior, front compartment, engine, underbody and exterior (exterior paint cleaned, prepped, clay bared, waxed and buffed)   | \$100 | Owner did interior, front compartment, engine, & underbody. Professional Detailer did the Exterior |
| ...     | ...     | <b>I thought I was done but I found other things to improve ... I guess Restorations are never really done!</b>   | ...   | ...  |
| 8/2016  | 64,205  | Replaced rear trunk light switch and installed disconnect for car shows   | \$20  | Owner Installed : New part came from Club member   |
| 8/2016  | 64,251  | Replaced upper engine “dog bone” with adjustable Rodney Dickman poly version (full retail \$70)   | \$50  | Owner Installed : New Part was bought from Club member   |

## Restoration Details for Investment Level Fiero GT

| Date                | Mileage | Description  | Cost           | Performed by   |
|---------------------|---------|--|----------------|--|
|                     |         |  |                |  |
| 9/2016              | 64,355  | Replaced front speakers with Kenwood KFC415C 2 way speaker System with 160W Max power. \$150 retail price – bought at large discount on Amazon.                  | \$52           | <b>Owner Installed:</b><br>Much improved speakers over stock.  |
| 9/2016              | 64,355  | Replaced tape radio with perfect match newer Pontiac disc radio from Replacement Radios. Color / knobs/ lighting / faceplate and equalizers are a perfect match. | \$190          | <b>Owner Installed:</b><br>New speakers and rebuilt radio produced a much better sound system than original. |
| 5/2017              | 64,410  | Replaced side window seals (Dew Wipes) and refurbished all window mechanisms, door locks, remote mirrors, and glass tracks.                                      | \$100          | <b>Owner installed</b> - this is a very labor intensive job – both doors have to be completely disassembled. |
| 05/2018             | 64,812  | New High Capacity Battery installed  | \$171          | <b>Owner installed</b>   |
| 05/2018             | 64,812  | New Street Legal Halogen Vision X Headlights installed   | \$83           | <b>Owner installed</b>   |
| 05/2018             | 64,812  | Four New Tires BF Goodrich Radial T/A 215/ 60R -14s. Plus new alignment front and rear. Old tires had like new tread but were manufactured in 2007 (not safe!)   | \$760          | Bell Tire in Northville  |
|                     |         |  |                |  |
| <b>2006 to 2018</b> |         | <b>Sum of recent repair, maintenance and update costs (Owner installs are parts cost only)</b>   | <b>\$7,966</b> | <b>Every system referenced is working at factory specs or better</b>   |

As you can see I started with a car that was worth maybe \$5,000 at most and invested another \$8,000 for a total investment of \$13,000 (granted, some of this was regular maintenance and not true restoration costs).

The only problem was that the finished product market value is only \$8,400 according to the current Hagerty Valuation Tool estimates. By almost any measure, I invested much more than the finished car was worth; this is unfortunately the case with the vast majority of classic car restorations.

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Over those 12 years I got more than \$383 per year of enjoyment ( $\$13,000 - \$8,400 = \$4600$ ; and  $\$4,600 / 12 = \$383$  per year). I suffered no depreciation and my insurance costs averaged about \$420 per year for full coverage with no deductible ... still not a bad deal!

But with 20/20 hind sight, selling my existing car and buying a class two (2) for about \$7,700 in 2007 would have been a much better investment in lieu of this restoration project.

If you have the time and skills, restoring your own car is fun and rewarding. The adventure is a major portion of the fun and you can say you built it; this will prove to be a great conversation starter in almost any car group gathering.

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**My second restoration project:** After almost completing the restoration of my Red 1985 Fiero GT, I started a White 1985 Fiero GT **Restomod** project with a 300 HP NorthStar V8 and a Cadillac automatic transmission. This car also has Corvette brakes, upgraded suspension & steering, performance wheels & tires, improved fuel flow, lowered body, and an upgraded cooling system.

I bought this White 1985 Fiero GT used and already converted professionally about 18 years earlier (2000 was the approximate conversion finish date by a professional shop in Oklahoma City, OK). The professional shop was the well known Design One Systems owned by Kevin Leslie and the car was Kevin's personal ride for many years. Close to 50 of these Fiero GT Restomods were built by Design One Systems ... all with Cadillac automatic transmissions.

The interior, tunable exhaust system, tires and many base Fiero systems needed repair or replacement; headlights did not flip, back up lights did not work, door locks were functioning poorly, dew wipe window rubber needed to be replaced, air conditioning did not work, new stereo radio and speakers were needed and much more. But all the converted basics were in excellent shape (frame, suspension, brakes, engine and transmission). It took me a year and a lot of effort to find the project car that met all my criteria.

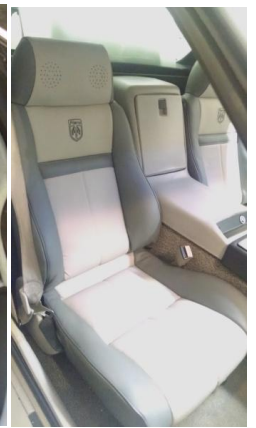
This **Restomod** project was mostly completed in about 9 months and probably close to the 200 hour mark for personal mechanic and refurbish time. Figuring out what I wanted to do and finding the right parts, took quite a bit of research (maybe another 50 hours). My out of pocket investment in this second restoration project (White 85 Fiero GT Restomod) was much closer to the current market value of the vehicle ... **it seems I am capable of learning!**

*This second project adventure has become the subject of another restoration article see: "**Restoration Details for Investment Level Fiero V8 Restomod**" in our Fiero as an Investment Tab on our [Michiganfieroclub.com](http://Michiganfieroclub.com) web site.*



# Restoration Details for Investment Level Fiero GT

Here are a few pictures of the almost finished product:



# Restoration Details for Investment Level Fiero GT



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If you are into fixing or restoring your Fiero, the Michigan Fiero Club can help you with information (we have an extensive technical library) and advice on the development, maintenance and enjoyment of this fine classic car. We also have good information on parts sources and useful comfort/drivability modifications.

*I used these resources extensively on both of my restoration projects and saved a lot of time, effort, and money.*

Many of our members are skilled automotive engineers, mechanics, development people, and build technicians ... some of our members are even GM engineers that worked on the original development of the Fiero. We also have a rich events schedule that will put you in touch with a great group of fellow Fiero enthusiasts.

Check out the rest of our Michigan Fiero Club web site and join us; if you don't have a Fiero we will help you find one.

The Pontiac Fiero is currently one of the best emerging values in the Classic Car Market ... begin the journey!

All The Best / *Roger Fagnani*