

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

Third Gen Firebird 1982 1992 Trans Am Gta Formula

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RESTORATION ESSENTIALS

Third-Gen Firebird

1982–1992

Trans Am, GTA & Formula

Trans Am, GTA, Formula and the 1989 Turbo — Pontiac's third-gen file

Platform guide · Model years 1982–1992

KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

- The third-generation Firebird ran 1982–1992, with about 841,000 built — Pontiac's half of the F-body story.
- The Trans Am carried the performance banner throughout; the GTA (RPO Y84, 1987–1992) became the flagship with the 350 TPI standard.
- The Formula (1987+) is the sleeper: Trans Am mechanicals without the ground effects — RPO WS9 + W66.
- The 1989 20th Anniversary Turbo Trans Am: 1,555 built, turbocharged 3.8L V6 at 250 hp / 340 lb-ft, 0–60 in 4.6 seconds — the quickest American production car of its day.
- Engines mirror the Camaro's small-blocks (note: Pontiac rated the 1985 305 TPI at 205 hp), plus the one-year turbo V6.
- VIN is 1G2 (Pontiac); the 8th digit uses the same engine codes as Camaro: F = 305 TPI, 8 = 350 TPI.
- RPO WS6 is the handling package (1987–92: 36mm front / 24mm rear bars, quick steering, 16-inch wheels). RPO B4U is the SLP Firehawk (1991–92).
- This guide speaks two languages, labeled throughout: STOCK-CORRECT (how Pontiac built it) and PERFORMANCE-SMART (what the aftermarket learned).

SAMPLE EXCERPT — full guide available at the link on the cover sheet

Why the third-gen Firebird matters

If the Camaro was the workingman's F-body, the Firebird — and especially the Trans Am — was the one with the presence. The screaming chicken had given way to a subtler menace by 1982, but the Trans Am remained Pontiac's performance flagship through the entire third generation, joined in 1987 by the GTA (Gran Turismo Americano) and the stealthy Formula. Then, in 1989, Pontiac did something nobody expected: it put a turbocharged Buick-derived V6 in the Trans Am and built the fastest-accelerating American production car of the year.

About 841,000 third-gen Firebirds were built. The community is strong — thirdgen.org, the GTA Source Page, and model-specific registries — and aftermarket support has grown over the last decade. And yes: an entire generation knows this car as KITT from Knight Rider, which is why clean Trans Ams keep finding new young buyers. Be honest about this crowd: they restomod as much as they restore. **STOCK-CORRECT** sections decode VINs, RPOs, and finishes. **PERFORMANCE-SMART** sections cover the TPI path and the judgment calls. Never blurred — when originality is at stake, this guide says so.

Year by year: what changed, 1982–1992 — STOCK-CORRECT

1982 — The all-new third generation. Trans Am is the top model from launch. Engines: LG4 305 4-barrel (145 hp), LU5 Cross-Fire 165 hp. The Firebird S/E covers the middle ground.

1983 — The L69 305 HO (190 hp) becomes available on the Trans Am. T-5 5-speed offered.

1984 — The 15th Anniversary Trans Am: white with blue accents, the first F-body with 16-inch wheels (white "high-tech" aero wheels with Goodyear Gatorback VR50s), 5.0L HO standard, nearly every option in the book — 1,500 built at about \$3,499 over a standard WS6 Trans Am (roughly a \$17,500 sticker). Total 1984 Firebird production was 128,304, of which 55,374 were Trans Ams; the Recaro-edition Trans Am added another 1,321. This is the first collectible third-gen Firebird.

1985 — Restyled nose, new taillights, and full rocker and quarter-panel extensions giving the Trans Am its aggressive look. The 305 TPI arrives — Pontiac rated it 205 hp (automatic only), versus Chevrolet's 215-hp rating of the same LB9 engine. Cross-Fire is gone.

1986 — Third brake light (CHMSL). LB9 at 190 hp. Carryover otherwise.

1987 — The GTA debuts (RPO Y84): standard 5.7L 350 TPI, TH-700R4 automatic, air conditioning, new seats with inflatable lumbar and side bolsters, special door panels, epoxy-filled emblems, body-colored ground effects, special horn button, and the WS6 handling package — produced through 1992. The Formula returns as the no-frills performer (WS9 + W66): V8 running gear without the Trans Am's ground effects. L98 rated 225 hp / 330 lb-ft. All V8s get hydraulic roller lifters and center-bolt valve covers.

1988 — GTA continues as flagship; Trans Am continues below it. L98 at 230 hp.

1989 — The 20th Anniversary Turbo Trans Am (see below): 1,555 built, all white with tan (saddle) leather, pace car of the Indianapolis 500. GTA details: notchback body available as a \$700 option, Z-rated tires standard (up from V-rated), compact-disc player optional, PASS-Key theft deterrent across the line. L98 ratings: 230 hp standard, 240 hp with G92.

1990 — Shortened model year. GTA and Trans Am continue; L98 at 245 hp / 345 lb-ft (published). TPI switches to speed-density (MAP) metering.

1991 — Facelift: new front fascia with round fog lamps, high-rise rear spoiler, revised ground effects. The SLP Firehawk (RPO B4U) debuts — a dealer/aftermarket performance package, extremely low production. Z28-style updates mirror the Camaro side.

1992 — Final year for the third generation — and for the GTA, the Formula, and the Trans Am names until the fourth gen. Firehawk continues.

The models: Firebird, Formula, Trans Am, GTA — STOCK-CORRECT

- **Firebird / Firebird S/E** — the base and mid-level cars. V6 or 305 V8 power. Honest cars; the S/E added sport trim.
- **Formula (1987–1992)** — RPO WS9 (model conversion) + W66 (Formula merchandised package). The sleeper: full V8 running gear, no Trans Am ground effects or spoilers. The enthusiast's value pick — everything the Trans Am has where it counts, without the boy-racer visuals or the price premium.
- **Trans Am (1982–1992)** — RPO WS4 (model conversion) + Y82 (Trans Am package). The flagship 1982–86; continued below the GTA from 1987. Ground effects, spoilers, and the full visual treatment.
- **Trans Am GTA (1987–1992)** — RPO Y84. Pontiac's pride: standard 350 TPI, automatic only, WS6 handling, leather, and every luxury option made standard. Note for the bench racers: the GTA's 350 was not "the Corvette engine" — the Corvette's L98 used aluminum heads; the Firebird's used cast iron. Comparable performance, different heads.
- **1989 20th Anniversary Turbo Trans Am** — the halo. See below.
- **Firehawk (1991–1992)** — RPO B4U. SLP Engineering's performance package: the rarest third-gen Firebird variant, built in tiny numbers through select dealers. Documentation is everything — with production this low, registry verification is mandatory before paying a premium.

The 1989 Turbo Trans Am — STOCK-CORRECT

1,555 built — all white with tan leather interior, all with the 4-speed automatic. The engine: a turbocharged 3.8L V6 derived from the Buick Grand National/GNX program (built by Production Automotive Services), with a reinforced crankshaft, high-flow heads, Garrett turbo, intercooler, and sequential fuel injection — rated 250 hp at 4,400 rpm and 340 lb-ft at 2,800 rpm. Period road tests measured far more: *Car and Driver* recorded 0–60 in 4.6 seconds and the quarter mile in 13.4 seconds at 101 mph, estimating output closer to 300 hp, with a 153-mph top speed — the quickest-accelerating American production car available at any price that year. It paced the Indianapolis 500 with virtually no modification.

Identification: unique VIN sequencing, "Turbo Trans Am" and "20th Anniversary" badging, white/tan color scheme, 16×8-inch diamond-spoke aluminum wheels with P245/50ZR16 Goodyear Gatorbacks, WS6 suspension, four-wheel disc brakes. Every one of the 1,555 is a collector car — modifications destroy value that originality preserves. If you're restoring one, stock-correct isn't a preference, it's the investment thesis.

Engines — STOCK-CORRECT

The V8 ladder mirrors the Camaro's (see the companion Camaro Z28/IROC-Z guide for the full year-by-year table), with two Pontiac-specific notes:

Years	RPO	Engine	Rating
1982	LG4	305 4-bbl	145 hp
1982–83	LU5	305 Cross-Fire	165 hp
1983–86	L69	305 HO 4-bbl	190 hp
1985	LB9	305 TPI	205 hp (Pontiac rating)
1986–87	LB9	305 TPI	190 hp