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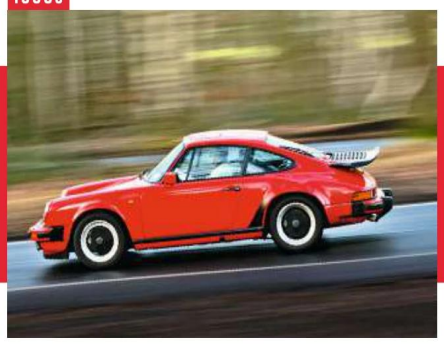
1960s

1980s



1990s

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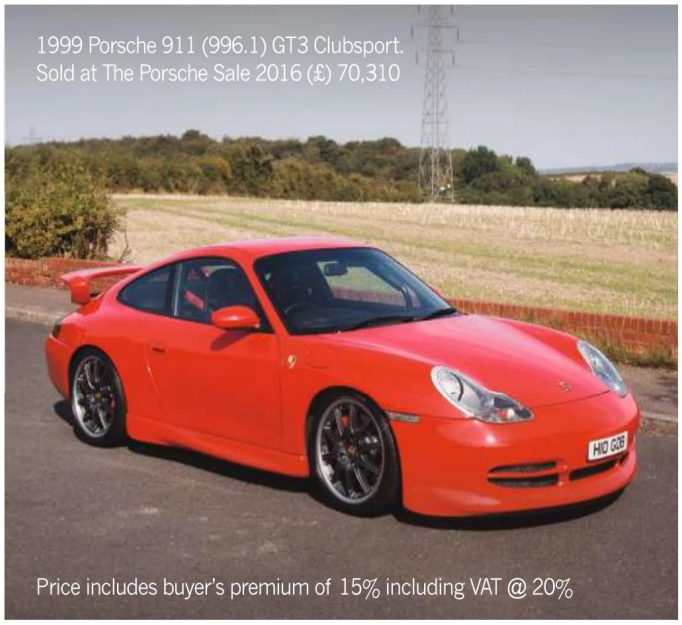
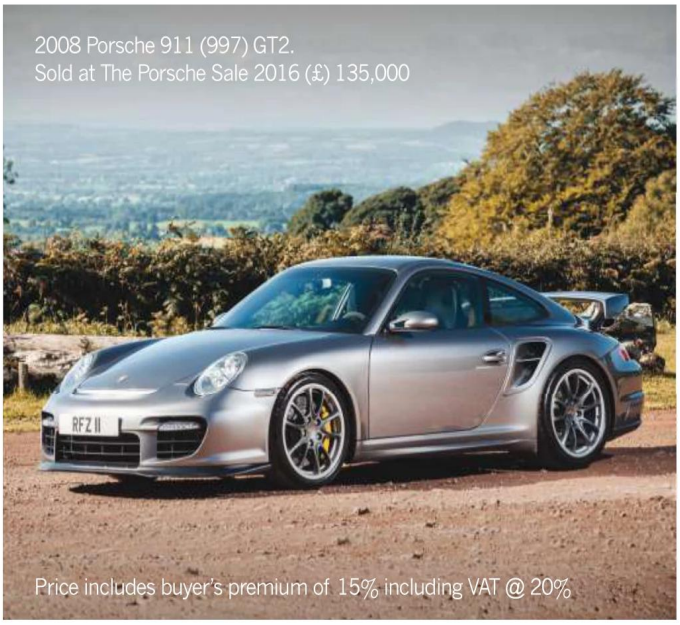


1999 Porsche 911 (996.1) GT3 Clubsport.
Sold at The Porsche Sale 2016 (£) 70,310

Price includes buyer's premium of 15% including VAT @ 20%



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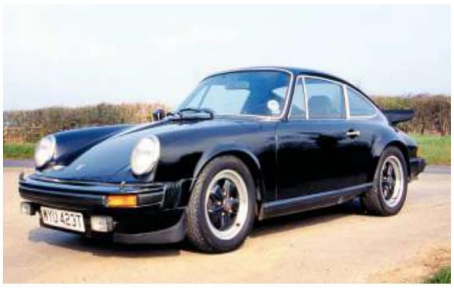
Welcome



From the original 130bhp 2.0-litre to the 300bhp 993 RS, any 911 is a thrill to drive, so picking the highlights wasn't easy

The day I first drove a Porsche 911 was brought back to me so clearly that I could feel every sensation again with perfect clarity. While sat in my office chair. This happiest of memories was triggered when I started putting together this compilation of the greatest aircooled 911 features from the *Classic Cars* magazine back catalogue. The car was a Carrera 3.2 Club Sport – surprisingly roomy inside, but disconcertingly offset controls. Disappointing acceleration at first, then a searing rush from 4000rpm, accompanied by disconcertingly squirrelly behaviour from the front wheels as they darted, bobbed and weaved over every road imperfection. The car seemed to be fighting itself and its startled driver at the same time.

Three tightly connected corners later and I was under its spell, the intense steering feedback and lunging acceleration ganging up into one of the most rewarding drives of my life. Years later I got to experience that thrill on a daily basis, my 1977 Carrera 3.0 turning every commute into my own mini Le Mans 24 Hours. And it was a special thrill to take it to La Sarthe, where its descendants were still battling through the night for GT honours. And they will be again this year. And next.

It's what sets the 911 apart from every other sports car – everyday utility cloaking track-honed engineering and track-proven ability. From the original 130bhp short wheelbase 2-litre to the 300bhp 993 generation RS, every variant lives up to that core philosophy.

Since that opinion-shifting Club Sport drive I've been privileged to drive many of the models in this book, from a 2.4S to the Paris-Dakar-winning 911 and 959 that gave a first taste of the 911's water-cooled future. But it's the aircooled models that we've focused on, the essence of original 911. And in between the extremes we've included key production models and highlights.

I hope that you enjoy exploring them as much as we did.

Phil Bell, editor

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9 BEST 911s

We pick the smartest choices from every air-cooled 911 generation, plus a water-cooled top tip

Words ADAM TOWLER Photography CHARLIE MAGEE AND RORY GAME


YV 10D
LN51 VTL
ULO 307R
YAH 42
MRX IL

Nine 911s parked neatly in a row - such a show of Stuttgart brute force is enough to stop anyone in their tracks. After nine days of non-stop rain the sky is blue at Millbrook proving ground. Awaiting us, tucked deep inside this zealously guarded vehicle testing facility in Bedfordshire, is the Alpine-esque Hill Route.

We're here to drive our favourites from each generation since a small and rather unconventional-looking 2+2 coupé with a 901 badge on its rump made its debut on the Porsche stand at the 1963 Frankfurt Motor Show.

Porsche was already a successful sports car maker, the 356 having found favour with film stars, racing drivers and other wealthy owners. A 356 had even won a grand prix with Dan Gurney at the wheel, but all of this turned out to be a preamble to the phenomenon that would be the 911, a car whose form is as instantly recognisable today as the original Mini's.

There are still those who jibe that the engine is mounted in the wrong place, but while that brings flaws to some aspects of the handling, it also gives the car exceptional traction, brilliant packaging and a unique shape. Porsche obviously understood the worth of what it had created because, ever since, it hasn't stopped honing, adapting and occasionally reinventing the basic idea to staggering commercial and sporting success.

The cars here range from the relatively affordable through to blue-chip investment opportunities. Some, like the little 2.0S, are historically significant but arguably undervalued; others, such as the 2.2T Targa, are a more affordable entry point into their particular niche. Nine cars to drive - let's get cracking.


2.0S gains 30bhp extra over standard 911


S boasts basket weave vinyl trim

1966 2.0S

We'll start with the earliest car here, the diminutive 2.0S. After two years of 911 production - enough time for the model to show its formidable sporting potential in both circuit racing and rallies - this first high-performance derivative appeared, simply badged S. This stunning example is one of the first three right-hand-drive examples brought to the UK in late 1966.

The big news sits over my shoulder - a thoroughly honed engine with a higher compression ratio, new camshafts, bigger valves and ports, Weber 40 IDS carburettors (instead of IDA) and a revised exhaust system. It's stronger too, thanks to a nitrided crankshaft and forged pistons. The result is 160bhp at 6600rpm and 132lb ft at 5200rpm (compared with the standard car's 130bhp at 6100rpm and 129lb ft at 4200rpm). These figures give a clue about what a screamer this engine is set to be.

Compared with what the 911 became, and the visual *braggadocio* exuded by most modern performance cars, the S has the ambience of a village tea room. It's small and personable with big, round eyes for headlamps. Its body sides are smooth like a bar of soap, completely free from blistering of the wheelarches, and although it was the first model to sport Fuchs forged alloy wheels - all-silver rather than the later silver-on-black that would become so recognisable - at just 135cm wide, you could

Below left: weighing in at under a tonne, short-geared, twitchy 2.0 S wants to oversteer, as writer Adam Towler (below right) discovered

1966 2.0S
Light, revvy and keen to oversteer. A car that demands full attention

'With the slightest twitch of the wheel I sense it developing a tail-led slip angle'

hardly call it over-tyred. But underestimating this car would be a mistake. Of all the 911s here, it's this S that shouts feedback at you. It may also be the most exciting.

I climb into the cosy little cabin - so Sixties in detail compared to the rest of our group - and settle into the driver's seat. It's soft, with a springy give like an ancient train seat. Both the squab and backrest are flat, so I'm not expecting any cornering support, and the oversized steering wheel feels disconcertingly close to my chest. There's no inertia-reel seatbelt, just an airline-style harness that I bring over my shoulder and lap, clipping in down to the left. Checking that the spindly gearlever is in neutral takes a third and fourth waggle just to be sure, a portent of what's to come, and the little metal ignition key requires a persistent turn.

Selecting first in the dogleg gearbox is initially a mystery, as is finding the other cogs until I've built up some confidence. However, on the move, the 'box oil quickly heats through and it turns out to have a fast, light change, which soon becomes second nature.

The sonic machinations of the two-litre engine are a delightful constant. It's always very loud, and gets even louder when I use more and more throttle and pile on the revs. And there's every incentive to do this because it rapidly becomes apparent that the 2.0S is a true free spirit. Weighing little more than a tonne and with what feels like short gearing (although fifth was lengthened for the S), the engine zips through the revs, then pulls with real vigour at the top end. Porsche quoted 0-62mph in 7.4sec (down from 8.6sec), and in 1966 it must have felt almost unbearably exciting.

Exciting is an apt word for the handling, too. The '66 S is like juggling with laser-sharpened sabres compared to the multi-coloured squishy balls of a new 911. It's not a fan of travelling in straight lines. By that I mean that the combination of sharp, hyper-detailed steering, negligible weight over the nose, a very short wheelbase and all that weight beyond the rear axle means that even with the slightest twitch of the wheel I sense, with some trepidation, the car developing a tail-led slip angle. It's a bit like one of those deliberately unstable modern fighter jets; the S wants to oversteer, wants to be bent out of shape into a corner and powered through on the throttle. It was made to be drifted by a Vic Elford-calibre rally driver, the conceit being that you will absolutely know your oversteer from your elbow and not even think about lifting off the throttle mid-corner.

THE 2.0S OWNERS HOWARD WARREN AND CHAS COLTON

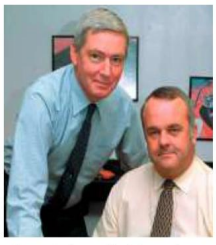
Warren and Colton, founding partners of nationwide motor factors and car parts distributors CES UK, bought their first 911 in 1990 – a Martini-striped SC. The pair then got heavily into classic rallying and have since expanded their 911 collection into a fleet.

The S featured here is one of three sales cars imported by then Porsche UK distributors AFN alongside the press car at its launch. 'The appeal is how original the car is,' says Warren, 'and it's a nice addition to the 1965 911s we own.'

Warren has developed a healthy respect for the car, but revels in driving this important piece of Porsche history. 'You have to watch it!' he says. 'In its day it was a real driver's car – it's a true sports car, but you have to respect it. Funnily enough, it can be a good touring car as well.'

Running a Sixties 911 is less of a worry. 'They don't like the damp. Other than good general servicing, it's a matter of making sure things like suspension bushes and brakes are all in good health.'

Warren says a sneaky drive recently reaffirmed just how special it is. 'It hadn't run for four months but it started first time on the key. I thought I'd just take it for a little drive to warm it up but ended up going for more than an hour.' It's just that sort of car.



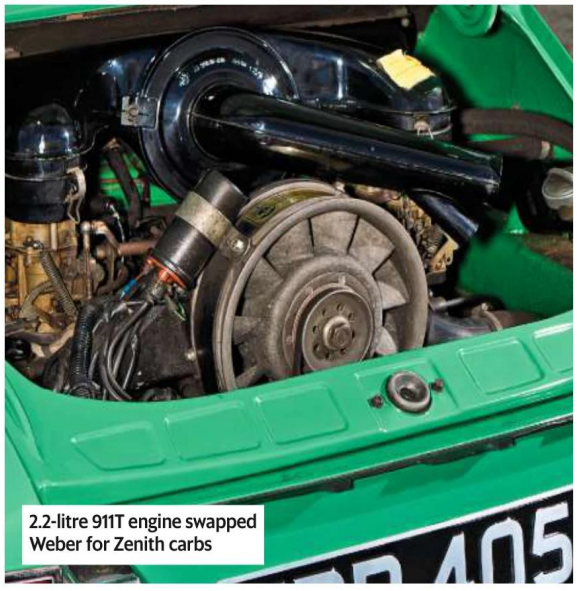
Chas Colton (left) and Howard Warren own a 'fleet' of 911s

1966 2.0S

Engine 1991cc, horizontally-opposed six-cylinder, sohc per bank, two Weber 40 IDS carburettors **Power and torque** 160bhp @ 6600rpm; 132lb ft @ 5200rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Steering** Rack and pinion **Suspension** Front: MacPherson struts, lower wishbones, torsion bars, anti-roll bar. Rear: semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear **Weight** 1030kg (2271lb) **Performance** Top speed: 138mph; 0-62mph: 7.4sec **Fuel consumption** 17.6mpg **Cost new** £3556 **Values now** £80,000-£150,000

1971 2.2T Targa
One of the prettiest 911s ever, here with semi-automatic transmission

Instrument rims became black rubber on 2.2 models



2.2-litre 911T engine swapped Weber for Zenith carbs

Yes, this S in the wrong hands is downright dangerous, but no one dares to make cars like this any more - and that, plus the sheer spirit of this machine makes it utterly compelling. Outside of historic racing circles, Sixties 911s tend to play second fiddle to the more famous early Seventies cars, but this has to be one of the most exciting 911s ever to reach production.

1971 2.2T Targa

After stepping out of the urgent, prickly, exuberant 2.0S, this retro-luscious Condor Green 2.2T Targa couldn't be more different. In early 911 parlance, the T suffix signifies Touring and the entry point into the range which, following the C-series cars that were introduced for the 1970 model year in late 1969, features a bigger engine courtesy of an increase in bore size from 80mm to 84mm.

By this stage the 911 already benefits from a 57mm longer wheelbase that helps to calm the wilder aspects of its handling repertoire. It breathes through Zenith triple-choke carburettors and the larger 2195cc capacity means more torque at lower engine speeds - the T boasts 125bhp and 130lb ft of torque at 4200rpm.

Vertical cabin air outlets on the roll-over hoop improved ventilation in the Targa

The role of the T was to replace the four-cylinder 912 with a more exotic base-level 911, powered by a cheaper version of the flat-six engine. To that end, the engine uses simpler iron cylinders (instead of the alloy-finned Birral ones) and a cheaper crankshaft without counterweights.

This particular car is also fitted with Porsche's semi-automatic Sportomatic transmission, so - to gasps of despair from the purists - this is an open-top, automatic

1971 2.2T Targa Sportomatic

Engine 2195cc, horizontally opposed, six-cylinder, sohc per bank, two Zenith TIN40 triple-choke carbs **Power and torque** 125bhp @ 5800rpm; 130lb ft @ 4200rpm **Transmission** Four-speed semi-automatic, rear-wheel drive **Steering** Rack and pinion **Suspension** Front: MacPherson struts, lower wishbones, torsion bars, anti-roll bar. Rear: semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Discs all round **Weight** 1070kg (2359lb) **Performance** Top speed: 125mph; 0-60mph: 9.1sec **Fuel consumption** 24mpg **Cost new** £3397 **Values now** £30,000-£69,000

911. Still, that's exactly the type of 911 that has been by far the biggest seller in the modern 911 range over recent years (in Tiptronic/PDK Cabriolet form). You probably won't be surprised to hear that by the end of the Seventies 31 per cent of all 911s sold in the crucial North American market were Targas, and 25 per cent of all American 911s featured the Sportomatic gearbox.

Our thinking for including the 2.2T Targa in our line-up was simple - with the rocketing prices of early 911s over recent years this is surely one of the cheapest routes into ownership of an early car. But there's a proviso, because while that may still be true to some extent, this is a very rare car - possibly the last example of its type in the UK. With their susceptibility to water ingress into the cabin, much more flex to the structure, and their relative lack of desirability to enthusiasts of the marque over the years, not many Targas have survived, which tends to put upward pressure on prices.

The Sportomatic box is now largely forgotten because many cars originally equipped with it have been converted to the manual alternative. It aimed to combine the best of both types of transmission, offering a manual shift but no clutch pedal. In practice, it combines a four-speed manual gearbox with a hydraulic torque converter and a single-disc clutch, operated automatically via switches hidden beneath the gearlever gaiter. So the torque converter sorts out the stop-start stuff, but you still get the involvement of changing gears. Given that the clutch engages the moment you move the lever, you can't even think about touching it until you're ready to change gear, otherwise the revs soar as the 'box goes into neutral. Come off the power, move the lever through the gate to the next ratio and then smoothly come back on to the power. Within a few minutes I've got the hang of it, and it does work surprisingly well.

Porsche promoted the Sportomatic by putting it in team cars contesting the gruelling 1967 Marathon de La Route (an 84-hour slog around the Nürburgring won by Vic Elford, Hans Hermann and Jochen Neerpasch), but in truth it's a leisurely drive - a comfort-orientated box to tick - and that suits this charming car well. There's a distinct lack of fireworks from the engine, gearbox and chassis, but with the roof removed and the sun shining today, it's certainly an evocative experience.

'The 2.2T Targa is a leisurely drive and that suits this charming car well'

No prizes for guessing why a 911 bound for California might have been ordered thus from the factory. It's also disarmingly attractive to look at, with its early-Seventies 'safety' paint hue, Fuchs wheels and satin alloy roll hoop. Early Targas had a zip-out plastic rear window, but by the time this car was made it was a superior glass pane. Right-hand drive models weren't available until the introduction of the 2.4-litre cars.

1972 2.4E

From funky green to retina-singeing orange, the 2.4-litre 911s - the E and F series models from August 1971 to August '73 - are very special cars - the ultimate incarnation of the original 911 before the introduction of the G-series model for 1974, with its hefty aluminium impact bumpers,

THE 2.2T TARGA OWNER BERNARD TESTER

Berny Tester has worked on Porsches for 40 years. Now semi-retired, he undertakes pre-purchase inspections on 911s.

He says, 'It's like a disease that, once you get, you never get over.'

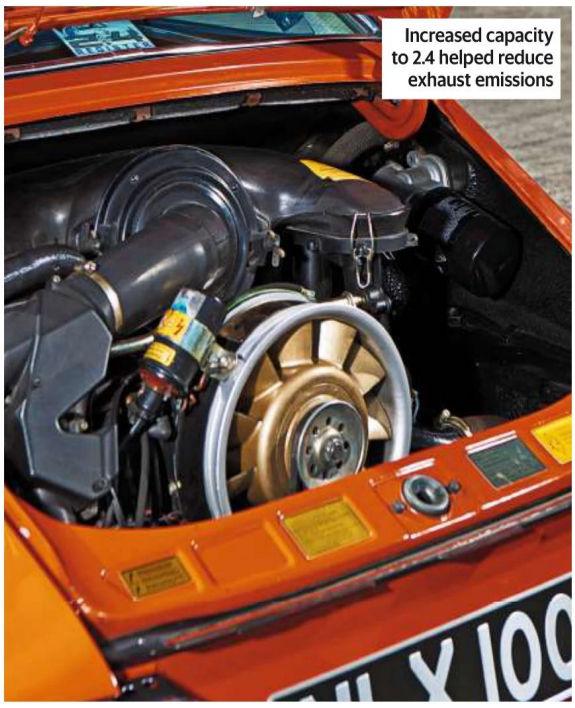
This was his first 911. It's an American-spec car bought new in Germany, probably by an American serviceman. Tester had put an advert in the club magazine seeking a 911 project, and this car was the best.

The Sportomatic gearbox didn't deter him. 'I'd driven them before and you can practise left-foot braking.'

Tester is quite a Sportomatic guru and reckons that they don't need extra maintenance – problems are usually 'more adjustment than anything'.

He says parts prices for early cars can be expensive, but with regular servicing believes 911s don't need a lot of attention.

31 per cent of all US 911s were Targas



Increased capacity to 2.4 helped reduce exhaust emissions

E Series 911s got a leather-look dash

'The 2.4E is an environment in which to drive a sports car quickly, not to get excited about flamboyant interior design'

1972 2.4E
The E Series was heavier, its engines bigger – and it was faster than ever

THE 2.4E OWNER MARK FULLER

Fuller's Porsche odyssey is a case study in 911 ownership which began eight years ago with a secondhand 986 Boxster S Tiptronic. When he sold the car about two years later he was 'inconsolable for weeks'.

After owning other cars he did what Porsche hopes all ex-Boxster owners do when they get older – he bought a 911. But the 997 Carrera S was a disappointment.

'It was a nice car, but something was missing,' he says. 'It was almost too comfortable.'

Later he bought a 993, but then went hunting for an early car, and recommends anyone doing the same to join the Porsche Club GB for advice. He also urges getting a specialist to inspect a car before you buy, as 'the dreaded rust can lurk below the skin.'

Is this the 911 he's been dreaming of owning then? 'I've fallen in love with it. It's definitely a keeper.'

6Jx15in Fuchs forged alloys were all-silver; now silver on black

larger but quieter engines and greater comfort features. It was a pivotal point in the history of the 911, and this Blood Orange car encapsulates the model's appeal perfectly.

Porsche stuck to the same T-E-S range structure as before, so it follows that the 2.4S is the ultimate of this breed, and therefore quite rightly positioned as one of the finest 911s ever. The 2.4S does everything you could want from a classic 911, but the problem for those of us with less than overflowing bank accounts is that the market knows this, and they're priced accordingly. These days, a really good 2.4S is well into six figures. So on this occasion we have the mid-range car, the 2.4 E, which tends to go for somewhere nearer £100,000 for a good one, but is also arguably the nicer all-round road car.

Fact is, the E was less of a middling-spec car and more of a comfort-orientated, luxury alternative to the S.

1972 2.4E

Engine 2341cc, horizontally opposed six-cylinder, sohc per bank, Bosch mechanical fuel injection **Power and torque** 165bhp @ 6200rpm; 152lb ft @ 4500rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Steering** Rack and pinion **Suspension** Front: MacPherson struts, lower wishbones, torsion bars, anti-roll bar. Rear: semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Vented discs all round **Weight** 1050kg (2315lb) **Performance** Top speed: 138mph; 0-60mph: 6.6sec **Fuel consumption** 22mpg **Cost new** £4827 **Values now** £35,000-76,000

Challenging the elevated status of the 2.4-litre models isn't the done thing in Porsche circles, but if you look through the hype, the reasoning behind them was more pragmatic than the hitherto impassioned quest for ultimate performance - it was about meeting the incoming emissions laws of the time. Porsche knew the 2.2-litre models would struggle in the face of nitrogen oxides limits in the USA, and there was also the desire to have the cars run on lower-octane fuel. Detuning the engines was the only answer, but it could never be done at the expense of outright performance. Experience with the racing 911s had shown that the bore size could be increased for greater performance, but take it too far and reliability suffered. However, with only slight modifications the stroke could be increased via a longer-throw crankshaft, so Porsche arrived at a new 2341cc capacity, optimistically badging the cars as '2.4'.

For the 2.4E that means a rise in horsepower from 155bhp to 165bhp, with torque unsurprisingly rising a similar amount to 152lb ft at 4500rpm. That torque is a key attribute here, but so is where it's delivered. That's because although the 190bhp 2.4S does have slightly more pulling power - 160lb ft - that peak is delivered much

2.7 capacity homologated larger racing engines

higher, at 5200rpm. On the road that means you have to work the S substantially harder, particularly if you want to access the additional horsepower over the E at the top end of the rev range.

In reality, the 2.4E is a jewel of a car. Unlike the Sixties feel to the 2.0S, with its early dials and chrome, by the time of this 2.4, Porsche had reduced the interior design of the 911 to a dark, functional, almost austere cockpit. More than ever, this is an environment in which to drive a sports car quickly, not for black polo neck-wearing types to get excited about flamboyant interior design.

Another new development for the 2.4 is the 915 gearbox, which ended up lasting Porsche until 1987 and the advent of the G50 transmission. In a further move towards mainstream acceptance, it does away with the racers' preferred dogleg gearshift pattern for an ordinary H-layout with fifth away and up to the right. Although shifting cogs smoothly still calls for care, it's an easier box to get to grips with, and with the engine's added torque I'm soon driving this E without consciously thinking too much about it.

However, don't let that fool you into thinking that this car is somehow dull. This is one of the truly great 911s, a car in which you can travel across Europe among modern traffic and still feel comfortable, and yet with all the vibrancy and richness to the controls, sound effects and performance that make these cars such legends. That means that it's extremely difficult to pinpoint a suitable period rival. It's obviously less inclined to sling you through a hedge than an early car, but the challenge is undimmed. The rule is 'slow in, fast out' on the road because it will bite back - hard - if you provoke it but it tells you what's happening all the time via a constant stream of messages.

It's the kind of car that, after a drive like this, you want to take home and never let go of.

1972 2.7 Carrera RS
40 years after its launch, it remains the most sought-after 911

Below left: this Carrera RS was converted from a Touring to a Lightweight model using genuine parts
Below right: RS Touring interior was equipped to production S-model spec

1972 2.7 Carrera RS

How could we not have included a 2.7 Carrera RS? It's not just a great 911, it's one of the most iconic performance cars of all time. To this day manufacturers copy its graphic signature of contrasting wheel and body colours with matching script along the door edge.

To the uninitiated, much of the 2.7 RS legend appears to be built on hype, particularly when it comes to Touring and Lightweight versions. The former currently commands £350,000 for a nice genuine example. The latter fetches up to £700,000; less than 20 years ago it was a £60,000 car at the most...

With the 911 becoming the centre of Porsche's competition activities from 1973 onwards, the 2.7 RS road car was a mechanism for homologating the parts needed for racing. The 210bhp 2.7-litre engine, benefitting from experience gained with the 917 racing car, elevated the 911 into the 2500-3000cc class (RSR racing versions were initially 2.8 litres, and later three litres) and the possibility of mixing it with heavyweight opposition such as BMW's CSL and Ferrari's Daytona Competition. The ducktail rear spoiler is the first proper wing on a 911; the widened wheelarches allow more rubber to come in contact with the road (and grew spectacularly further still for the RSR), and Porsche put the car on a diet (lightweight panels, stripped interior), reducing the weight to as little as 975kg. It's said that Porsche's marketing department was reluctant, believing that the 500 cars would be a nightmare to clear off the books; in the end they sold easily and Porsche wound up making 1590 of them.

What we have here is a genuine Touring model that was converted early in its life into a Lightweight model, using genuine parts. The Touring - M472 to be exact - is basically the RS equipped with the comfort and feature items fitted to the 2.4S of the time to make a more friendly road car. Remember, genuine Lightweights - M471s - have a cord for opening the door, and the clock and even the glovebox lid have been removed. Spartan is an understatement.

This car, kept for 30 years by its previous owner, is disarmingly original and perfect. It has the Lightweight's glassfibre front and rear bumpers, lightweight seats, lack of carpeting, no clock and minimalist door cards, but aficionados will notice that it has a Touring's opening rear windows and a glovebox lid. What makes this particular story all the more complicated is that, as one of the initial batch of 500 RSs built, this Touring was manufactured in thinner-gauge steel. When it originally left the factory, it may well have been comparable in poundage with those later Lightweight models that eschewed some of the weight-saving measures.

One of the reasons for featuring this car was to explode some of the myths surrounding the 2.7 RS and its incarnations, but in the end driving one again only serves to illustrate just how special the car is. Any pontificating that may have taken place, along with the residual cynicism that automatically builds around such premier league hype, is washed away as emphatically as the manner in which the RS demolishes the twists, turns and dips of Millbrook's Hill Route.

One of the key aspects that elevate this car to true greatness is that over 40 years later it's still genuinely fast, in both outright acceleration and point-to-point pace. This does two things once you've spent a few minutes behind

Nigel Mitchell's son Harry loves the car too

THE 2.7 CARRERA OWNER NIGEL MITCHELL

Nigel Mitchell has owned a variety of Porsches since buying his first 911 in 1980, but had never owned an early car until getting his Carrera RS ten years ago.

'I really wanted to find the right car and spent two years looking for it,' he says. 'I wanted to find one I could keep for a long time.'

He adds: 'It's quite thirsty, but then it's a 40-year-old mechanically-injected car, so what can you expect?

'The great thing is that you can use it like a modern car – I'd be happy to jump in and drive it to Switzerland, and you know it's going to be dependable. I rely on just turning the key and driving off.'

Even so, a car like the RS requires expert maintenance – and in Nigel's case that has included a recent full engine rebuild. But, as Mitchell says, 'I know the value is in the car so I don't mind putting money into it. You don't have the dilemma that you get with some cars that aren't worth the expenditure.

'I love everything about this car – the ethos of paring everything back, the less-is-more approach, the history. Owning an early 911 is a joy, and with my son Harry enjoying the car as well, that enthusiasm is being carried forward to the next generation.'

1972 2.7 Carrera RS

Engine 2687cc, horizontally opposed six-cylinder, sohc per bank, Bosch K-Jetronic mechanical fuel injection **Power and torque** 210bhp @ 6300rpm; 188lb ft @ 5100rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Steering** Rack and pinion **Suspension** Front: MacPherson struts, lower wishbones, torsion bars, anti-roll bar. Rear: semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear **Weight** 975kg (2150lb) **Performance** Top speed: 150mph; 0-60mph: 5.8sec **Fuel consumption** 16mpg **Cost new** £7193 (Touring); £6112 (Lightweight) **Values now** £500k-£700k (Lightweight)

1976 Carrera 3.0
The car that heralded the arrival of the 911 as an everyday vehicle

Control knob in central console tamed 911's cabin temperature

3.0-litre fan had five blades; the 2.7 had 11

Badge wasn't seen in Porsche's biggest market, because the 3.0's larger engine didn't meet the emission standards in the USA

the wheel. One, it gives you even greater respect for this car as a piece of period engineering. And two, you find yourself marvelling at what a rocket this must have felt like back in 1972. This is a car that will crack 0-60mph in under six seconds, reach 150mph and, more to the point, do all that day-in day-out with just routine maintenance - even to this day. And therein lies the secret to its extraordinary competition success.

Driving it is a rare pleasure, an occasion that you know will only happen a few times in life at the very best, and one you want to savour as long as possible. If you're the kind of person whose niche of classic car worship manifests itself as a love of old performance cars and the history of motor sport, I guarantee that exposure to a genuine 2.7 RS will thrill you to the very core, melt all your sensibilities away and leave you a tingling wreck when the experience is over.

Many have written about this car in the past, but it's the sound, the acceleration, the free-revving engine, the feel through the steering and chassis, the cornering poise, the wieldy dimensions, the look and smell of the thing... I could go on.

So how can what is ostensibly 'just' a 911 really be worth such huge sums of money? Maybe the bubble will burst, maybe it won't, but the market decides these things - and once you've driven a real one you can see why those with the necessary funds will hand over extraordinary amounts of money to call one their own.

1976 Carrera 3.0

After I'm dragged away kicking and screaming from the sensational Carrera RS, the Carrera 3.0 is like a bucket of cold water over the head. Everything changes by the time we get to this car in the 911 timeline - and yet, to use a popular expression, everything stays the same. A major overhaul in 1974 did so much more than add a set of impact bumpers. Engine size and creature comforts went up, emissions and awkward behaviour went down.

THE CARRERA 3.0 OWNER PETER BRETT

This Carrera 3.0 is Peter Brett's first 911, and follows an MGC GT, a Lotus Elise, and an Aston Martin DBS V8.

His criteria for his next classic was a wish list that has led many prospective owners into the driver's seat of a 911. 'I wanted something sporty that I could do track days in but that had rear seats.

'When I saw this it was a case of, "Wow, it's so much brighter than an SC or 3.2." At 4000rpm it comes on cam and – whoosh!'

He says choose carefully and look for a model that's going to rise in value. 'Compared to the Aston it just sips petrol,' he laughs. 'Cruising to the Nürburgring at 70mph I got 35mpg. In the Aston I'd have got 14mpg. A friend in his E-type had to stop regularly for fuel and I'd pull over and wait. I can spend a day on track and still have half a tank to drive home with.'

By this point the 911 has become a car that people with enough money, but who are not necessarily car enthusiasts, can buy and use every day. In time this would lead to the modern, mass-produced and multi-role 911s of the 21st century, but the magic of the Carrera 3.0 is its exclusivity - Carrera 3.0s were only built for the 1976 and 1977 model years - and the way it sits between the extremes of an early car and an Eighties 3.2 Carrera. At 1120kg it's nearly 100kg lighter than the 3.2 C, and with 200bhp it's got a horsepower advantage that the following SC model wouldn't exceed until revisions introduced in 1981.

And wait, there's more to this pitch - not only is it lighter, but this car's engine is a more enthusiastic, freer-spinning motor than the same-capacity powerplant that went into the SC for 1978, with more aggressive camshafts.

Porsche hadn't given up on the 911 at this point, as they had by the time the SC arrived - the car that was supposed to herald the eventual end of the 911 in deference to a front-engined new dawn that never really arrived.

The Carrera 3.0 isn't a lugger - it likes to rev. It is, however, also quieter, more refined and with a deeper and softer note than, say a 2.4S, and indeed the 2.7 Carrera that preceded it. It's an engine ideally suited to pounding along an autobahn at high speed, day after day, year after year.

This, the SC and the larger-engined Carreras that followed it, were the cars that built the 911's unrivalled reputation as an everyday, dependable sports car that you bought to last a lifetime, along with the early adoption of a fully galvanised bodyshell. Using an engine developed to withstand the strains of the Turbo in naturally-aspirated form was a masterstroke. Not only did it cure the ills that had been affecting the regular 2.7-litre cars, it also helped with the economies of scale.

'The quicker you go in the Carrera 3.0, the more it seems to shed the air of refinement'

1976 Carrera 3.0

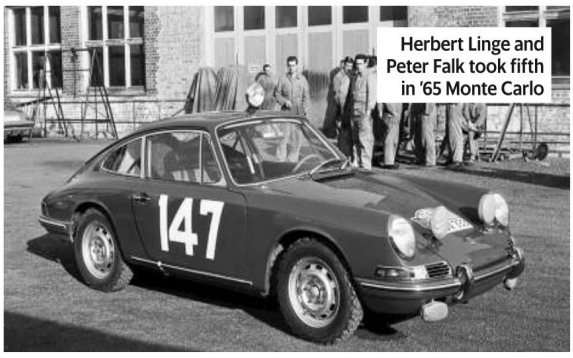
Engine 2994cc, horizontally opposed six-cylinder, sohc per bank, Bosch K-Jetronic mechanical fuel injection **Power and torque** 200bhp @ 6000rpm; 188lb ft @ 4200rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Steering** Rack and pinion **Suspension** Front: MacPherson struts, lower wishbones, torsion bars, anti-roll bar. Rear: semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear **Weight** 1120kg (2469lb) **Performance** Top speed: 143mph; 0-60mph: 6.5sec **Fuel consumption** 20mpg **Cost new** £10,997 **Values now** £30,000-£65,000

The throttle response isn't as sharp as the older cars here, with their carburettors or plunger-type mechanical injection, but the Bosch K-Jetronic continuous-flow mechanical injection does allow for much better fuel consumption when you're simply cruising along. Remember, it's easy to average 15mpg in a 2.4S - a much less appealing figure in the aftermath of the 1973 fuel crisis, and certainly today.

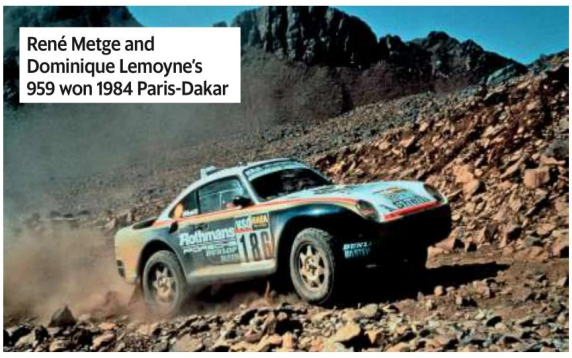
These 3.0s were the last to feature non-servo-assisted brakes, and while that considerably increases pedal effort, I love the feel of the brakes and the pivot point they make for blipping the throttle on downshifts. There's now more weight to the steering, and my initial impression after spending the last few hours driving the early cars is of a 911 with a slightly blunt edge. Porsche's traditionalists at the time must have been aghast.

But not only does this make the Carrera 3.0 a much less formidable personality on a wet November morning when you have to get to the office, it also becomes apparent that the quicker you go, the more it seems to shed the air of refinement, to the point that once I'm attacking the corners and working the engine through the rev range it feels much like an early 911 again, with everything that entails. It's still completely clear where the weight is mounted in the car, and the manner in which you should drive it, and it's also great fun.

911 IN RALLYING



Herbert Linge and Peter Falk took fifth in '65 Monte Carlo



René Metge and Dominique Lemoyne's 959 won 1984 Paris-Dakar

The 911 made its competition debut when a lightly tweaked car from the factory test department was entered on the 1965 Monte Carlo rally for Herbert Linge and Porsche engineer Peter Falk.

It finished fifth, and it wasn't long before 911s were regularly showing the traction advantages of their engine location in rallying.

Things got more serious in 1967 when British driver Vic Elford joined the team, winning the Monte Carlo rally in 1968. The 911 went on to scoop a number of European championship titles and won the 1970 International Championship of Makes.

Even so, the 911 never truly realised its full potential in rallying because Porsche ran out of money to develop it. Something had to give and it was the rally team, so the 2.7 Carrera RS was only seen as a works car once, in Corsica in 1972. 911s were hugely successful in national championships throughout the decade, but there could have been so much more.

Come the Eighties, the 959 was the great hope for Group B, but it was too late, and there ended the 911's rallying career. Or it did until 2005, when Porsche built a limited run of GT3 RS rally cars; and these and their ilk have been thrilling crowds on European asphalt events ever since.

With the RGT class introduced for 2013, the scene could have been set for a proper rallying comeback.

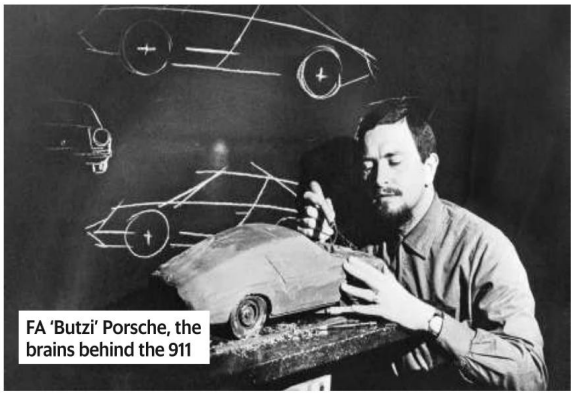
THE 911 CONCEPT AND PROTOTYPE

When it came to replacing the 356, Porsche engineers were unsure as to the best way ahead. The 356 had been a huge success, but by the end of the Fifties was showing its age, especially in terms of interior space, comfort and performance.

Ferry's son 'Butzi' Porsche worked on a number of design proposals. The favoured one, named Type 7, was handed to a body engineer, Erwin Komenda, who was asked to build a number of prototypes. They retained the 356's swing axle rear suspension but used a new MacPherson layout for the front axle to maximise luggage space in the front compartment.

Up to four Type 7 prototypes were built, each getting successively larger until the car was finally a full four-seater. Differing engine concepts were worked up with six cylinders, but still influenced by the 356's uprated Beetle engine.

At this point Ferry Porsche stepped in and pushed the concept back in the direction of Butzi's original, smaller 2+2 idea, worried about taking on Mercedes-Benz. The decision was also taken to design a new flat-six engine, with overhead cams, dry sump lubrication and an axial-flow cooling fan. Semi-trailing arms were adopted for the rear suspension, and the 901 concept evolved into the Frankfurt Show car – hastily re-badged 911 when Peugeot protested the name.



FA 'Butzi' Porsche, the brains behind the 911

1980 3.3 Turbo
Its flared wheelarches and whaletail spoiler helped feed the 911 legend

3.3 Turbo has a boost gauge set into the rev counter

An air-to-air inter-cooler arrived in 1978

These days the Carrera 3.0 is sought-after but not outrageously expensive, so the biggest obstacle to ownership may well be finding a car to buy. It's also a fascinating element of 911 history that if you were to park a red '76 Carrera 3.0 next to a red '89 Carrera 3.2, both in equal condition, you'd need an expert to tell them apart. Sometimes the 911 has developed at an astounding rate, but at others, progress was glacial.

1980 3.3 Turbo

The Turbo. The original. A supercar misunderstood, feared and admired in equal measure.

By rights, this is the car that should follow the 2.7 Carrera RS as the gilt-edged investment of the Porsche scene and the wider classic world, and yet would you be surprised if I were to tell you that this strikingly original example, with a reassuringly meticulous history file, sold three years ago for a figure beginning with the number 3?

Thought so. Like the 2.7 RS, the first three-litre Turbo was a homologation car, and its competition history between 1974 and the early Eighties in wildly evolved forms was far greater than anything the RS could ever have hoped for. A 935, the ultimate evolution of the racing 911 Turbo, even managed to win the Le Mans 24-hour race

High-pressure headlamp washers were first seen in 1974

outright in 1979 (see 'The 911 in racing' panel on page 12 for more history).

The 3.3 Turbo was the car that vied with the Lamborghini Countach as the ultimate pin-up car for at least two generations of youngsters. At launch it was so advanced, so fast and so terrifyingly expensive (around twice the price of the 2.7 Carrera) that it may as well have descended from another planet.

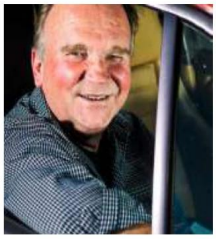
The model became the ultimate status symbol, but perhaps that's where its troubles began - because while the RS is associated with a glorious period in motor racing, the Turbo has for many years been closely linked with the excesses of the Eighties. Whenever any news footage is trotted out to illustrate the boom years in the UK economy during this decade, you can usually spot a red 911 Turbo lurking in a London side street.

The Turbo is also a complex car, with a reputation for eye-wateringly expensive running costs. It's got a complicated character, too, and is not an easy car to understand or, at times, drive. Ah yes, that last point - the 911 Turbo has a reputation even among the more ruthless models of 911 for not taking prisoners.

It's this great, multi-layered weight of expectation that greets me as I stand next to this particular 3.3 Turbo (the replacement for the original in 1978 and the model that, with subtle revisions, would last right up until 1989), but all I can think about is the amazing curvature of the metalwork, those swollen rear haunches that have captivated onlookers for decades. This car still has the capacity to entrance. Driven around Millbrook's twists and turns today it's a revelation.

A poorly maintained and tired 911 Turbo is an obstinate, heavy, distant car to drive, but this example pulverises Millbrook's sharply varying gradients and short straight sections, and it's a joy to thread through its tightly twisting curves. Off-boost there's almost no acceleration to deploy, but once that turbine is spinning and it's past 4000rpm, where the 304lb ft torque peak is delivered, the car absolutely flies. It's not tuneful like the older cars here, instead producing a deep-chested, overtly mechanical rumble faintly overlaid with the haunting whistle of the big turbocharger.

The fact that it has only four forward speeds doesn't seem to matter. In fact, there's a simple rule of thumb with any four-speed 911 Turbo. First gear is for moving off from rest and single-track roads. Second gear is for B roads. Third gear is for A roads. And fourth? That's for the autobahn. It may sound rather flippant, but the



THE 3.3 TURBO OWNER JOHN WARD

As the Porsche Club GB registrar for the 911 Turbo, what John Ward doesn't know about the type could be written on the sides of that famous tea tray rear wing – and still leave some unmarked rubber.

'Like most people in my teens at the time, when the 911 Turbo was launched I thought it was out of this world; something that was impossible to attain,' he says.

'When I saw my first Turbo it was £14,500 – and I'd just paid £6500 for my first house. I remember I saw it at Silverstone and it looked phenomenal.'

But John has a warning for the would-be Turbo buyer. 'Part of the reason why I've bought so many is that at first you buy cheaply and then find out the car hasn't been looked after, leading to a £2000 bill. But I realised that once you're on top of it [the maintenance] they're no more expensive to run than a normal 911. Well, it's expensive when something unexpected goes wrong...'

He advises any owner to take their car to a 911 Turbo specialist, not just a 911 specialist.

'A bad 911 Turbo can be *really* bad – and put you off Porsches for life.'

'They are perfectly useable as a daily driver,' he reckons. 'You can trundle around below 3000rpm, never wake the turbo and still get fuel economy in the mid-twenties.'

1980 3.3 Turbo

Engine 3299cc, horizontally opposed six-cylinder, sohc per bank, Bosch K-Jetronic mechanical fuel injection, KKK turbocharger, intercooler **Power and torque** 300bhp @ 5500rpm; 304lb ft @ 4000rpm
Transmission Four-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Steering** Rack and pinion
Suspension Front: MacPherson struts, lower wishbones, torsion bars, anti-roll bar.
Rear: semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear
Weight 1300kg (2866lb) **Performance** Top speed: 165mph; 0-60mph: 5.2sec
Fuel consumption 16.5mpg **Cost new** £26,249 **Value now** £72,000-£125,000


964 looked deceptively familiar

combination of huge torque and gear ratios that seem to stretch for ever means that in most instances one, two or, at most, three gears will do the job.

Like the 2.0 S, the 930 is the other car here with a reputation to eat you alive, and like the early car it's not undeserved, particularly given the additional weight in the tail of the car (amplified on the 3.3 Turbo over the earlier 3.0 because the engine was moved slightly backwards to accommodate a larger clutch). At normal speeds on a dry road it feels like a pussycat - but when pressing on or in the wet, don't even think about jumping off the throttle pedal mid-corner. Respect is due to, and earned by, this landmark car.

1990 964 Carrera 4

Having this car in our classic line-up may raise a few eyebrows among diehard 911 fans. In 1988 the 964 Carrera 4 was Porsche's first real modernisation of the 911 since the G Series for 1974. Delayed in development, its debut coincided with the beginning of a fearsome global recession. Within a few years Porsche was on its knees, teetering on the verge of bankruptcy and haunted by supremely talented new rivals, including the Honda NSX.

With the introduction of power steering, coil-sprung suspension, anti-lock brakes, improved heating and ventilation, active aerodynamics and updated engine management electronics, the 964 was deeply radical by Porsche's standards. Fans of the old 'true' 911 were not easily convinced - particularly because Porsche's image, and how it was perceived by the enthusiast market, had taken a considerable battering during the yuppie years of the mid-to-late Eighties.

THE 964 CARRERA 4 OWNER MARCUS CARTWRIGHT

Marcus's first experience of a 911 was a 2.7 Carrera RS while he was a member of the Classic Car Club. Originally an engineer by trade, Marcus realised how perfectly put together early 911s were. His quest began when his son-in-law, formerly a 930 owner, bought a 964.

'I was ready for a classic,' Marcus recalls, 'but one that had not just character but also engineering quality built in from the start. Drives in older Ferraris and Lamborghinis reminded me of what an occasionally fraught experience it could be.

'I was left with an obvious choice in the end. I wanted something that retained the 911's originality, that felt like you were really driving it, but that I could use on European trips with my wife and two children.'

Sadly, the 964 C4 that Marcus bought in 2009 was written off in a 'leaving the road moment' on the way to Le Mans a few years ago.

Enter his second C4 – the car shown here – with all the tasty parts swapped over from his old car. It's all working out nicely.

Perhaps because of all this the 964 has languished for many years near the bottom of the 911 desirability scale. Even the 964 RS was perceived as a rough 'n' tough track day variant with very limited appeal for quite some time, until a few years ago when values began to rocket. Now the RS is a star, and values of other 964 variants have started to rise in its wake as the type finds its own band of dedicated followers.

If you're in the market for a coupé, be aware that finding a good Carrera 2 is now a struggle, partly because many have been converted into RS replicas and partly because many fine examples have been shipped out to collectors in the Far East.


Four-wheel-drive transmission meant larger central tunnel


New bore, stroke and pistons upped power to 250bhp

1990 964 Carrera 4
Porsche claimed 964 was 87 per cent new compared to Carrera 3.2

Although perhaps misunderstood at launch, the 964 now appeals for precisely the reasons Porsche introduced it. This car is a good deal less taxing to drive than its 3.2 Carrera predecessor and much easier to live with, and yet compared with the 993 that replaced it, it still has those distinctive upright front wings and headlamps, with a smooth design that harks back to the pre-1974 cars in its simplicity. So it should come as no surprise that compared to the equivalent 993, a good 964 C2 - and they're a much rarer car given Porsche's precarious sales figures at the time - is threatening to surpass its slightly younger brother in terms of value.

There's still a cheaper way into 964 coupé ownership, and that's to consider the Carrera 4. Popular opinion tends to pigeonhole it as the dark lord of understeer, and any spec sheet will tell you that its complicated, 959-inspired drivetrain means that it weighs a hefty 100kg more than the standard rear-wheel drive car. Nevertheless, just one drive in Marcus Cartwright's fabulous, expertly-developed C4 would be enough to convert even the most ardent of model sceptics.

1990 964 Carrera 4

Engine 3600cc, horizontally opposed six-cylinder, sohc per bank, Bosch Motronic fuel injection **Power and torque** 250bhp @ 6100rpm; 228lb ft @ 4800rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, four-wheel drive **Steering** Rack and pinion **Suspension** Front: MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar. Rear: semi-trailing arms, coil springs, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear, servo-assisted **Weight** 1450kg (3197lb) **Performance** Top speed: 162mph; 0-60mph: 5.5sec **Fuel consumption** 20mpg **Cost new** £47,699 (C4) **Values now** £40k-£70k

Inside the C4, the dashboard is much less antiquated than before. The short gearlever moves around the gate with all the ease of that of a modern car, and turning the competition-specification steering wheel of this particular example calls for a fair bit of musclework. Not that it's a tiresome, muscle-pumping chore, though - just as its Japanese rivals had done, Porsche was listening to what customers said they wanted.

This twin-spark, 3.6-litre flat-six has had a rebuild and features a freer flowing exhaust and an RS flywheel, but a rolling road output of 292bhp still comes as a shock to the ears - then again, 964s were always relatively low stressed and conservatively rated.

The secret to this car is the straightforward changes that have been made. Look at any standard 964 Carrera and the front ride height seems absurdly high, but this car has been sensibly lowered and set up with precision on a rig with full corner weighting and personalised suspension geometry. It's a revelation.

I'm immediately struck by how confidence-inspiring the chassis is - though the experience of its owner Marcus proves that there is a limit (see the interview with him on the opposite page). Get on the power early and you can maybe detect a little of that infamous understeer. But with the 911's rear-engined traction qualities enhanced by the driven front wheels, it positively rips out of tight corners.

The dense, rich engine noise is an appropriate signature tune for a motor that's big on brawn, pulling hard from low revs in one linear swell of acceleration - and it really does feel quick too. The steering is utterly precise and

FERDINAND 'BUTZI' PORSCHE

Ferdinand Alexander Porsche, known as FA or 'Butzi', passed away in April 2012 at the age of 76. Although forever associated with the design of the 911, he spent most of his career running a successful design studio and consultancy.

FA was born in Porsche's hometown, Stuttgart, in 1935. The third generation of a formidable engineering dynasty, as a youngster he was often seen around the workshops owned by his grandfather, Ferdinand Porsche.

After studying at the College of Design in Ulm he joined the family firm in 1958, rising to Head of Design by 1962. His functional, fluid realisation of the 911 marks him out as one of the most famous car designers, but his work on the 804 Grand Prix car and delectable 904 Carrera GTS proved he was far more than a one-hit wonder.

FA, along with the rest of the Porsche family, left the day-to-day running of the business during a shock upheaval in 1971-1972. Butzi founded the Porsche Design studio, and in 1974 moved the headquarters to Zell Am See in Austria, where it remains today.

It was here that he designed his famous watches, pens and sunglasses. Over the years, Design by FA Porsche, the consultancy side of the business, has created a wide range of domestic and industrial products.

Butzi remained a Porsche shareholder and board member, only relinquishing his mandate to his son, Ferdinand Oliver, in 2005.

1995 993 RS
Today it's revered for its status as the last of the air-cooled RS 911s

993 RS OWNER PAUL MADDEN

Paul's 911 odyssey began in 1995 with a brand new 993 in Midnight Blue. It was a base model Carrera, but a fine car nevertheless, he says. At the time the RS was not only more expensive, but any car would have to be his daily driver, so the idea of firmer suspension and fewer creature comforts didn't appeal.

But, over time he realised that he should have bought the RS, so set about trying to find one. When he found this car in Midnight Blue, he knew it was for him.

What makes it so special? 'A real delight is the 'ping' of the door as you pull it shut,' he enthuses. 'That lack of sound proofing/deadening says all you need to know about Porsche's quest to save weight.

'I love the car because it's a real treat – I genuinely feel that it's one of Porsche's finest.'


Motor sport-oriented RS got all-leather steering wheel

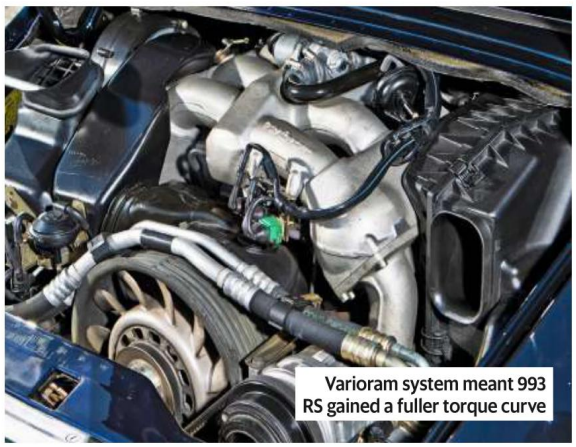
beautifully weighted so that you feel that you can place the car where you want it to the last millimetre. This C4 is the surprise of the day - the sort of car in which you'd want to keep lapping until the fuel tank ran dry.

1995 993 RS

Here, we go from bargain 964 to 911 royalty - you might wonder why the 993 RS has climbed so quickly to stratospheric values in the classic Porsche market. Or at least you might until you get around to driving one; a real one - which isn't easy, given how increasingly rare these cars are. At that point you'll almost certainly fall head over heels in love with the car, then spend a depressingly long time rueing a lack of funds and garage space, too many children... you know the rest.

1995 993 RS

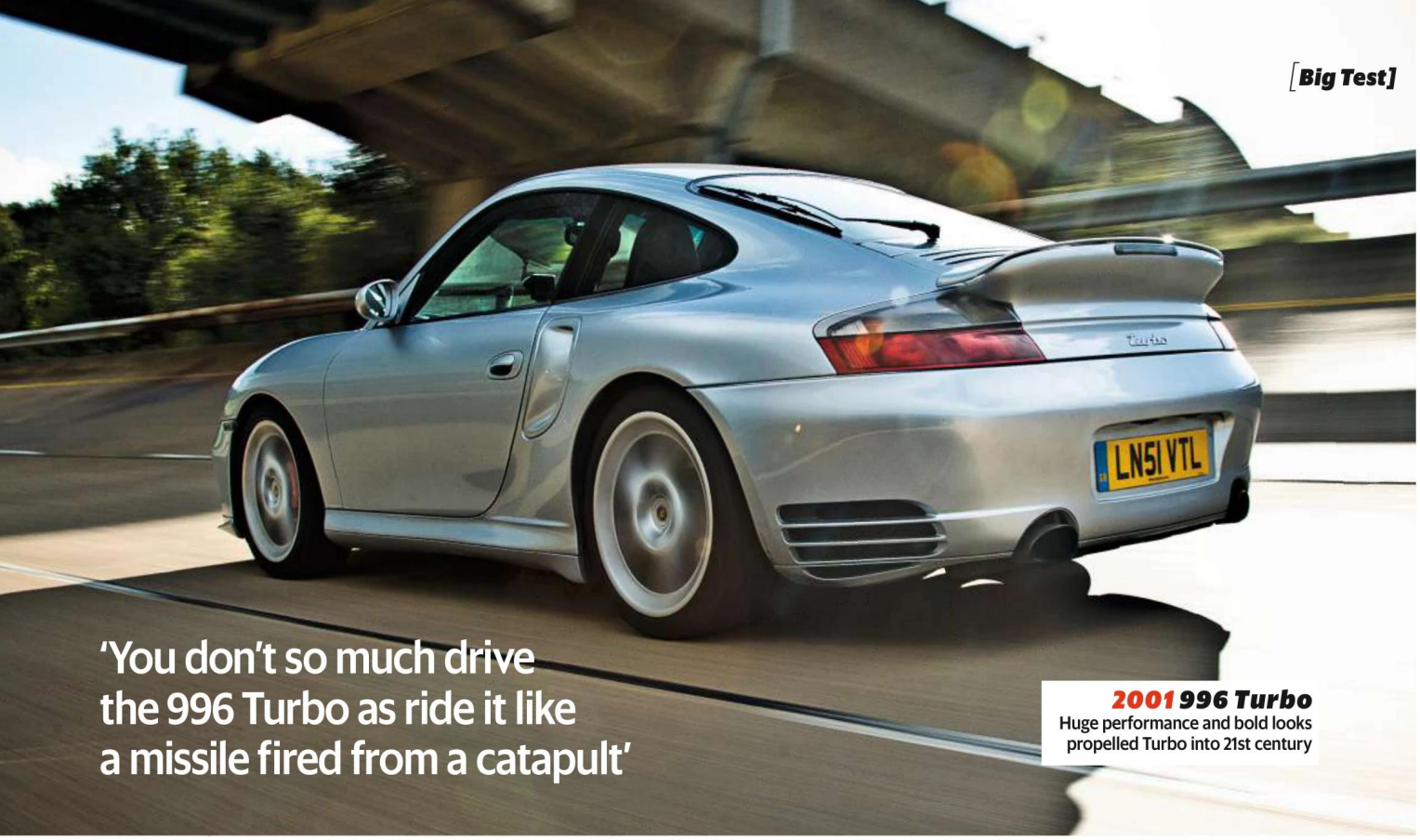
Engine 3746cc, horizontally opposed six-cylinder, sohc per bank, Bosch Motronic fuel injection **Power and torque** 300bhp @ 6500rpm; 262lb ft @ 5400rpm **Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Steering** Rack and pinion **Suspension** Front: MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar. Rear: multi-link, coil springs, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar Brakes Vented discs **Weight** 1279kg (2820lb) **Performance** Top speed: 172mph; 0-60mph: 5.1sec **Fuel consumption** 20mpg **Cost new** £68,495 (Clubsport £74,795) **Values now** £180,000-£240,000


Varioram system meant 993 RS gained a fuller torque curve

If you're looking for a car in this story to show just how far Porsche developed the original 911 idea, this is that car. Any 993 would have done a great job in that role, because although these days the quite beautiful redesign - by Englishman Tony Hatter - seems to have fallen a little out of favour with the traditionalists, there's no denying the brilliance of that multi-link rear axle over just about everything that came before.

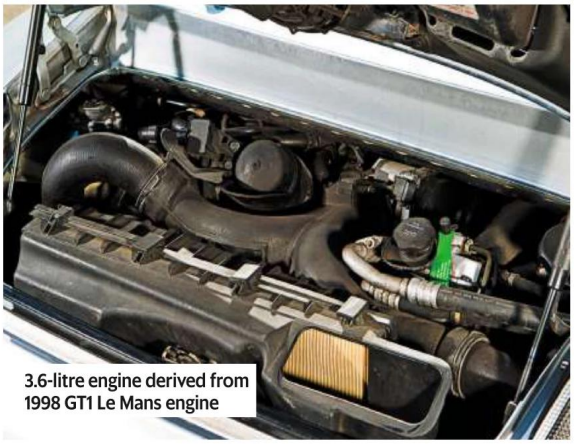
If the 993 Turbo is a devastating bludgeon of good roads, and the fabulous 993 GT2 a ferocious beast best not approached without body armour, then the 993 RS is simply sublime, percolating everything that's great about 911s and then modernising it so it still feels almost contemporary. It and the 996 Turbo are the two cars that make the Millbrook Hill Route feel too small, so high is their potential performance. But it's the 993 RS you'd choose to enjoy your drive the most.

The standard Carrera's engine received a bore enlargement to achieve a 3746cc capacity, and this is also the first car to receive Porsche's Varioram variable length intake system. A last hurrah for the naturally-aspirated, air-cooled flat-six, it debuted in 1995, with 300bhp and 262lb ft of torque, fitted to a much modified Carrera 2 bodyshell - seam-welded, stiffened and with rolled



'You don't so much drive the 996 Turbo as ride it like a missile fired from a catapult'

2001 996 Turbo
Huge performance and bold looks propelled Turbo into 21st century


3.6-litre engine derived from 1998 GT1 Le Mans engine


996 Turbo had come a long way from the 2.0S

wheelarches and aerodynamic enhancements. Gorgeous split-rim alloy wheels fill those arches to perfection, and every mechanical aspect of the car is honed along with a 100kg diet plan that even extends to a smaller bottle for the windscreen washer.

In these power-crazed days, 300bhp arguably doesn't sound like a huge amount, but this engine in a car that weighs just 1279kg is an intoxicating combination. Despite the capacity increase, the big-bore flat-six thrives on revs, while the throttle response is fabulously instantaneous. In that respect it's a great match for the steering, which requires only small inputs from the driver to set your course, but is quite beautifully weighted. Even lapping at a reasonably quick rate, it's obvious that the car is still barely awake and there's plenty more still to come. Rivals from the period are thin on the ground - maybe the Lotus Esprit Sport 300, but Ferrari chose not to play on this occasion and the rare and sublime Honda NSX Type R stayed in Japan.

As the last in a historic line of air-cooled RS models, this 993 really did have the weight of the 911 world resting on its broad, curvaceous shoulders. But that it exceeds all expectations goes a long way to explaining why it's so sought after today.

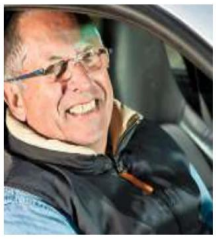
2001 996 Turbo

And so to our final car of the day. If the 993 Turbo is the son of the 959, the 996 Turbo is where the 959 may have gone in the future. You may view its presence with suspicion here because, with its water-cooled engine, represents the postscript to our air-cooled journey.

It seems like only yesterday that this near-200mph whispering giant bestrode the supercar landscape, ruthlessly scything to size most other exotica that dared to confront it on road and track. But with the advent of the new 991-generation 911 in 2012 to replace the 997, the 996 Turbo's chassis and engine no longer have descendants in the current Porsche range. It's the end of a glorious era that began with the 996 GT3 and Turbo in 1999 and 2000 respectively.

2001 996 Turbo

Engine 3600cc, horizontally opposed six-cylinder, four valves per cylinder, dohc per bank, Bosch Motronic fuel injection, two turbochargers **Power and torque** 420bhp @ 6000rpm; 413lb ft @ 2700-4600rpm **Transmission** Six-speed manual, four-wheel drive **Steering** Rack and pinion **Suspension** Front: MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar. Rear: multi-link, coil springs, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear **Weight** 1590kg (3505lb) **Performance** Top speed: 190mph; 0-60mph: 4.2sec **Fuel consumption** 20mpg **Cost new** £86,000 **Values now** £29,000-£75,000



996 TURBO OWNER RAY NORTHWAY, SPECIALIST PORSCHE SERVICING AND SALES

Ray Northway has been fixing 911s for more than 20 years and runs his own business fixing and selling Porsches near Reading in Berkshire.

'These are bulletproof cars and we rarely have problems with them,' is the good-news story from Ray. Finding a car with a compete history is vital, but otherwise you're looking out for general condition, signs of accidents, and that all the electrics work.

Ray says the gearbox can give trouble if the car has been abused, but the engine is strong and can be tuned up to 600bhp, proving the Mezger design's strength.

Some cars have the X50 upgrade (bigger turbos and other parts) that releases 450bhp. Run-out Turbo S models had this option and standard ceramic brakes.

Very different reasons to buy a Porsche 911

Both the GT3 and the Turbo were Porsche's 'serious' cars in the new Porsche world order and masterminded by arch-strategist Wendelin Wiedeking. From 1997 the 911 evolved into the 996 Carrera, a modern, adaptable super coupé that anyone could drive without sacrificing comfort. However, when it came to firepower, Porsche reverted to battle-hardened technology it knew it could reply on - the Hans Mezger-penned water-cooled 3.6-litre flat-six, developed in the 1998 Le Mans-winning GT1 and originating in the 1978 935/78 'Moby Dick' Group 5 monster.

In today's market, 996 GT3s have probably fallen in value as far as they're going to and bear all the hallmarks of a great future investment. But like the 3.3 Turbo a few pages back, the 996 Turbo has turned a corner. But you can still buy one from £30,000.

Compared to every other car here it's a vehicle you could drive in traffic every day and feel you hadn't made any compromise over a normal car. It also has four-wheel drive and an ever-vigilant electronic safety net, should you overstep the mark. If you've only ever driven an original Turbo you'll be amazed that there's no waiting for boost, no ponderous moment wondering why you didn't get on the power sooner.

Reaching the first hill at Millbrook, a punishing grand slam of torque compresses me into the seat and fires me up the road with dizzying ferocity. With 414bhp and 413lb ft (the latter from 2700-4600rpm) and not an ounce wasted through poor traction, you don't so much drive the 996 Turbo as ride it like a missile fired from a catapult. That it has Porsche's trademark extreme stopping ability and a chassis and steering rack giving great feedback and verve merely add to its attractions. With many examples more than a third cheaper than its price when new, get one on the cheap while you can.

'Driving these nine cars demolishes the cynics' complaint that all 911s are alike'

Nine 911s driven then. It's been a day of guttural flat-six crackle, occasional glowing turbocharger air-rips, wriggling steering wheels and the sensation of front-ends bobbing around like little boats in an insistent ocean swell - the sensations have been vivid, inspiring and nothing but hugely revealing.

There's a yawning chasm between the first and last cars here, and driving these nine cars demolishes the cynics' complaint that all 911s are alike. This group proves the sheer diversity of the 911 gene pool, along with the affirmation that there's no greater entertainer among sports cars. Just two of the reasons why the type has lasted more than 50 years.

Thanks to: *Ian McLeod, Guy White and Steve Brookes at the Porsche Club GB; Howard Warren and Chas Colton; Bernard Tester (for pre-purchase 911 inspections call 01449 777911); Mark Fuller; Nigel and Harry Mitchell; Peter Brett; John Ward; Marcus Cartwright; Paul Madden; Vic Cohen and Ray Northway for the 996 Turbo (northway.co.uk, 0118 971 4333)*

Car production at Porsche began in 1948 with the 356, but it will be forever defined by the 911, launched 15 years later

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A close relationship between road and race cars has always kept 911 credibility on a high

FROM ROAD JOY TO RACE VICTORY

The Le Mans 24 Hours has swarmed with Porsche 911s for five decades. We pit a road-going 2.4S against a 2.8 RSR race car to find out why

Words ADAM TOWLER Photography CHARLIE MAGEE

Most of us can recall those memorable racing scenes in Steve McQueen's film *Le Mans*. I bet many of us know every blipped downshift, every twitch of flameproof facemask. But look at the real sections of film - it's 1970 and once the prototypes have screamed out of shot, note how many Porsche 911s are spread throughout the field.

Just four years after it had made its debut there in the most humble fashion, the 911 was already the backbone of the grid. To help explain how that happened we've brought together the archetypal high-performance road 911 from that classic period of sports car racing - the 2.4S - and its ultimate racing relation, the 1973 2.8 RSR.

The 911's competition baptism came not on a racing circuit but on the gravel and ice of the 1965 Monte Carlo rally. It wouldn't be long, though, before the Porsche was turning up regularly for endurance racing events. The odyssey at Le Mans began in 1966, just 18 months after the type went on sale to the public. A little red 2-litre 911 - in effect a road car with auxiliary lights on the front bumper - was entered for Jean Kerguen and Jacques 'Franc' Dewez. Starting 37th it finished 14th overall, winning the 2-litre GT class. In a year dominated by the Ford-Ferrari wars it received little prominence, but it was an early warning that this compact coupé displayed levels of performance and endurance that belied its dimensions and meagre statistics.

Over the next few years the 911 grew, literally. A longer wheelbase for 1969 went some way to taming the extreme oversteer characteristics (not that Vic Elford ever seemed to mind those) and with the 2195cc C Series 911 range in production for 1970 the 911 could finally lift itself out of the up-to 2-litre class and into the 2000-2500cc category.

The exotic 911R of 1967 had been Porsche's first real attempt at creating a dedicated 911 for competition, with a weight-saving regime bordering on the obsessive and thrust from the most powerful 2-litre flat six available, taken from the 906. But as long as the 911 was limited to the 2-litre class, there was only so much engineers could do.

The new 2.2-litre production cars brought new opportunities, given that the rules stated that engine size could be increased up to the class limit. Between 1970 and 1972 these so-called 911 ST models dominated their class in both racing and rallying. Enlarging the bores initially brought 2247cc, then 2380cc and a wailing 250hp, and with the advent of the E Series production cars for 1972, with their 2.4-litre engines thanks to a longer stroke, this crankshaft was then fitted to the race engines for the ultimate ST - 2.5 litres, albeit impacting on reliability.

It's an E Series 2.4S that we have here today. This variant is special for a number of reasons, not least because, 2.7 Carrera RS excepted, it was the pinnacle of the original, chrome-bumper 911. Everything from that rapidly renamed '911' show car in 1964 had been building to this point, and thereafter, for 1974, the 911 would evolve in a new direction with safety impact bumpers, bigger engines and increased weight.

As the top of the range S model it was fast and expensive - the smart choice of the wealthy driving enthusiast aware of Porsche's triumphs on the track. The classic, air-cooled Porsche flat-six made 190bhp at 6500rpm, with 160lb ft of torque at 5200rpm: in a car that weighed 1050kg that provided sparkling performance for the period. A 2.4S could reach 0-60mph in around 6.5sec, with a top speed in the vicinity of 145mph. Moreover it had excellent brakes and superb roadholding ability - once its unusual handling traits had been mastered.

Today the 2.4S seems tiny and somewhat meek compared to the kind of brash, modern performance cars that are its modern equivalent; almost virginal in this delicate shade of Porsche Light Ivory. Rarely has Butzi Porsche's design looked so right than with this

'Get it singing and this 40-year-old will determinedly chase the current crop of hot hatches'

190bhp in a 1050kg car made the 2.4S a serious performer in 1972

Even the roadgoing 911S has the functional purity of a race car

Stark purpose of RSR is reinforced by a roll cage

300bhp RSR motor has just 900kg to push

car; there is no bling or appeasement to unnecessary kerbside appeal. For some it lacks emotion and drama compared to an Italian of the period. The interior is the same - simple, functional.

The passion of this car is in the driving, not the shouting about it, and while it might look relatively innocent, there's nothing shy about its performance. Be in no doubt that this is a quick car. Once you've got a rapport going with that tricky type-915 gearbox you can work the flat six hard, which you need to do to reap the best from it. Get it singing and this 40-year-old will determinedly chase the current crop of turbocharged hot hatches. It is an absorbing experience that takes practise to master: drive a 2.4S sloppily and you'll look like a buffoon.

But there's something else that strikes you other than pure speed. It radiates from deep within this 2.4S - a genuine sense of confidence. It might be the comforting whirr of the air-cooled engine or the solidity of the structure, the consistency of the controls so precisely tuned and the reassuringly legible instrumentation. 'It feels as though you could just drive it to the south of France right now,' is how the owner of this car describes it - speed and endurance through quality is the message.

By now it was becoming clear that the search for power would need a new engine, and that was exactly what Porsche had in mind to combat new GT-class rivals such as the Ferrari 365 GTB/4 Daytona.

Whether it's an AC Cobra, Ford GT40 or a Porsche 911 RS/RSR, a legend that has often been replicated makes for an odd experience when you meet the real deal. This *Gulf Blau* 2.8 RSR is no exception - you're immediately consumed by awe and suspicion, the latter alleviated when you're told that it's worth about £750,000. Chassis 1155 was originally sold to long-standing driver and entrant Reinhold Joest and enjoyed a busy career, first in hill climbs and latterly German national sports car events where it was updated to 3.0 RSR spec. Today it's presented as it would have left the factory in 1973, save for safety details such as a substantial roll cage and fire extinguisher system.

THE ENGINEER
HELMUTH BOTT

Dr Helmuth Bott (above right) was a key figure in the growth of Porsche. Later, as head of research and development, he oversaw many of the most famous models, including the two featured in this story.

Bott joined Porsche in 1952. Much of his early work was in taming the handling characteristics of the 356 but by the Sixties he was involved in the 901 project – later to be renamed the 911. In fact, it is said that he was the first person to take the running prototype for a drive on pulic roads.

Having worked on the first 911 S model for 1967 as head of chassis development, Bott became the overall head of development in 1972 when Piech and the rest of the Porsche family withdrew from the day-to-day running of the company, handling overall management control to Dr Fuhrmann.

In this role Bott oversaw all the great Porsche cars of the Seventies and Eighties. In early 1981, after American Peter Schutz replaced Fuhrmann, it was in Bott's office that survival of the 911 was secured, Schutz picking up a pen and continuing the 911's line to infinity on Bott's wallchart. But it's the incredible 959 that Bott is perhaps best remembered for. He retired in 1988 and died in 1994, leaving a legacy of wonderful road and racing cars

The 2.4S is tactile but civilised...

...the 2.8 RSR is buzzy and frantic

'Today values have rocketed, and both are at the forefront of that"

By 1973 the 911 was very much on Porsche's radar as a frontline competition machine, what with the days of the 917 over on the world stage and the type into its final and most extreme year in the Can Am sports car series of North America. What Porsche did was to make key items bigger, and then mix into the recipe some of the exotic components and know-how from the prototype programme of the preceding years, such as the 917-type brakes.

The goal was the 2500-3000cc GT class, and to meet it Porsche produced an early form of homologation special - the 2.7-litre Carrera RS. Folklore states that Porsche's marketing department thought the 500 units required would be hard to shift. In the end Porsche built 1590 and struggled to find enough special parts to satisfy orders.

The 2.7 RS engine was closely related to that in the 2.4S, but larger bores led to the increased capacity and 210hp, with a much beefier, flatter torque curve. Nikasil bore coating was derived from the 917 experience. The rear wheelarches were swollen so that wider wheels could be fitted and aerodynamics were finally given real consideration, leading to the famous ducktail rear spoiler. The RS was available in both Lightweight and Touring variants, the latter effectively an RS trimmed inside like a 911S and wearing heavier bumpers.

For racing, the factory introduced the M491 - the 2.8 RSR. This took the standard RS Lightweight and evolved it according to what the regulations allowed - in this case a march towards the 3-litre class limit (which in time the car would hit) and a further two inches of additional body width so that nine-inch front and 11-inch rear rims could be fitted. Weight-saving was taken to even more of an extreme - suspension, braking and the drivetrain were upgraded accordingly, and the much more exotic engine - with twin plug ignition and high throttle butterflies for the fuel injection - bellowed out 'at least' 300hp at 8000rpm. It was a turnkey racing car, pure and simple.

Climb aboard and there's a similar dark cockpit to the one in the 2.4S, but the gloom cloaks an even sparser interior - no glovebox, no heater, just pull strings to open the doors and some simple rubber matting on the floor. The huge tacho directly in your line of sight has been rotated so that the 8000rpm limit is now directly at 12 o'clock, while the simple bucket seats are a lot more comfortable than they appear. Like all Porsche's racing cars, including the 917 and the Group C 962, you start the RSR with a rather underwhelming ignition key and prime the twin ignition system via two little switches. It fires instantly, with the kind of ka-boom that makes the length of your spine shudder along with much of the bodyshell itself.

With 300 horses pushing just 900kg, the 2.8 RSR has a power-to-weight ratio comparable with Porsche's 997 GT3 RS 3.8, but thanks in part to that miserly kerbweight, it feels initially more potent.

Touch the throttle even at low revs and the lack of inertia from engine, and the car itself, is exhilarating. Hold the throttle open and you're treated to ferocious acceleration.

It's a complex, mechanical aural signature that evolves and gradually opens out like the pipes on a church organ progressively brought into play. This particular RSR features rudimentary silencer boxes mounted in parallel behind the transverse crossmember at the rear of the car, but you'd be hard pressed to know, especially from inside.

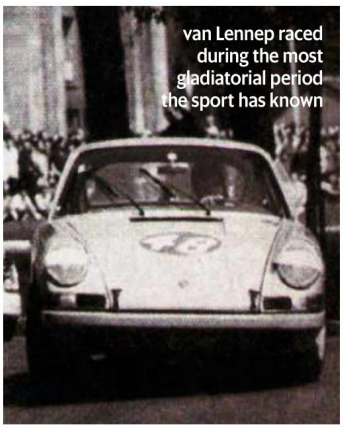
Preconceptions can be funny things. Given the fat, Michelin TB15 rubber at each corner (a modern compound, but very retro-looking) and the brief of this car, the assumption is that it'll be a real workout to drive. Nothing could be further from the truth. Settling in to that unique 911 driving position and adjusting to the floor-hinged pedals, thin-rimmed, four-spoke steering wheel is close to the chest and the wand-like gear lever a stretched arm away. The clutch is virtually no different from the one in the 2.4S in terms of effort required, and the brake pedal is firm but effective from the off.

Although the steering wheel requires reasonable heft at very slow speeds, once moving it doesn't load up nastily. You don't need to muscle the RSR, instead you can guide it, if not with your fingers, then at least only your palms. Up the pace and the RSR feels superbly agile, albeit with a pivot point dominated by the lump of engine in the rear. Roll is minimal and takes every last brain cell of my concentration not to wander off into dreaming about braking late for Mulsanne corner.

This durable, biddable temperament is the biggest surprise, putting into context something that Le Mans legend Gijs van Lennep recalled about driving the early 911s - '[in that period] you'll never be the boss of a Ferrari, but with a Porsche you'll be friends in 30 minutes. Difficult, yes, but you're the boss. You feel exactly what is happening, where and when; you are at one with the car.'

It's fascinating how van Lennep separates 'difficult' and 'friends' in his comments. Even he jokes that 'the engine is in the wrong place'. Getting the best from the Carrera RSR was not easy. Despite the traction benefits of the engine's location that have formed so much of its success over the years, to drive the 911 fast you had to be on the limit, but over or under that limit was bad news in equal measure. Too slow or lacking commitment and the 911 would resolutely understeer; too wild and oversteer would cost too much time and destroy tyres.

I'm nowhere near the limit today, so the most revealing aspect of our drive is that the 2.8 RSR is so usable, but there was something else that made them winners and the choice of the wealthy amateur. For van Lennep, it was their toughness. 'They were so strong,' he quips with a chuckle. That much was true when he co-drove the RSR prototype to an incredible fourth place overall against considerably more exotic rivals at Le Mans in 1973.



van Lennep raced during the most gladiatorial period the sport has known

THE DRIVER GIJS VAN LENNEP

Few can boast of such a record behind the wheel of endurance sports cars as Gijs van Lennep.

Much of the Dutch driver's career was spent behind the wheel of a 911, from an early encounter on the 1966 Tulip Rally with his brother to sharing the exotic 911R at Vallelunga in 1967, coming home third.

Having starred in the big prototypes during the early Seventies and winning the 1971 Le Mans race with Helmut Marko in a Porsche 917K with experimental magnesium chassis, he became the works lead driver for 1973 alongside Herbert Muller in the 911 Carrera RSR.

This was the car that Porsche moved up into the prototype class and developed keenly – so much so that van Lennep and Muller snatched fourth overall at Le Mans and won the Targa Florio outright.

For 1974 that car gave way to the Turbo Carrera RSR, the first of a dominating lineage that would stretch for nearly a decade, with second for van Lennep at Le Mans a season highlight. The following year was a transitional one, but still brought him a fine fifth-placed finish in a 3.0 RSR. His career was signed off in style when he took outright victory at Le Mans in 1976 with Jacky Ickx in the Porsche 936 spyder.

2.4S was the first road 911 to wear a front spoiler; 2.8 RSR used the ducktail from the 2.7 RS

Today, air-cooled 911 values have rocketed, and both of these specimens are at the forefront of that movement. A lovely 2.4S like this one is worth around £160,000, while a rare, genuine RSR as here, is into the lofty reaches of the millionaire investor market.

The 2.8 RSR begat the 3.0 RSR for 1974, based upon the G-series 'impact bumper' 3.0 RS road car, itself an evolution of the original 2.7 RS. However, by now Porsche had revealed something more exotic - the 2.1-litre, 500hp Turbo Carrera RSR and, after a break in 1975 when the new Group 4, 5 and 6 rules were delayed a year by the FIA, the factory introduced the customer 934 and works 935 models for 1976. The era of the turbocharged 911 had arrived, with the opposition wilting. Power outputs began to exceed 600hp, with aerodynamic devices becoming increasingly outrageous to keep the 911 grounded.

Matters reached a climax in 1978 when, having dominated racing for two successive years with the 935, and taken two successive Le Mans victories with the Group 6 936 Spyder prototype, the factory went all-out to create the ultimate 911-based racing car - the 935/78, otherwise known as Moby Dick. Its extraordinary bodywork clothed an exceptional engine - still air-cooled for the cylinders but with water-cooled heads. With between 800-900hp, Moby Dick wasn't lacking anything in a straight line, recording over 220mph at Le Mans, but niggling problems kept it from victory that year.

Instead it was left to one of Porsche's great privateer entrants - the Kremer brothers - to score the original 911's only outright Le Mans win in 1979 with a 935 K3. This 700hp monster had brought the 911 a long way from Kerguen and Franc's little red 911 of 1966, but the ancestry was clear: the 911 had evolved, but it was the quality of the original design that was still paying dividends 13 years later.

Thanks to: *Autofarm for sourcing both cars used in this feature and to Managing Director Josh Sadler for his input (autofarm.co.uk) and to the owners of both cars.*

EXPERT JOSH SADLER

Josh Sadler co-founded Oxforshire Porsche specialist Autofarm in 1972 which now specialises in repairing and renovating racing and roadgoing 911s.

Sadler sums up the reason behind Porsche's success as 'quality engineering, carefully developed', with the 911s famous reliability 'inherent in the original design'.

'The 2.8 RSR was the last one to be a thoroughly roadable motor car,' says Sadler. 'The 3.0 RSR was too wide, and the slide throttles weren't so usable.

'Versatility is at the core of the vehicle, thanks to their excellent traction. There're all sorts of things you can do with them.'

1973 911 2.8 RSR (M491)

Engine 2807cc, horizontally opposed six-cylinder, sohc per bank, Bosch 'plunger type' mechanical fuel injection **Power and torque** 300bhp @ 8000rpm; 217lb ft @ 6200rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear **Suspension** Front: MacPherson struts, torsion bars, anti-roll bar. Rear: semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Steering** Rack-and-pinion **Weight** 900kg (1984lb) **Performance** Top speed: 175mph; 0-60mph: 4.5sec (est) **Fuel consumption** n/a **Cost new** DM59,000 (£9020) **Value now** £1 million depending on provenance/condition

1972 911 2.4S

Engine 2341cc, horizontally opposed six-cylinder, sohc per bank, Bosch 'plunger type' mechanical fuel injection **Power and torque** 190bhp @ 6500rpm, 160lb ft @ 5200rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear **Suspension** Front: MacPherson struts, torsion bars, anti-roll bar; Rear: semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Steering** Rack-and-pinion **Weight** 1050kg (2315lb) **Performance** Top speed: 145mph; 0-60mph: 6.5sec **Fuel consumption** 14-20mpg **Cost new** £5401 **Values now** £120,000-£150,000

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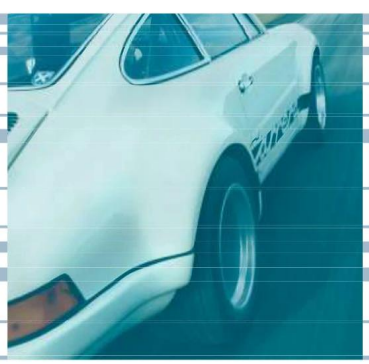
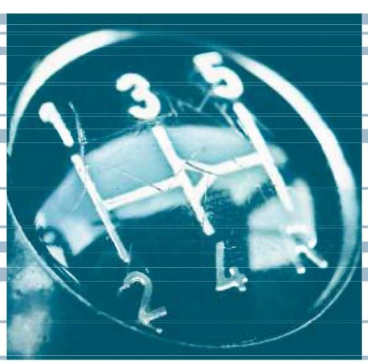
CN36

P7





Words MARK WALTON Photography GUS GREGORY

LIGHTSPEED

Just 55 Porsche 911 2.8 RSRs were built. We take one on to the moors to feel the force

RSR is unquestionably fast, but soaring noise will set your ears on fire

'The sound of that 2.8-litre flat six, hollering into a deep baritone wail, is so solid you could reach out and touch it'

I think I've got a problem. I've got a tape, a little mini-recorder tape, with about 30 seconds of 911 RSR noise on it – and I keep listening to it. Not casual, background radio, absent-minded, white noise listening-to-it; I'm talking lights out, eyes closed, empty my head of day-to-day transient things, and really listening to it. Which might be deeply sad. Then again, it might be because the sound of that 2.8-litre flat six, hollering into a deep, baritone wail, hardening beyond 6000rpm to a sound so solid that you could reach out and touch it, might just be the sound of one of the greatest cars ever built. Distil everything you've ever wanted in a sports racer for the road, condense all a 911's reputation would have you believe, and the RSR is it - the incontrovertible real thing.

We've travelled to the North York Moors in search of 911 heaven. Lord John Mexborough's beautiful home is anchored safely in a valley, on the bleak edge of these high empty spaces, some of the last roads on earth where you can really drive a car. We approach the house through high security gates and wander round the back to the the garages. Mexborough is clearly a Porsche enthusiast. Inside we find a row of 911s, ranging from a volatile-looking wide-bodied racer to a 200mph 959 supercar. And in among the collection sits the car we've come to drive - a 1973 2.8 RSR. In its original ivory with black decals, this car (to these eyes) is the pick of the bunch, visually the most resolved of the various 911 interpretations on view. It seems to be the perfect blend of early 911 simplicity and restrained arch-bulging aggression. It sits on enormous Fuchs alloys, and its stance is ground-hugging; slightly nose down; totally focused.

Mexborough starts the car, a blatting, popping race engine on a slightly fast tickover, warming oil into the corners of the alloy cylinder block and heads. I'm given a tour, shown the kill switch, the special-order 120-litre fuel tank and the choke. Mexborough's cars might sit in carefully protected, high-security garages, but they're not mollycoddled. Cars aren't built to sit in museums, he explains. They're supposed to be driven. With that, he hands me the key, and we loosely arrange to meet again by nightfall.

The responsibility of driving out of an owner's driveway in a genuine RSR is enormous. This car is one of only 55 made, and this actual example has a history that clicks just about every epic endurance race name into place. The car you see here? Vallelunga, Monza, Spa, Targa Florio, Dijon, Le Mans - all 1973. Le Mans a further three times over. It has track testing, lap times and a continual, night-time, spotlit pounding of La Sarthe deep in its veins.

So what exactly is this wide-bodied 911 racer? The RSR is the iconic 2.7 RS's less well known cousin; and yet, ironically, the RSR is the whole reason for the RS's existence in the first place.

When cars over 3.0 litres were disallowed from sports prototype racing for the 1972 season, the FIA knew that it was deliberately banning the all-conquering Porsche 917, which had annihilated the opposition and set many new speed and lap time records in the previous season. What it didn't foresee was how that decision would unleash Porsche's full racing and technical prowess on the lesser European GT racing scene, a series that it would come to dominate for

Take a close look at that rev counter, marked up to 10,000rpm

the next few years. Almost as soon as the FIA had made its decision, Porsche committed to developing its 911 road car into a more potent track competitor, with the further aim of encouraging sales by racing something more closely related to a showroom model. The 917 was so extreme, it might as well have been a Lunar Module. The target was Group 4 (Special Gran Turismo) in European GT racing. Porsche already had a presence in the production GT class, in the form of many privately entered 911s.

But the 2.4S, which in 1972 was the sportiest version of the 911, was beginning to suffer at the hands of the bigger Ferrari Daytonas and De Tomaso Panteras. Porsche needed to build 500 identical 911S specials to homologate a new car into the Group 4 category, a class that allowed a bigger engine and greater flexibility in weight reduction and wheel size. And so, under the charge of engineering director Ernst Fuhrmann and racing chief Norbert Singer, Porsche looked at four areas to turn the 911 into a racing car - engine capacity, aerodynamics, tyre width and weight.

'Porsche brought back a historic 356 name, so the car became the Carrera 2.7 RS – and a legend was born'

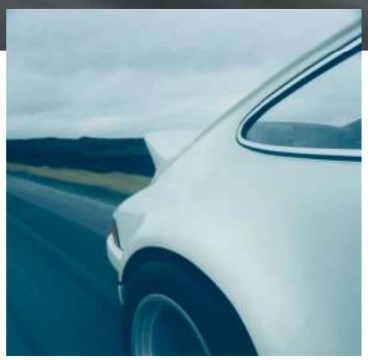
In developing the engine beyond 2500cc, which would allow the 911 to be entered into the 3.0-litre Group 4 category, Porsche already had a head start. To supplement the 2.4S in the showroom, engineers had been working on a 2.7 engine, a development that wasn't as easy as it sounds. The 911's engine was designed as a 2.0-litre, using Biral cast iron cylinder liners within finned aluminium barrels, and a capacity of 2.4 litres was seen as the limit - bores meant that the engine became Swiss cheese and the cylinder walls dangerously thin. The solution came from the 917 racing programme. Instead of using a (relatively) thick cast iron liner, the 917's V12 used a nickel carbide, called Nikasil, which was electrolytically deposited directly on to the aluminium cylinder bores in a layer just a few hundredths of a millimetre thick. This allowed a bore increase to 90mm, increasing the capacity to 2687cc, while retaining a thick aluminium cylinder wall for strength. Power was raised from 190bhp to 210bhp at 6300rpm. With this engine ready, engineers then scrapped the plans for another 'luxury' S model, and used the engine instead for its new lightweight.

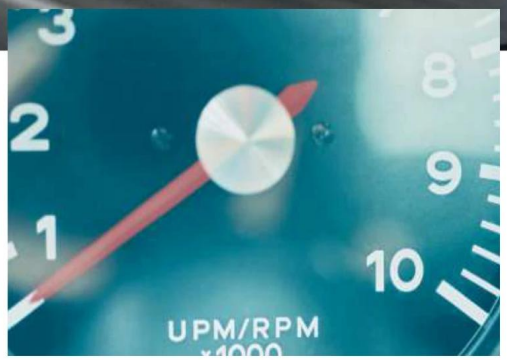
Stripping weight was easier. Porsche had developed a lightweight car in 1967, the 911 R. With perspex windows and glassfibre panels, it weighed just over 800kg, and only 20 were made. In 1972, however, the economics of building 500 homologation specials meant that Porsche had to sell its new lightweight car in the showroom, and the idea of plastic windows and doors made the marketing department freak. So instead, Porsche stripped the interior and used special thin glass, light-gauge steel (0.08mm thinner than production standard) on unstressed body panels (saving 2.7kg on the roof alone) and glassfibre bumpers. Following this radical diet, the car weighed in at 900kg.

Finally, the body would be modified to accommodate wider wheels. The car would only have 7in wide rear wheels, and no flaring was necessary, but the racing department wanted to use 11in wheels on the track and the racing rules dictated that arches could only be flared 50mm beyond the homologated car. So the road car got *slightly* flared arches as a good basis for the racer's *very* flared arches.

In addition, Norbert Singer used his experience in the 917 programme to tame the 911's high-speed aerodynamic deficiencies. Nature proved once again that the most functional and the most beautiful are often one and the same thing - and Singer's team invented the famous ducktail, also made in glassfibre.

Carrera decals were a popular option on all RS and RSRs





By now, Porsche's conservative marketing and sales departments were gearing up to sell the new model, which would first be shown at the Paris Auto Show in October 1972. They were deeply worried about offloading 500 stripped-out road cars, and great thought was put into the sales pitch. Calling it the 2.7 S didn't exactly trumpet the new arrival, so a new name was created – the 'Renn Sport' or 'motor sport'. And, applying a kind of belt-and-braces approach to badging, they also brought back a historic 356 name, to be applied to a 911 for the first time, just for good measure - *Carrera*, after Porsche's success at the Carrera Panamericana road race. And so the car became the Carrera 2.7 RS, and a legend was born.

The marketeers were dead wrong - all 500 cars were sold by the time the car was launched at that Paris Show, and so Porsche built some more - 1580 RSs were built between July '72 and July '73.

It's generally understood that there were two versions of the RS - look in Porsche specialist ads and you'll see cars listed as RS Lightweight and RS Touring. In fact, there were four different versions, and the starting point was the RSH ('Homologation'), the car Porsche built to qualify for racing - 500 identical cars, which were checked off the production line and weighed to satisfy the sport's governing body. However, once they'd been accounted for, they could then be modified and sold on through the dealer network. Good job, as no one would want to drive a standard RSH, which was stripped to the point of being silly - narrow tyres, no trim around the rear windows, no clock, hardly any underseal, not even a badge on the bonnet.

There were three dealer conversions on offer. First there was the RS 'Sport' or 'Lightweight', Conversion M471, which took an RSH and added bigger wheels, carpet in the luggage compartment and a better passenger seat. But it was still raw, and with the marketing department fearful of public taste, Porsche also offered the RS Touring, Conversion M472. The Touring offered 2.4 S-style comfort in a lightweight body, with normal door furniture, carpets, dials, switches and back seats.

And finally, the Renn Sport Rennen, the RSR, Conversion M491. This was the racing car, the competitor, the weapon that Porsche had developed the Carrera RS for, and of the 1580 RSs built, ultimately 17 would remain as unconverted RSHs, 200 became Sports, 1308 became Tourings, and 55 became race cars.

So, 55 times over, Porsche took an RSH bodyshell off the line before the engine and transmission had been fitted and moved it down to a separate factory called *Werk 1*. There they turned an RSH into an RSR. The cylinder bores were enlarged again to 92mm, giving a total volume of 2806cc, and the compression was raised. The cylinder heads were modified for larger valves and valve timing was that of the 906 sports racer. Engineers installed fantastic-looking trumpets on top, and the exhaust was enlarged for easier breathing. A new oil cooler was fitted in the front spoiler.

With these modifications - the racing department using all its experience at the forefront of sports car racing during the last few years - power was increased to a whopping 300bhp at a giddy 8000rpm, and

Blanking plates cut power a little, but prevent exhaust noise from waking up every policeman within 20 miles

the engine revved so willingly that a cut-out was installed at 8200rpm. The car was then lowered and all the rubber was taken out of the suspension joints. The arches were flared (in steel) to the maximum permitted by the sporting rules, which allowed 11in rear and 9in front wheels. The racing department took the RSR's brakes off the shelf marked '917', giving the car huge axially- and radially-drilled discs and finned four-piston calipers. Inside, the car stayed as bare as the RSH homologation model, with the addition of harnesses and a 10,000rpm rev counter. When it was done. the RSR stood as the lightest, fastest, most powerful and most agile 911 ever to enter GT racing. And when the car won the first round of the 1973 Work Championship for Makes, entering the Daytona 24 Hours simply as an endurance test for the unproven engine, GT racing didn't know what had hit it.

The RSR was never meant for the road, and Porsche sold the car with documents stamped with the message 'not for public highway'. But, as it's based on a 'production' GT, its road car genes are strong, and getting this car's road licence was a relatively easy conversion. That said, Mexborough's RSR is still unmistakably a race car. Inside, you find a bare metal floor with a couple of minor bits of felt trim and a rubber mat, framed by a black roll cage. Like the RSH, there's no clock and no door furniture other than a leather cord to open and a little Fiat 600 plastic pull to close.

And yet, despite the pared-down, paper-thin lightness, I'm amazed by the solid, bank vault clump the door makes when I swing it shut. And the Le Mans engine happily ticks over like any solid, sensible 911. Mexborough has fitted blanking plates over the two fat exhaust pipes at the rear, leaving one smaller exhaust out the side. 'Take them off if you like,' he says. 'They make a noticeable difference to the power. But you'll be noisy enough to upset people on the other side of the valley.' I leave them on.

I rumble out to open moors, strapped into the short-backed bucket seat and terrified of meeting a slow-reacting tractor coming down the valley. In fact the 911 is amazingly friendly at low speeds. The flywheel is lightened, so it zings with revs when you blip it and, while it needs a little bit of coaxing to get it away from a standing start, the clutch is benign once on the move. And the steering, frighteningly wayward at first as it follows every knobble in the tarmac, has a wonderfully light and unburdened feel at low speeds.

But the RSR's true character isn't to be found sputtering through little villages or gurgling with traffic. When we reach the top of Blakely Ridge I meet a high, open strip of tarmac that weaves its way over the brown and yellow moor to the distant horizon. And here the RSR makes me laugh out loud with incredulity. Floor it in third gear, and from 3000rpm it'll begin to pull, maybe with the staccato miss as the cams fight the mechanical fuel injection, but it'll haul forward with conviction. At first it sounds like churning gravel but then the noise revolves, resonates, blooms inside the metal cockpit, until suddenly it trombones a deep, bassy note right through the car and the pit of my stomach, rising still into a hard-edged growl that from 6000rpm becomes a

Porsche 911 2.8 RSR

Engine Air-cooled horizontally opposed six cylinder, 2806cc, mechanical fuel injection **Power and Torque** 300bhp @ 8000rpm; 217lb ft @ 6300rpm **Transmission** Five speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Brakes** Ventilated discs **Suspension** Front: wishbone, strut, torsion bar, anti-roll bar Rear: Semi-trailing arm, torsion bar, telescopic damper **Weight** 2046lb (930kg) **Performance** Never tested (RS top speed 149mph, 0-60mph 5.8sec) **Cost new** £5825 for an RS 25,000DM for Conversion M491 **Values now** £760,000-£800,000

tremulous, shrieking metallic yowl. From 6000rpm, the acceleration sharpens and the noise gets so loud and intrusive that you'd have to shout at the top of your voice to talk to a passenger. Reach 7500rpm, grab the next gear and floor it again, and ratios, revs and throttle openings will meet again in blissful union, and that engine behind blares out, right on cam, climbing back up through the deep warbling to packed rpm and peak power. There is a profound rightness about this noise, the muscularity of the power. The RSR is fast, but it's the noise, not the acceleration, that gets etched on the brain.

The RSR's power is much easier to access than the handling. Not that the RSR feels wayward - in fact it feels entirely planted. That suspension is rigid, and there's never a moment when I stop adjusting the steering wheel. But it's full of feel; and once I start entering corners faster, it firms up to the point of making my arms ache. A real man's car, this. And I feel like a boy in its company.

The brakes are the same - at first they feel wooden, but then you realise that they were designed to stop a 917 Lang Heck from 250mph and treat my light tread with disdain. Pedro Rodriguez knew how to use these brakes. I don't, but by the end of the day I've gained enough confidence to mash my foot into them knowing that the harder I press, the more they bite.

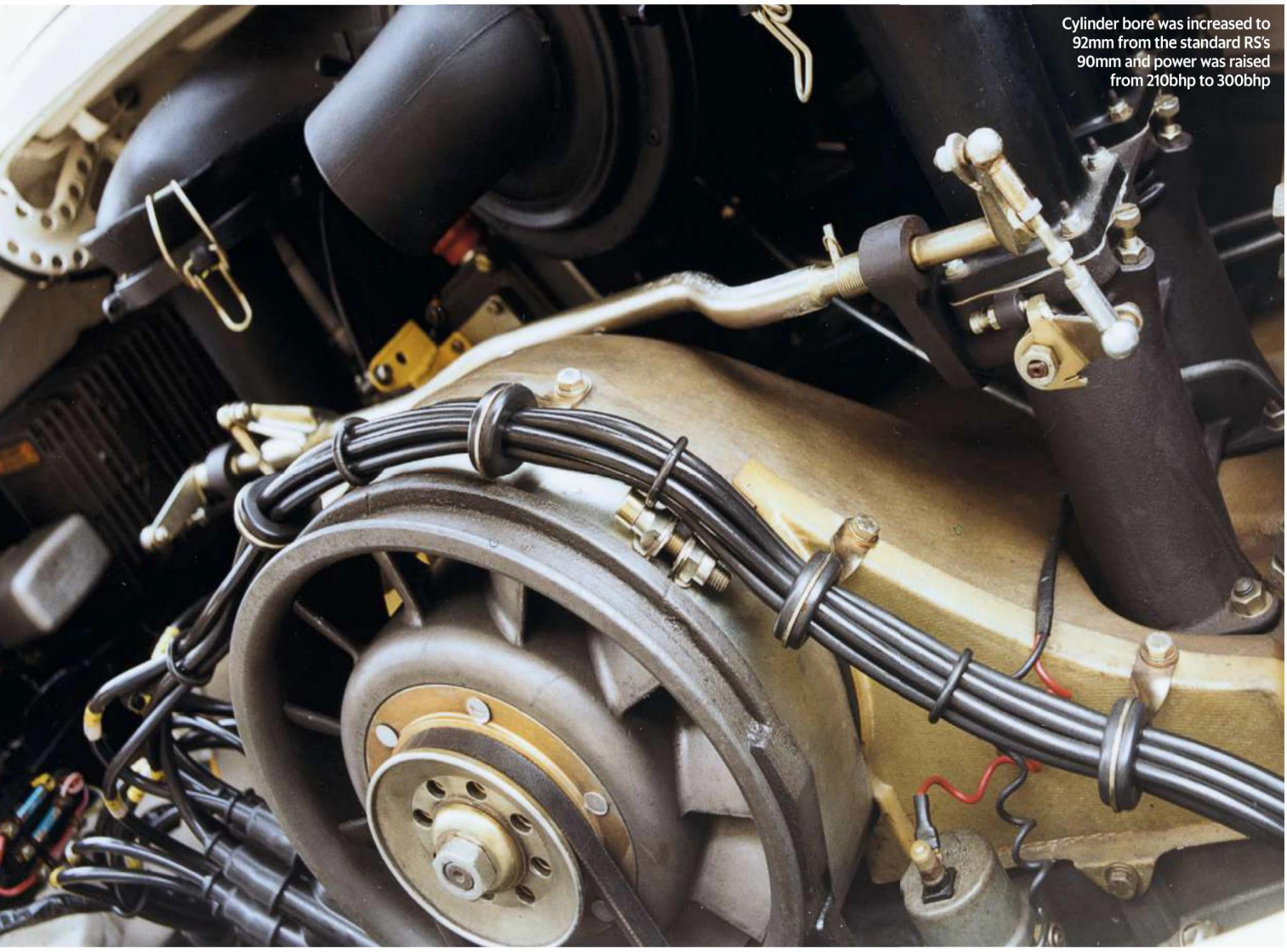
All in all, the RSR is incredibly physical to drive, but it isn't a naturally fast car - it requires commitment. You have to *make* it fast, eke out the speed. When you do, it carries itself easily through the twists and curves of this moorland scenery, effortlessly proving its track-car ability to crush a stretch of road with its bare hands. Forget early 911 horror stories about the pendulum effect - at real-world road speeds this car feels more mid-engined than rear, totally tuned and sorted by people who really knew what they were doing. That the 2.8 RSR won so many races shows that the speed is there, built in from the ground up. That it remains just out of reach for mere pretenders like me just adds to the appeal.

'The brakes feel wooden at first – then you realise that they were designed to stop a 917 from 250mph'

For 1974 Norbert Singer cleverly interpreted the racing rules to develop a 3.0-litre RS for Group 3 GT racing, a full production class, yet only 106 were built. It boasted a further bored-out engine, bigger arches and a bigger rear wing. These later racers left behind the 2.7 RS's purity, the subtlety of Butzi Porsche's shape. The 2.8 RSR brings racing car functionalism to a road car context. All but impossible to own, all but impossible to drive, it nevertheless still seems to belong in the real world, like you might see one tomorrow, overtaking you, exhausts blaring, on a B-road near to you.

And in the meantime, I'll just listen to my tape, thank you very much, and remind myself just how close to the Targa Florio I got.

Thanks to: *Lord Mexborough, Stuart Gosney*



Cylinder bore was increased to 92mm from the standard RS's 90mm and power was raised from 210bhp to 300bhp

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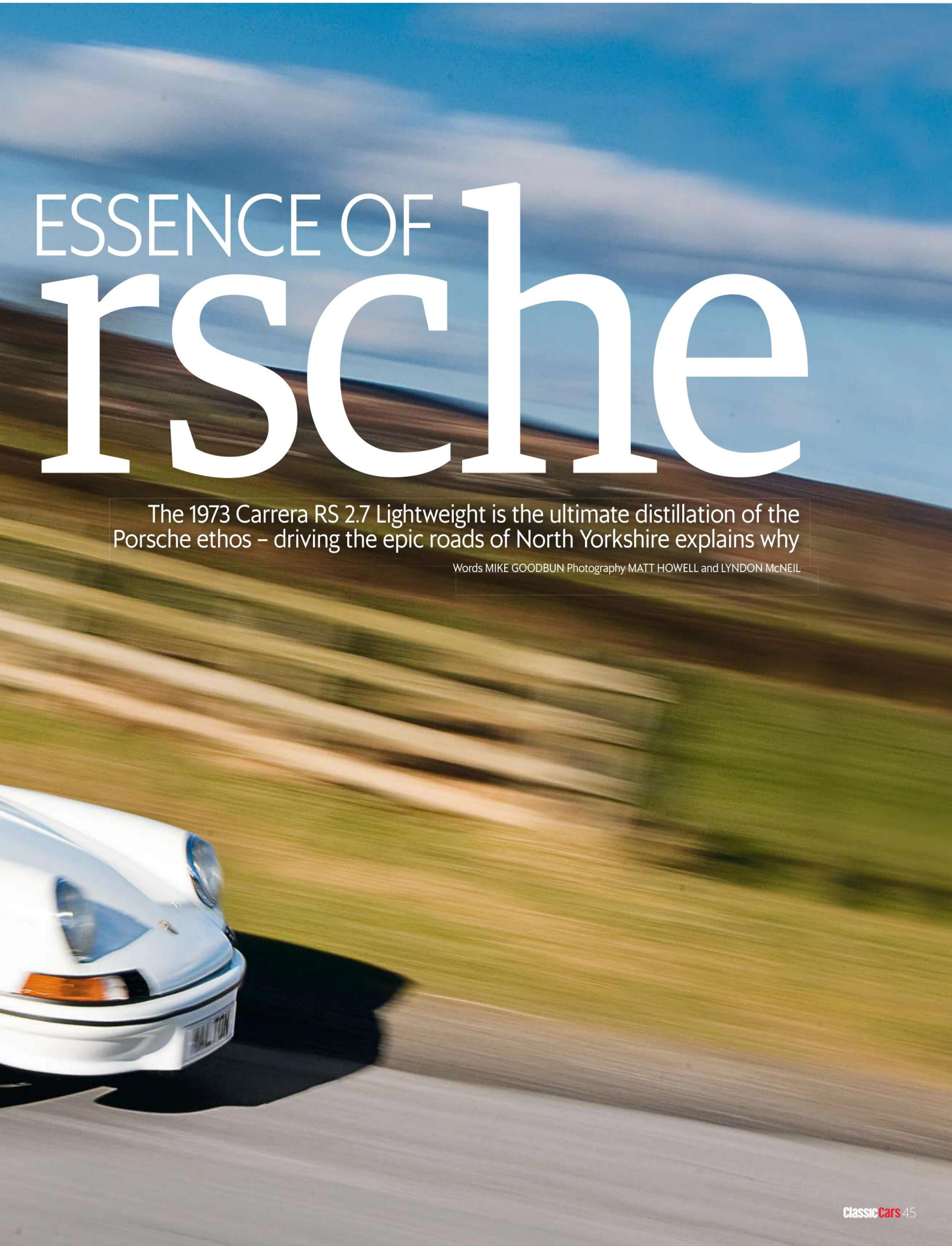
The 1973 Carrera RS 2.7 Lightweight is the ultimate distillation of the Porsche ethos – driving the epic roads of North Yorkshire explains why

Words MIKE GOODBUN Photography MATT HOWELL and LYNDON McNEIL



You could have an RS 2.7 without the Carrera graphics and matching colour on the Fuchs wheels – but why would anyone *want* to?

DAMN SPEED LIMITS – Dalby Forest Drive bobs and weaves more than Amir Khan, evoking a mini-Nürburgring, but the Forestry Commission's 30mph diktat is stifling our lightweight. The Carrera RS 2.7 can cope with slow - its fuel-injected air-cooled flat-six is tractable at any rpm - but both car and road beg to meet at higher velocity. This is torture.

You'll know the pine trees of Dalby in North Yorkshire from the days of the RAC Rally, back when the event wasn't confined to Wales and when Lombard did the sponsoring, Propaganda's *Duel* provided the theme tune and Tony Mason risked muddying his bobble hat for an hour of prime-time BBC TV. This 911's rallying days are now over, and you're more likely to find Status Quo rockin' all over the riggs and dales, but for today it's the Porsche making the loudest decibels.

My obedient nine-mile drive from Thornton-le-Dale to Bickley is composed entirely of second-gear crescendos. The sound is unmistakable - a deep bass-driven yowl overlapped with fast-paced tapping and the rush of accelerated air. The faster the 'six spins, the more turbine-like it sounds. And in this lightweight Sport version you get the full un-muffled experience.

Most Carrera RS buyers ordered theirs in Touring trim, with thick sound-deadening carpet, rear seats, even an electric sunroof, but the Sport has none of those. The carpet is thin felt overlaid with rubber mats, the glass is thinner too, and you hear every granule of grit flicking into the arches or tinkling along the floorpan.

The minimal trim doesn't stop there. There's no radio. One sun visor. No armrests. A blank circle of plastic sits in place of a clock. To open the door, tug on a thin length of leather; to close it, pull on a simple plastic handle - from a Fiat 500. The low-back Recaro bucket seats I'm sitting on are thinly padded lightweight items too. And we haven't touched on the rest of the car yet.

The sole purpose of the RS (RennSport, aka Motor Sport) was to homologate the 911 for competition, predominantly its Group 4 Ferrari Daytona-baiting 2.8 RSR offspring. Reducing weight to make the most of the big-bore 2.7 motor's extra grunt was high on Porsche's agenda. That's why the bonnet, roof and (flared) wings are formed from thinner gauge steel, the signature RS duck-tail engine cover is glassfibre and Sport models have one-piece glassfibre bumpers. Other than that it's just a regular Seventies 911.

So why is it worth between £650,000 and £800,000 today, when a standard Seventies 911 will set you back just £60,000 or £70,000? Its suitability for the increasing number of historic racing and rallying events means top values have spiralled from around £50,000 eight years ago. It's as in demand now as it was when new - Porsche built three times as many of them as planned between 1972 and 1973 and it seems that we still can't get enough of them, that's why.

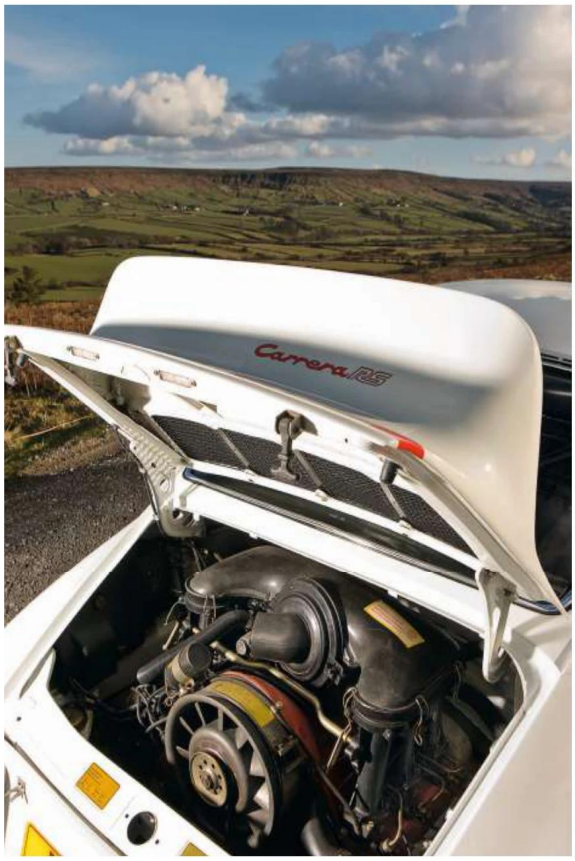
Does it justify the hype? I'm flitting up and down through flowing esses and tight hairpins, low sunlight glinting through the trees, following a valley floor carved in the Ice Age. Even at these lowly speeds you can tell that the RS is gifted.

Bar the occasional speed bump, the narrow tarmac drive is perfectly surfaced, yet the thin leather-wrapped steering wheel, a regular four-spoke 911 item, bucks and writhes constantly in my fingers, communicating every nuance. I feed it gently, there's no need to grip tightly, and let the car's natural straight-tracking attitude do most of the work. Pick up any book on Seventies racing 911s and you'll see images of Nick Faure campaigning this car (registered RGO 2L) for British Porsche concessionaire AFN, the inside

'With a limited-slip-diff-induced scrabble, the RS launches into action'

'The pedal you need to know best is the brake – to keep your licence. And to avoid sheep'

Spartan interior with no radio or clock and just one sun visor keeps weight down



front wheel dangling in mid-air in every cornering shot. Not lifting off the accelerator and letting go of the steering wheel was his technique for recovering a tail slide, and 16 victories in one season says that he knew what he was doing. You soon realise that trust is a two-way flow here.

Spinning round to sample the drive in reverse, making hill climbs of the hairpins, I can't resist a few bursts of full throttle. The wail reverberates across the valley, the tail squats and 911 and I surge towards the next crest. It's just a taster, a teaser, but we're heading for the less restrictive North York Moors and I know that this is going to get a lot more exciting.

From Scarborough and Whitby on the north-east coast, to its Thirsk and Middlesbrough borders inland, the North York Moors has a rightful claim to being England's greatest driving landscape. As I leave the A-road bypasses behind and climb through the twee tourist trap of Hutton-le-Hole, I emerge on to heather-covered Blakey Ridge, the highest point on the moors.

The view is epic. Worth-parking-up-for epic. On my left, a patchwork of fields and hamlets dropping down to the River Dove and Farndale. On my right, Rosedale – home of the steepest drivable road in Britain, the 1:3 gradient Chimney Bank – and the North Riding Forest. Together with the biggest sky imaginable, it makes the bright white 911 appear positively tiny.

Stepping back, I appreciate how perfect this car looks. It doesn't have a bad angle. The flared wheelarches counter the effete, droopy, rear quarters of lesser 911s, the ducktail spoiler and boxy front air dam reduce lift and balance the proportions too, and the red Carrera graphics with matching Fuchs wheels slim the body, tying the whole car together. The stripes were optional, but for me they're absolutely essential.

Straight ahead lies a ribbon of undulating tarmac, ten miles of uninterrupted fast, open bends unencumbered by vision-obscuring hedgerows. Back in the driving seat, sitting low and upright with my feet offset to the left, it's seatbelts on, ignition on. The red handbrake warning light – it's about the only thing in here that isn't black – blinks and buzzes. Let the fuel pump's fluttering slow, then start it up. The air-cooled flat-six's characteristic clatter settles into a buzzy idle.

A quick glance in the door mirror, which matches the diameter and clarity of the 8000rpm tacho dead ahead, and all's clear. Go! With a limited-slip diff-induced scrabble, the RS launches into action. From 2000rpm to beyond 6000rpm there's phenomenal, seamless urge. Sure, 210bhp and 188lb ft of torque doesn't sound like much today - implausible given the thrust in my back - but the RS Sport weighs less than a tonne - nearly 500kg less than a new 991 911 GT3.

With every rpm the cooling fan's whirr turns increasingly shrill and the gear cogs sing harder, the music quelled only briefly for a change to a higher ratio. It's a slightly ponderous shift, precise and locking into each slot with conviction, but it won't be hurried and feels like moving the lever through chewy toffee. No car is perfect.

As I pound the abrasive moorland road, darting from apex to apex, the benefits of

1973 Porsche 911 Carrera RS 2.7 Sport

Engine 2687cc, horizontally opposed six-cylinder, air-cooled, ohc per bank, Bosch K-Jetronic mechanical fuel injection **Power and torque** 210bhp @ 6300rpm; 188lb ft at 5100rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear **Suspension** Front: independent, struts, lower wishbones, torsion bars, anti-roll bar. Rear: independent, semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Steering** Rack-and-pinion **Weight** 975kg (2149lb) **Performance** Top speed:150mph; 0-60mph: 5.5sec **Fuel consumption** 15-25mpg **Cost new** £6255 **Values now** £500k-£700k

lightening this Porsche show in every attribute. The ride may be firm, I feel the same lumps through my seat as I've sensed through the steering, but it's certainly not harsh and the Bilstein dampers control body movements impeccably. Whether in compression or rebound, the RS maintains a rock-solid attitude at all times, all four tyres working together to give me the confidence to push harder

At 60mph there's rarely any need to brake for corners. Turn in and the steering weights up as the tyres grip, but lightens as soon as I aim for the next bend. Carry too much speed and I can feel the nose pushing wide, but in moderately fast (and dry) road driving I never feel the back stepping out. Having the engine weight over the 7in-wide rear wheels is working for me, not against me.

The pedal the driver really needs to know best is the brake – not because it's flawed but to keep your licence. And to avoid sheep. Signs at the side of the road tell a grisly tale of how many have been killed - 126 so far this year. Number 127 would not look good on the nose of the RS, so I'm on the alert over every blind crest. The non-servo brakes are communicative, with firm bite and always delivering my tiniest changes in modulation. I'm pleased to report that no sheep were harmed during the making of this feature.

Criss-crossing the moor, seeking out challenges for the RS, I find nothing that it can't handle. It's such an easy car to drive fast. Stir through the gearbox, tickle the 7300rpm red line and it'll set anyone's synapses into rapid-fire mode; but even at five-tenths, without changing out of fifth, flattening the floor-hinged accelerator sees me surging effortlessly past slower traffic in the blink of an indicator. After a day of intense concentration it's me that needs a rest, not the car.

At Crathorne, just off the western fringe of the moor, is the Crathorne Hall Hotel, an Edwardian country house and ideal halt for the night. The guest book reads like a *Who's Who* of British politics - Lord Crathorne was Winston Churchill's agriculture minister - but it's the heroes here we care about. World War Two flying ace Douglas Bader and double F1 World Champion Graham Hill, who 'dropped in with Prince Charles' in 1974. Bill Oddie's been here too.

While the 911 ticks and cools, I swap the aroma of hot oil for prosciutto-wrapped monkfish, a slow-cooked blade of beef and a glass of Chilean Palena merlot and eulogise about the RS to anyone who'll listen. It's infectious, and I know I'm making a fuss, but the car warrants it.

The following morning, while I'm people-watching over breakfast, the RS also proves that it's an exception to a 911 rule I'd previously thought unbreakable. Despite drawing near-constant attention from hotel guests, they're all curious admirers, not the jealousy-ridden detractors you too often find confronting a Porsche badge.

It's a view reinforced on the run back to Malton to return the car to its keeper. I have no trouble joining traffic, no one tries to race me, there is not one mouthed expletive or explicit hand gesture. Unbelievable. The RS 2.7 truly is a 911 like no other.

TOP 911 CARRERA RS 2.7 BUYING TIPS

- Check it's genuine. Chassis numbers span 911 360 0001 to 911 360 1590, but run any potential purchase past club registrars and classic 911 specialists before you part with any money.
- Engine numbers never corresponded identically to chassis numbers, so be even more vigilant when establishing whether the original unit is still in place.
- A total of 1580 was built (including ten prototypes) in four variants: 17 of the original RS H (Homologation); 200 stripped-out lightweight Sports (M471); 1308 of the more luxurious (and 115kg heavier) Touring (M472); plus 55 RSR 2.8 race cars (M491).
- Exact specifications varied throughout the Carrera RS's eight months of production, and from April 1973 standard weight steel panels were more often fitted.
- Despite its value, an RS is no more expensive to restore or run than any other contemporary 911 road car.

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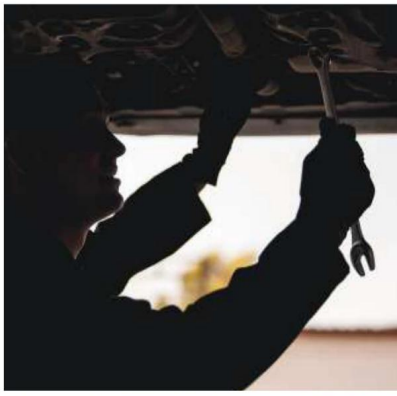

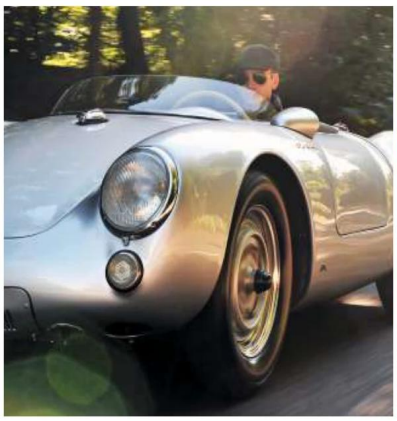

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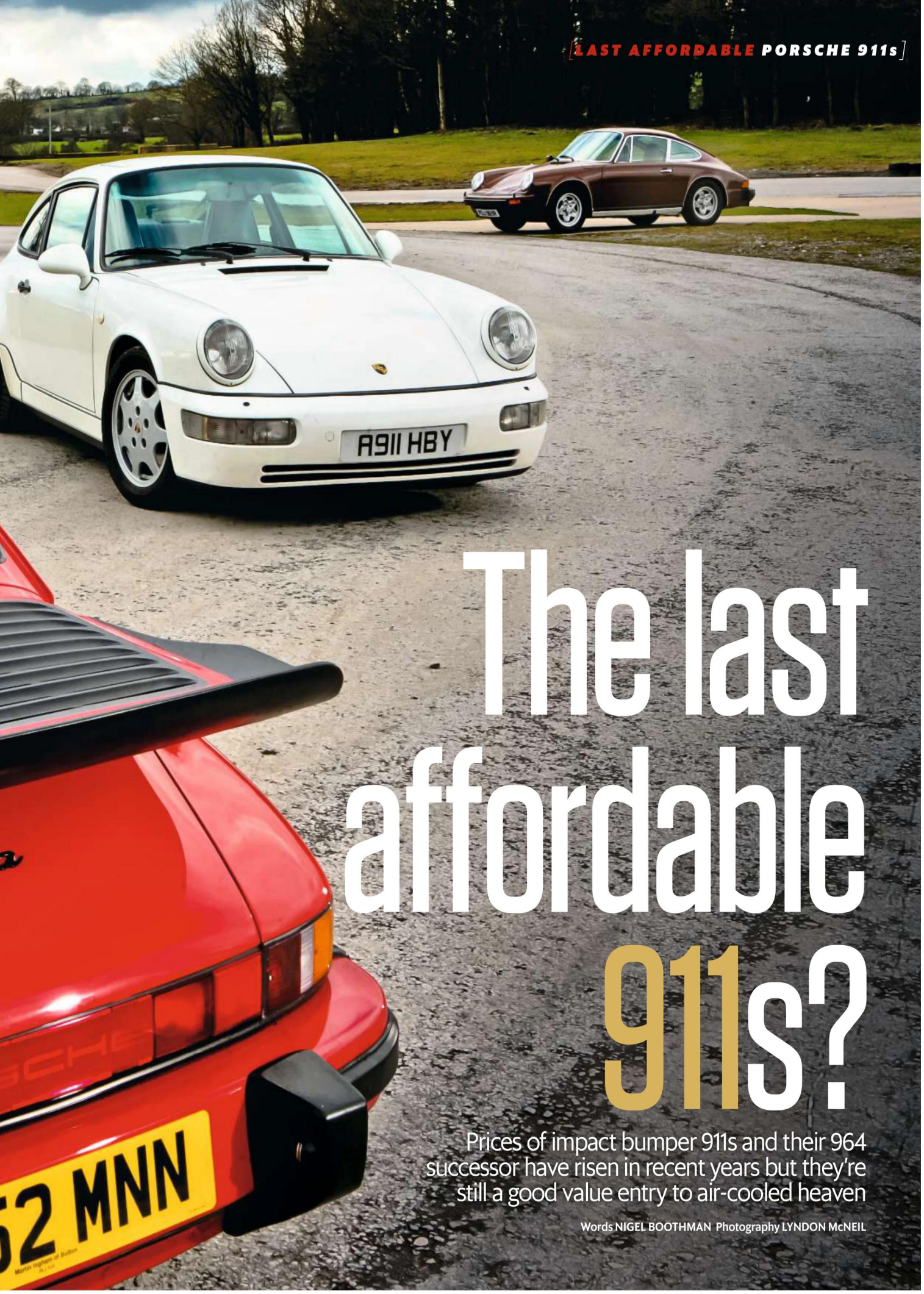


The last affordable 911s?

Prices of impact bumper 911s and their 964 successor have risen in recent years but they're still a good value entry to air-cooled heaven

Words NIGEL BOOTHMAN Photography LYNDON McNEIL

Porsche 911 2.7

Engine 2687cc, horizontally-opposed six-cylinders, ohc per bank, Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection **Power and torque** 150/165bhp @ 5700rpm; 175lb ft @ 3800rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Suspension** Front: independent, lower wishbones, torsion bars, MacPherson struts, anti-roll bar. Rear: independent, trailing arms, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear, servo-assisted **Weight** 1120kg (2469lb) **Performance** Top speed: 131/138mph; 0-60mph: 8.2/7.3sec **Fuel consumption** 23mpg

2.7 interior gently evolved from the Sixties

(right) SC from 1978 started with a 180bhp 3-litre flat-six

THE MAN WHO SAVED THE 911

PETER W SCHUTZ might not be a household name, but without him, the Porsche 911 would probably have vanished into history around the same time as the Morris Ital. Schutz, a German-born American, was recruited to Porsche after Professor Ernst Fuhrmann fell out of favour with the Porsche family.

He is best known for an episode that's supposed to have occurred shortly after his arrival in 1980, in the office of Porsche's Chief Engineer, Helmuth Bott. Schutz saw a graph for the evolution of various Porsche models and the line for the 911 stopped at 1981. When he asked why, he was told the model was being discontinued. In response, he picked up a pen and extended the line off the end of the chart and onto the wall.

Schutz encouraged the 911's engineering development as well broadening the range – the cabrio was brought to reality under his tenure. He built the business in America but eventually carried the can after Porsche's US sales collapsed following the economic downturn in '87, although, by this time, the 964 was almost ready and the 911's future was assured.

All 911s used the 2.7 engine from 1973

An early Porsche 911 is a wonderful thing. You can get poetic about the purity of its lines, the howl and clatter of the flat-six, the triumph of engineering over logic. Their looks, practicality and a fabulous driving experience has ensured that pre-'74 models are now regarded as all-time classics - with prices to match.

A good 2.4-litre 911S is now a £120,000 car; approximately four time what might have been asked six years ago. The Carrera RS has disappeared into fractions of a million, while even the humble, de-tuned T models can demand £55,000 or more.

Now for the good news. You can still buy into the genuine air-cooled 911 experience for less than £30,000, with the expectation of owning a nice car. Less, depending on how brave you feel. What's more, the models from which you can choose offer more power, more grip and more capability to fulfil the 911's intended role of being thrilling and useable in equal measure.

And they really are thrilling to drive. Light and communicative steering is teamed with an addictive combination of noise and thrust when you explore the far end of the rev counter. But with our selection, you won't be burying the throttle just to keep up with a kid in a hot hatch, because these are much faster cars than the early models. While they remain affordable now, there's an imminent danger of them being swept up in the next wave of 911 nostalgia. It's time to act.

On paper, the 2.7-litre 911 made from 1974-77 is the obvious choice for anyone wishing to hop onto the coat-tails of the 911's price boom. After all, the body is outwardly very similar to the much-vaunted 2.4-litre cars apart from the modifications needed to fit those shock-resistant bumpers, while the engine in this '77 car is a 165bhp version of the 2687cc flat-six that debuted in the most valued roadgoing 911 of all, the 2.7 Carrera RS. Yes, you get a slightly less funky steering wheel and seats with built-in headrests, but surely they're not deal breakers?

Perhaps not, but something else might be. When it's parked next to the SC and the 3.2 Carrera it's tempting to see the 2.7 not as a muscular version of the classic 911, but rather as an underpowered predecessor to these younger cars. You could get round this by tracking down a 911S or either a 2.7 or 3.0-litre Carrera, all of which are rather more valuable (£35,000 or more for one you'd want), and properly quick thanks to 200bhp. But wouldn't it be better to buy a younger successor?

The 911 SC arrived in the showrooms in 1978 clothed in the previous Carrera's wide rear arches, so the old slender 911 outline was gone forever. It used a three-litre engine sparked by breakerless electronic ignition but sticking with the K-Jetronic fuelling that had proven dependable in the 2.7. While it had much in common with the three-litre Carrera engine, it was initially detuned to 180bhp to stop it embarrassing the much more expensive 928. Nonetheless, the SC had plenty of torque and accelerated quicker than the 2.7 and the first 928, making it a general-purpose replacement for the 911, 911S and Carrera.

'You can still buy into the genuine air-cooled 911 experience for £30,000, with the expectation of owning a nice car'

The Sport option (whale tail, front air-dam, Fuchs wheels, lower and stiffer suspension) became crucial in altering the 911's outline from looking as if it were born in the Sixties to something very much on-message for the Eighties. It wasn't just a styling tactic - the spoilers killed 160kg of lift at top speed and reduced drag, too.

Porsche had long had a rule that no increase in engine size was permitted for the 911 unless an increase in efficiency could come along with it. Computer-controlled Bosch LE-Jetronic fuel injection made this possible for the 3.2 Carrera of 1984, when peak power leapt from 204bhp to 231bhp, acceleration improved and the top speed of the non-turbo 911 cracked 150mph for the first time.

It could have been better still if Porsche had kept the weight down to the 1160kg of the SC. As it was, the 3.2 added 120kg. Once again, there would have been the problem of embarrassing a more expensive model - the hefty and luxuriously-equipped Turbo was only 0.3 of a second quicker to 60mph. One significant step that the 3.2 could claim was a new G50 gearbox, but that didn't arrive until 1987.

But the big change came in 1989. The 964 used a 3.6-litre engine with ceramic inserts in the exhaust ports to keep cylinder head temperatures down, twin-spark ignition and an intake system that exploited pressure waves to ensure the optimum filling of each cylinder. This was combined with Bosch Motronic injection and resulted in 250bhp and 228lb ft of torque, pushing its maximum speed well beyond 160mph.

Changes elsewhere were also profound, with torsion bars disappearing in favour of conventional coil springs and dampers, while the new shape was engineered to stop aerodynamic lift without a whale tail and obvious air dam. Still, a small spoiler raised automatically at 50mph to perfect the balance. The first 964 that went on sale was the Carrera 4, with all-wheel drive.

The 964 was so heavily revised from the 3.2 Carrera and all previous 911 models that it's extraordinary how similar it appears. Starting with a clean slate, the 964's designers made a fast, capable, sports/GT with all the mod-cons you might expect in the Nineties - airbags, anti-lock brakes, climate control - only they did so in a car that looked, felt and drove almost exactly like an old 911. It's as if Porsche had done a cover version of its own greatest hit, improving the wonderful vocals and the soaring guitar solo, but including the fluffed chord changes.

'All these cars have an abundance of grip, taut brakes, light and accurate steering with only mild understeer'

As the 964 is such a faithful copy it allows us to look at all four as variations on one theme. It's apparent from the olfactory input alone that the 2.7 is the oldest. Inside, there's an evocative combination of oil fumes and Seventies waxy-smelling cloth upholstery. Open your eyes and you'll see the colours and details are all very period, right down to the Blaupunkt radio-cassette.

The SC also has distinctive seat fabric - not Stuttgart tartan this time but Pascha, a queasy chessboard pattern that would give Bridget Riley a headache. It might be an acquired taste, but there's no doubt it adds character. The coloured plastic controls and three-spoked wheel give a more modern vibe than the 2.7, even if the difference is only skin deep.

The 3.2 Carrera is a step forward to a chunkier feel, despite a wheel that seems to recall the 2.7's classic shape. The 964 is different again, but apart from some figure-hugging seats, not nearly as different as you'd expect. What goes for the first three is also true for the 964, especially as concerns the interior layout.

The pedals on all the cars are offset towards the centreline and floor hinged, so you push them forwards, not down into the floor. They also share an unusually long travel. Then there's the handsome and symmetrical dash, essentially unchanged since the Sixties. The problem is that it seems to have been created without the planned inclusion of a steering wheel, so you're constantly moving your head to gather the information you need.

One final quirk is that despite the generous interior space, those occupying the seat in the back will find their heads touching the roof. The roofline dips so early towards that tapered rear that the full extent of the headroom is only available to those who need it least. Ironically this is most pronounced in the 964, which has the least excuse for replicating the issue.

All the cars here are fuel injected, so all of them fire up as obediently as any modern hatchback. Admittedly, the 2.7-litre and SC are both in excellent nick, but there's no obstruction from the supposedly awkward 915 transmission. Yes, it needs a slower and more deliberate approach than the G50, but maybe the unflattering reputation of the older gearbox isn't entirely deserved.

The G50 gearbox in the Carrera is indeed quicker - you don't need to think about it at all, but the lever is just as long and it feels only a

Right: 3.2 Carrera's optional whale tail and front air-dam eliminated up to 160kg of lift. Far right, austere SC cabin with later three-spoke wheel

993 AND 996 – THE NEXT IN LINE

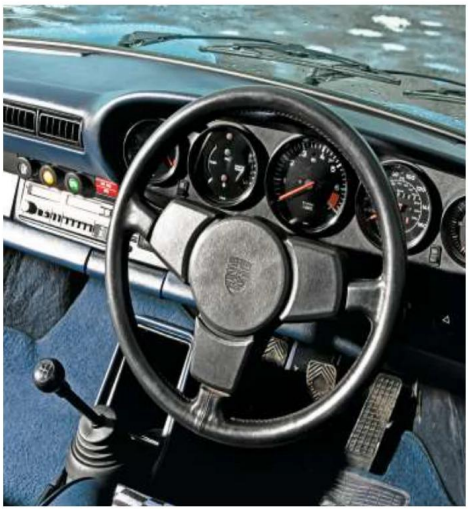
COULD the 993 and 996 be shrewd buys? Between late 1993 and '98 Porsche sold the last of its air-cooled 911s and once it became clear that the 993 would be air-cooled its status as an instant classic was more or less assured.

It used an all-new multilink rear suspension along with the coil-sprung front struts first seen in the 964. The sound and feel of the 993 retained a kinship to the 964, so it's no surprise that it never dropped to bargain basement money.

Its successor has done so, though. You can buy an MoT'd 996 for £11,000, but the only 993s you see under £30,000 are high milers, cabriolets or Tiptronics. Good manual cars can command £26,000 upwards, depending on model. The 996 had traditionalists weeping into their steins when it was announced, as the heresy of water-cooling arrived to conquer increasingly tough noise regulations and emissions standards. All that would have been forgiven if it weren't for the engine trouble. Porsche's new water-cooled flat-six used an intermediate shaft to drive its four overhead camshafts, and the failure of the bearing on which the drive sprocket sits means the cam chain can come off, causing valves and pistons to meet. Also, lack of block stiffness means cylinder liners can crack, leading to a hydraulic lock. The usual solution in both cases is a new engine, either off the shelf from Porsche for about £16,000 or rebuilt by a specialist for £10,000.

Early (1998-2000) ones are most susceptible but, that said, major engine failures are still a minority. The 996 is a very nice, modern-feeling, quiet and quick car, so if you can find one with a recent engine and a low price, or if you just feel lucky, there are bargains to be had.

993 (top), last of the air-cooled 911s. Water-cooled 996 (bottom) is cheaper but has engine problems



Porsche 911 SC

Engine 2994cc, horizontally-opposed six-cylinder, sohc per bank, K-Jetronic fuel injection **Power and torque** 180/188/204bhp @ 5500rpm; 195lb ft @ 4100rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Suspension** Front: independent, lower wishbones, torsion bars, MacPherson struts, anti-roll bar. Rear: independent, trailing arms, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear, servo-assisted **Weight** 1160kg (2557lb) **Performance** Top speed: 141/142/149mph; 0-60mph: 6.5/6.3/5.9sec **Fuel consumption** 22mpg

Non-Sport SCs do without front and rear spoilers or upgraded suspension

Porsche 911 3.2 Carrera

Engine 3164cc, horizontally-opposed six-cylinder, sohc per bank, LE-Jetronic fuel injection **Power and torque** 231bhp @ 5900rpm; 207lb ft @ 4800rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Suspension** Front: independent, lower wishbones, torsion bars, MacPherson struts, anti-roll bar. Rear: independent, trailing arms, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear, servo-assisted **Weight** 1280kg (2821lb) **Performance** Top speed: 157mph; 0-60mph: 5.8sec **Fuel consumption** 24mpg

little more precise. The 964's change is utterly different - the G50/03 offering a short, stubby lever with such a quick and accurate action that you'd think it was going straight into a gearbox in the transmission tunnel rather than back under the floor - like the Carrera's.

With a bit of open road ahead the shove in the back from the 2.7 comes as a welcome surprise, even if it's not exactly breathtaking. The engine noise you leave behind you is not what you can hear inside the cabin. Outside, these old 911s make a wonderfully familiar thrum and clatter, but inside there's just a well-insulated whoosh which keeps the cars perfectly civilised.

The SC has that happy feeling of a light car with a large engine and it leaps away in any gear with no fuss or fluffing, really building to a charge as you poke that throttle pedal further and further away. The 3.2 Carrera sounds angrier from outside but more suppressed inside. This one is fresh from a rebuild, so we didn't wind it past 4750rpm but, even so, the urge is apparent, as is its similarity to the smaller units. Of the four, the 964's engine comes closest to upsetting the evolution with a bit of revolution. While the horsepower figures mentioned above don't suggest a vast gap to the 3.2, the throttle response and power delivery tell you that there's a great deal more to come. You could almost call it an everyday supercar.

But could you live with a 911's road manners every day of the week? Of course you could. The tales of uncatchable spins and dubious wet-weather grip apply more to Sixties examples owned by inexperienced drivers. All of these cars have an abundance of grip, taut brakes, light and accurate steering with only mild understeer. Any

Porsche 964 Carrera 2

Engine 3600cc, horizontally-opposed six-cylinder, sohc per bank, Bosch Motronic fuel injection **Power and torque** 250bhp @ 6100rpm; 228lb ft @ 4800rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Suspension** Front: independent, lower wishbones, coil springs, MacPherson struts, anti-roll bar. Rear: independent, semi-trailing arms, coil springs, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear, anti-lock braking system **Weight** 1360kg (2998lb) **Performance** Top speed: 164mph; 0-60mph: 5.5sec **Fuel consumption** 25mpg

964 looked little evolved from predecessor but was 85% new

differences in roadholding among the first three are probably down to a combination of tyre size and weight.

The 2.7 and SC feel more nimble than the 3.2, but the heavier car's sense of security indicates that it would be the choice for trips on the fastest, emptiest A-roads. The 964 may have power steering, but you'd have to go a long way to find a better set-up with more precision. As for the limits of adhesion, the 964's revised chassis ensures these are well beyond anything you'd want to explore on the public highway.

Indeed, just a few minutes in each of these 911s confirms their strongest suit - they trounce the opposition as prospects for serious use. At various times from 1974 to 1994 rivals included the Ferrari 308 GT4, GTB and Mondial, the Maserati Merak and Biturbo family, the Lotus Elite, Eclat, Excel and Esprit, the Lamborghini Urraco and Jalpa, the Alpine GTA and various V8 and V6-engined TVRs. None of these would inspire as much confidence as a well-preserved 911 for year-round use, and only about half of them could be maintained as affordably. A BMW M635CSi or an Audi quattro would beat the 911 for accommodation and practicality while challenging it for performance, but good examples of these are no longer cheap.

Although all four of these Porsches seem eerily similar to drive, the revisions of the 964 mean that you need to apply different criteria when you're buying.

Dominic Delaney of Porsche specialist SVP offers this pertinent advice, 'For the pre-964 cars, rust usually starts in water traps and seams, and there are now very few which haven't had some bodywork repairs done to them. The major areas of concern are the so-called kidney bowls at the bottom of the B-pillar. Under the car you might only see a bit of bubbling, but that can mean the whole lot, including the inner sill, is rotten inside.'

Try to get evidence that decent repairs have been made here, or have it checked by someone who knows what to look for.

'Front wings corrode where they join the flitch plate, but by the time you see evidence it's often getting serious,' continues Delaney. New panels are often the best solution to the problem, especially if the area around the headlamps is also bubbling.

Crash damage is the other main worry for 911s. This can be difficult to spot, but look for inconsistent panel gaps, creases in chassis rails and ugly welds where the rear quarter joins the engine bay area. Check for panel ripples or signs of re-applied seam sealer inside the front luggage compartment, too.

'The bottom end of all these engines is very strong,' says Delaney, 'but top-end rebuilds are quite common thanks to broken 'head studs. You won't notice if just one has gone, but more than that can cause a noise like a blowing exhaust. By the time you've done valve guides and piston rings as well, it'll be around £4500 for all four of these models. Avoid sizeable oil leaks and cars that have been left standing for a long time - if you can't get written evidence of a top-end overhaul, then ask for the cam shaft covers to be removed and then try each of the 24 'head studs with a socket.'

Both the G50 and 915 gearboxes can take a while to warm through. If second gear crunches when still cold you'll eventually need a rebuild at a potential cost north of £2500, although thick oil such as Swepco can help to disguise this. Avoid quickshift kits as they'll hasten synchromesh failure.

Clockwise from above: affordable 911s include 2.7, Carrera 2, SC and Carrera 3.2

The 964 shares the earlier cars' engine worries, but with an extra row of spark plugs that are difficult to reach and as such are often overlooked during non-specialist servicing when they should be changed. There is also a dual-mass flywheel that can fail, producing a clonk from a standing start when on the way out. But it's more rust-resistant than previous 911s and you shouldn't be scared by the relative complexity - warning lights tell you of anti-lock braking faults or other potentially expensive issues.

The four-wheel drive versions have more to go wrong and offer a different driving experience, while almost all 964s have been lowered to overcome the stilt-like standard stance. Just make sure the spring rates haven't been altered as well. 'It's possible to ruin the ride quality,' says Delaney, 'and all 911s are incredibly sensitive to adjustment of ride height, camber and toe, both front and rear.' If the car doesn't drive as you hoped it would, it might just need a geometry check.

Remember that the 911 range has another important string to its bow - fresh-air motoring. The cabriolet (which was introduced in 1982) is well made - the roof design is good and it's long-lasting. Electric operation became an option on the 3.2 Carrera before becoming standard on the 964 cabrio. Despite good handling from high torsional rigidity, they don't appeal to purists and are worth less than coupés. Targas (around since 1966) are even better value if you can look beyond the less eye-pleasing side profile. Neither the Cabriolet nor the Targa will be entirely free of wind noise or leaks, but as long as the electric roof works well or the targa panel is not damaged or missing, there's little else to worry about.

'The 964's extra row of plugs are hard to reach, but it's rather more rust-resistant than previous 911s'

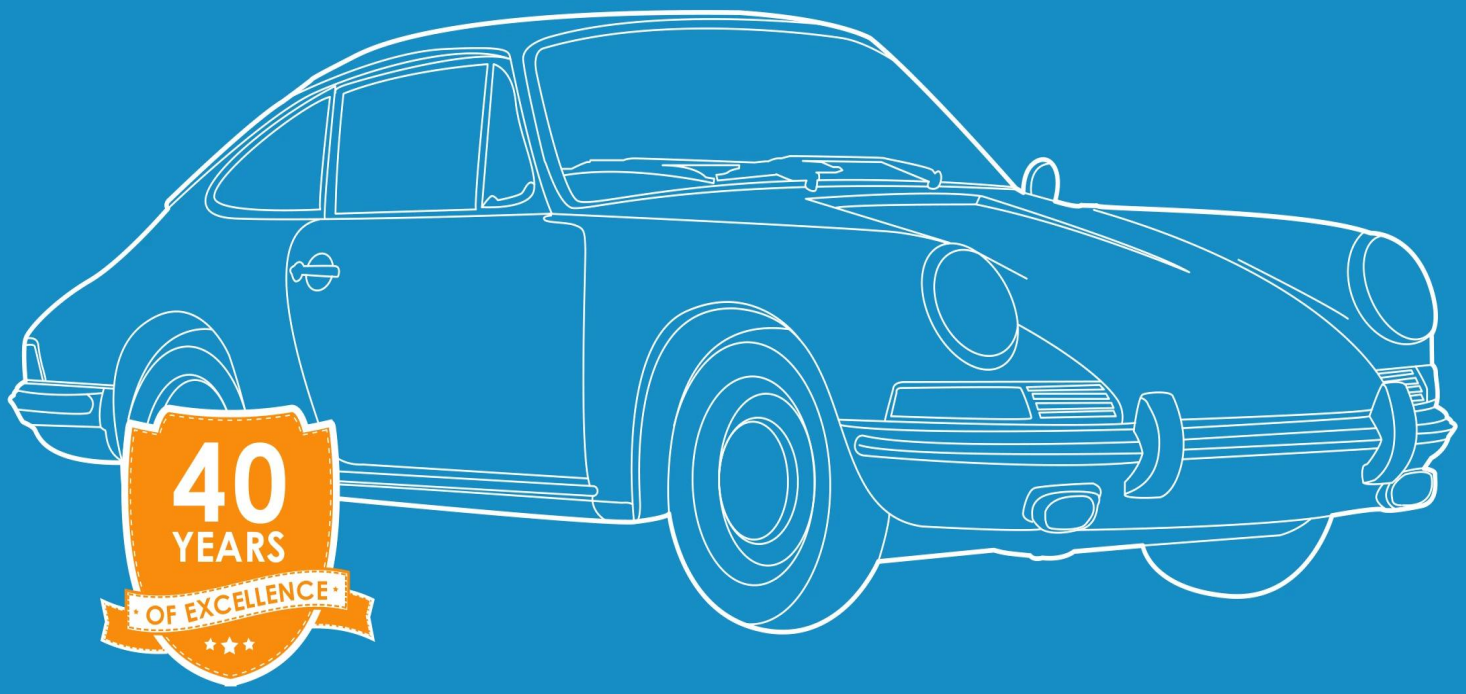
Assuming that you've settled on a body style, which model is it to be? Our sum of £20,000 gives you plenty of choice, but they won't be perfect. Nicely restored 2.7s and SCs and perfectly-preserved 3.2s cost £35,000-40,000 or more. Anything less is a danger zone where body and engine work is usually lurking, but buy well and you could nab a bargain. The 964 Carrera 2 and 4 is now in the same territory, with our £35,000 arguably buying a better car than with the earlier models. A price of £45,000 and above implies an unusually immaculate example.

Should you buy one? Yes, so long as you can find a well-maintained original. Nothing else here can touch the 964 for all-round ability. Well engineered and beautifully built, it's currently occupying an odd niche in which some owners dress them up with larger wheels and body mods to resemble newer 911s, while others embrace standard cars as the classics they're about to become.

Of the accepted classics, the SC is the most appealing drive, thanks to its excellent compromise of power and agility. Otherwise, the advice is unusual. Don't focus on one of the earlier three, instead go and drive examples of all of them and buy the best car you can find for your budget, whether it's a 2.7, an SC or a 3.2 Carrera. The charm of a good air-cooled 911 of any age blows away any minor differences in performance, equipment or image. But whatever you do, do it soon, because the very best examples will be the first to join the classic 911's inexorable upward spiral in values.

Thanks to: *Specialist Vehicle Preparations, Helen Goff, John Glynn, Porsche Club GB (porscheclubgb.com), Steve Brookes, TIPEC (tipec.net), Tim Little, Keith Hazel, Dave Gardner*

Your Pride and Joy



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NEW AGE CLASSIC

PORSCHE 911 SPEEDSTER

Mean looks, bulletproof reliability, a scintillating drive and pure rarity made the Speedster a tantalising prospect back in 1988 – and nothing has changed since. Is it the best way to spend £100,000 on a 911?

Words QUENTIN WILLSON Photography LYNDON McNEIL

Cut-down windscreen and distinctive rear hump show that this is no ordinary 911

Quentin remembers quick deals and big profits on these

I can remember the first time when you couldn't get near a new 911 Speedster for less than a hundred grand. Mind you, I am going back to the insane Eighties, when all new Porkers were selling for premium money and the prestige car market was on its way to the asylum. And with only a handful of right-hand-drive Speedsters ever imported into the UK at one stage they were more desirable than the iconic 911 Turbo. In fact if you'd had the presence of mind (plus the necessary fifty grand) to put an order down for a Speedster in '87, you could pretty much name your price when the thing landed on your driveway a year later. Never did so many make so much cash on so few cars. My dealer friends still chuckle affectionately at the epic profits they used to draw from Speedsters. Punters would sell them their cars for a £10k profit thinking that they'd done a good deal. The trade would then advertise that Speedster in the *Sunday Times* for £80k and the telephone would promptly start to smoke. But, opportunistic as ever, the London boys would play a little scam and tell all the callers that the car was sold, but quite by chance they had an identical one arriving soon but it might cost a little more. A queue of disorderly buyers desperately waving chequebooks would then appear, the price would be battled up (literally) and that same Speedster would sell to the highest bidder for almost double its original new list price. And all that silliness just because of a Turbo body and a pretty barchetta screen.

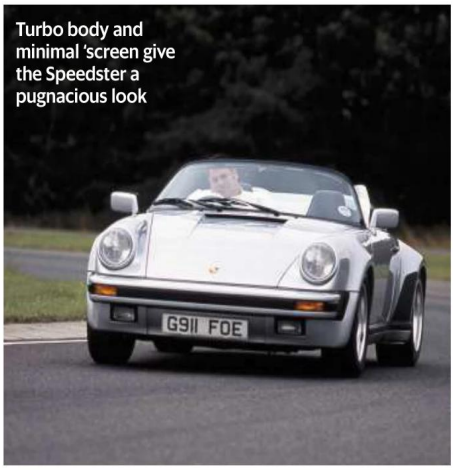
The Speedster was the last rear-wheel-drive model produced on the 911 Carrera platform of the Eighties and debuted at the Frankfurt motor show of 1987 with full production kicking off in 1988. Paying homage to the 540 Speedster of 1954, the new incarnation was surprisingly easy to make using a stock Cabriolet body but with a steeply raked screen and rudimentary unlined hood that lived under a polyurethane bubble-shaped canopy. Weighing in at 70kg less than the Cabriolet - no electric windows and more basic interior fittings - it was only available with the Turbo-look M491 body option. The car was an absolute peach and Zuffenhausen was taken completely by surprise. Originally

'The fact that you can get yourself into enormous trouble is perhaps the Porsche Speedster's greatest appeal. You could destroy a small suburb'

Cut-down 'screen makes it a tad windy in here

only intended for the German market and not slated as a long runner, right-hand-drive versions were quickly assembled, but despite the titanic demand only 2100 cars left the factory. The Speedster's appeal was simple. It was visually different from the 911 (which by then was rather over-exposed) as well as being much rarer, plus that swish screen and twin humps behind driver and passenger made it look a seriously high-tab item. Nobody is terribly sure how many right-hookers made it to the UK but some reckon as few as 65 found grateful owners.

And that piffling production figure is one of the reasons why a good Speedster is now worth snapping up, not forgetting that these days you still need more than £100k to buy a minter. Strictly a two-seater, with that glorious 3.2-litre Carrera lump and its flat-six soundtrack, this 911 is a honey to drive. Raking the screen back an extra five degrees causes a lot more wind buffeting at speed but it's still one the last of the great driving Porkers. Compared to the later Carrera 2s and 4s those late-Eighties 911s feel much more involving and vivid. The fact that you can get yourself into enormous trouble is perhaps their greatest appeal. Get it wrong on a damp corner and lift off when you shouldn't, and you'll destroy a small suburb before you stop



Turbo body and minimal 'screen give the Speedster a pugnacious look

1989 Porsche 911 Speedster

Engine 3164cc, horizontally opposed six-cylinder, ohc per bank, Bosch DME fuel injection, air-cooled **Power and torque** 231bhp @ 5900rpm; 195lb ft @ 4900 rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Steering** Rack and pinion **Suspension** Front: MacPherson struts, lower A-arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar. Rear: semi-trailing arms, transverse torsion bars, telescopic dampers **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear, ABS **Weight** 1202kg (2650lb) **Performance** Top speed: 151mph; 0-60mph: 5.3sec **Cost new** £50,000 **Values now** £90k-110k

Pick of the range

If you think the Speedster is rare, try finding the ClubSport version. It's much more radical, with lowered racing seats, tubular steel rollover bar and a canopy that extended round the whole cockpit like a tonneau cover with a tiny, low plastic windscreen. The CS Speedster was meant to be a weekend racer, but looks a little bonkers. Collectable and very unusual – if you're ever lucky enough to find two, buy them both.

RIVALS

Ferrari 328

The Ferrari goes well, but always feels fragile at the limit and doesn't have anything like the 911's adamantine build quality.

Mercedes-Benz SL300

The Mercedes-Benz SL300 24v of 1990 looks the part, but can't come close to the Porsche for grunt or poise – it's much more of a boulevardier.

TVR Griffith

For a fraction of the Speedster's price, you could have a TVR Griffith, which makes a lovely noise from its V8, but regularly overheats. Bits fall off and it feels much more kit car than a quality hard charger.

spinning. The vagaries of older 911 handling are the stuff of legend and many owners with more enthusiasm than expertise have come disastrously unstuck. As long as you get your head round the fact that there's a large chunk of weight behind you poised to swing out suddenly, you should be fine. But the compensation for such a twitchy rear end is huge. Wonderfully chatty steering, mighty yet progressive brakes, rifle-bolt gearchange and the spine-tingling metallic drum roll as you accelerate hard are just a few of the tremendous tactile bounties you get from those 1984-89 3.2 Carreras. As far as I'm concerned they're still the best driving Porsches of the lot, bar none.

However, finding a Speedster will be your only barrier to ownership. With so few on the market, coming across a proper car will take plenty of time. You'd don't want a left-hooker (quite a few German cars have been imported) but you do - *emphatically* do - want a nice one. And when it comes to 911s that means a cloth-of-gold Porsche main dealer history with a reassuring parade of rubber stamps in the service book. Copies of old bills and past MoTs are essential too.

Condition-wise, look for an immaculate unmolested example with maybe just a couple of owners and less than 50,000 racked up. Galvanised bodies mean that rust is less of a problem than accident damage and general neglect. If you're in any doubt at all get it inspected at a Porsche main agent, who'll only charge a few hundred quid for the privilege. They'll be able to access their computer and tell you if your prospective purchase has had any paintwork or major mechanical repairs. Things like heat exchangers, exhausts, timing chains, clutches and brakes can run into thousands so don't take on a tired car hoping to make it good. You'll shell out much more reconditioning a sorry shed than paying that bit extra for a mint and cosseted specimen. The 1989 Speedster in these pictures should be your benchmark. Utterly perfect, it's done less than 30,000 miles, is in best-selling silver with black trim and has never, ever had so much as a drop of paint. But even though it's in near concours nick, today you'd pay less than £100k for what must be one of the finest in the UK. Serious value.

In fact I'd go even further and venture that this cut-down cabriolet really does have enormous investment potential - something you'll very rarely hear me say. Bizarrely undervalued (probably a reaction to all the price premium nonsense of the Eighties) this limited edition 911 still looks separate, distinctive and enormously special. The James Dean stuff gives the Speedster moniker an added halo of glamour and the car really does look as pretty as a blank cheque. Chuck in its unerring reliability, lofty performance and day-to-day usability and you're looking at that rare thing - a card-carrying classic that you don't have to suffer to own.

Hell, if I didn't already have four garages stuffed with pensionable scrap, I'd have a punt at one myself. And that, coming from the meanest motor buyer around, has to be the greatest endorsement of all.

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Porsche 993 Carera 2S 3.6L Coupe 1997, Tiptronic, LHD Silver with Black leather interior.

Porsche 911T 2.2L Coupe 1970, Manual Gearbox, LHD Signal Orange (1414) with Black leather interior.

Porsche 911T 2.0L Coupe 1969, Manual Gearbox, LHD Bahama Yellow (6805) with Black leather interior.

Porsche 911T 2.4L Coupe 1973, Manual gearbox, LHD Silver with Black interior.

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[THE LIST]

'THAT'S ONE OF THE BEST ENGINE NOTES I'VE EVER HEARD'

His List

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Maserati Merak SS
Jensen Healey
Lotus Cortina
Aston Martin V8
Ferrari F355
Jaguar E-type
Dino 246GT
Lotus Esprit
Porsche 911 Turbo

Is the grass always greener? Ferrari 308-owning *Classic Cars* reader Phil Litchfield is about to find out as we hand him the keys to the Prancing Horse's arch-enemy – the Porsche 911 Turbo

Words: SAM DAWSON Photography: CHARLIE MAGEE

Despite pre-match nerves, Ferrari owner Phil finds the 911 Turbo easy to grab by the scruff of the neck

Phil Litchfield

Phil loves Seventies sports cars. When he was younger he rebuilt a Lotus Elan +2 before graduating to a 'fun but troublesome' Lotus Éclat. In search of something 'civilised', a series of Reliant Scimitars followed. On turning 50, Phil fulfilled a promise to himself and got a Ferrari 308 GTB.

Most of your requests to drive cars in The List feature include a Ferrari of some sort, which makes Phil Litchfield unusual - he drives a 308 GTB QV. Given that the car world tends to divide along a Maranello-Stuttgart axis, with the tifosi usually claiming that Porsches are Volkswagens with a charisma bypass, why does a lifelong Ferrari enthusiast want to drive a 930 Turbo?

'Like every other kid in the Seventies, I had the Top Trumps Supercars pack,' Phil explains. 'There were certain cards that, if they appeared in your hand, you knew you would win. The De Tomaso Pantera had the biggest engine, the Lamborghini Countach the highest top speed, but the Porsche Turbo was the undisputed 0-60mph acceleration king. I've got a Ferrari simply because I promised myself one by the time I turned 50, but I realised I've never so much as sat in any kind of Porsche, let alone driven one. Given all that Porsche has achieved, it's time to put that right. I'm satisfying my own personal curiosity as much as anything else.'

Phil settles into the driver's seat, and already it seems that he's unsure about the car. 'It doesn't feel very sporty,' he remarks as he mulls over the slightly upright driving position and saloon-like angle of the windscreen. 'It feels more like a grand tourer than a sports car.

There's a lot more room in it than my Ferrari, but the Ferrari has a low, reclined driving position that makes me feel more in control of the car. I'm not sure how I'd feel about going fast sitting like this.'

Litchfield changes his mind when he turns the ignition key and hears the engine roar. Once it's up to temperature, he prods the accelerator gently, listening to the flat-six's offbeat cacophony overlaid with turbine whine. 'That's one of the best engine notes I've ever heard,' he says after some reflection. 'Better than a Ferrari V8 - it's just so meaty and potent. It's the sound of power!'

We pull away, out of Porsche specialist Design 911's headquarters in Ilford, Essex and head for the meandering tarmac routes through Epping Forest. Litchfield likes the way the Porsche delivers its power when we reach clear straights. 'I'm amazed,' he says. 'It doesn't feel like there's any turbo lag, no sudden power deficit. The throttle response is as immediate as a normally aspirated engine, but it gets this tremendous second wind once the turbo starts boosting, when it switches from sports car to supercar.'

Something's still bothering him, though. 'I'm not sure I could ever get used to this floor-hinged clutch pedal. It's very heavy - much more firmly sprung than my Ferrari's - and already hurting my left foot,' he says. 'And this gearlever needs a really firm shove; it's a very long throw too. I suppose Porsche reasoned that with all that torque you don't need to change gear much, but it's not a sporty change.'

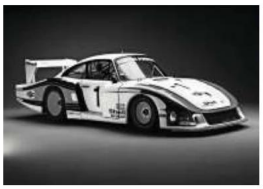
Rear-mounted 300bhp flat-six requires a complete recalibration of driving style

'It gets this tremendous second wind once the turbo starts boosting, when it switches from sports car to supercar'

911 930 TURBO EVOLUTION

3.0, 1975-78

The first Porsche 911 Turbo, termed 930, uses a KKK turbo, Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection and twin fuel pumps installed in series. It's introduced at the same time as the H-series 911s and the engine is based on the existing Carrera 3.0's, but the 930 features wider bodywork covering bigger tyres and a four-speed gearbox. Porsche says that the Turbo's torque renders a fifth gear unnecessary, but in reality the 911's five-speed can't cope with 260bhp.



935, 1976-81

Porsche offered this version as a customer racing car for Group 5 competition. The first 935s looked like wider-bodied 930s, with 3.0-litre engines producing 560bhp at 7900rpm. The cars gained a *Flachbau* ('flatnose') profile after race engineer Norbert Singer realised that the headlight nacelles created drag and lift at speed. A water-cooled 3.2-litre engine was introduced in 1978 after cylinder head gasket failures. It took 150 victories over the course of its career.

3.3, 1978-89

As the L-series 911s receive 3.0 engines, the Turbo's engine is bored and stroked to 3.3 litres and fitted with an intercooler. The L-series 930 also receives brakes derived from the 917 – the first incidence of ventilated discs being used on a road car, cross-drilled and with four-piston calipers. Secondary air-injection is added to ensure that the Turbo can cope with 98-octane unleaded fuel in the US, Canada and Japan, but the 300bhp car can still hit a 168mph top speed.

SE & Flachbau, 1983-89

Porsche launches its *Sonderwünschen* ('special wishes') programme in 1983, providing Porsche owners with a personalisation service. The most popular modifications include the 'SE' 330bhp engine tune, achieved with a larger turbocharger and four-pipe exhaust, and the *Flachbau* bodywork, derived from the 935 racer. The first full convertible version of the 911 also appeared in 1983, but the Turbo wasn't available with canvas or Targa roof options until 1987.

Speedster and five-speed gearbox, 1989

Although it never sported the Turbo's engine, the new Porsche 911 Speedster teams its wide bodywork, wheels, suspension and brakes with a cut-down windscreen, simple showerproof hood and two-seat cockpit with twin head-fairings. In return, the Turbo finally receives a five-speed manual gearbox – the new G50, complete with a hydraulically actuated clutch. Top speed is unchanged, but the 0-60mph sprint drops to 5.2 seconds.

The 911's interior is too utilitarian for reader Phil's tastes

He applies this philosophy, leaving the 911 in third gear and attacking a complex of cambered forest bends, turning in with a trailing throttle and shoving the accelerator mid-corner, boosting the turbo in time for the exit. What began as a wry grin at the corners of his mouth becomes a big smile, then a hearty chuckle.

'I love this steering,' he says. 'It's so direct and immediate. Not even my Lotuses had steering as intuitive as this. And the grip - that's incredible. I was a bit nervous about putting the power down because I've heard horror stories about 911s leaving the road backwards, but there's so much grip that it's barely crossed my mind.

'I even like the way it rides - it's firm, but not that hard, and there's something about the way it rattles over bumps in the road that's so very Eighties. It's reassuringly familiar.'

He's still not feeling comfortable in the car - the 35-degree heat of the year's hottest day so far isn't helping matters. 'The interior's so austere,' he points out, prodding various surfaces to make his point. 'With the exception of the leather seats - which I'm now stuck to - it's all black vinyl. It's high-quality stuff for what it is, but it's not what I expect on a car that cost so much, even from 1983.

'It doesn't help that the fan control's behind the steering wheel and the temperature wheel is down behind the handbrake - it's an interior clearly designed for racing drivers.'

We swap seats, giving Phil's clutch foot a rest. He's right - the floor-hinged pedals are difficult to get used to. The clutch bites when my left foot is at a painful, unnatural angle and it's very firmly sprung, hinting at heavy-duty race engineering at work. The gearlever has a strange double-gating action, the required throw longer than it feels like it should be, the ratios only ready once the lever clunks substantially and reassuringly into its slot.

Once underway, I'm reminded of the engine's rear-mounted location, but it's thanks to grip rather than tail-happy nervousness. Accelerate and, as the weight shifts rearward, the car feels as though it's vacuum-sealing itself to the road as those 225/50 VR16 rear tyres bite. This is how the 930 achieved its then-record 5.4-second 0-60mph sprint. There's no hint of the wheelspin or driveline shunt you might encounter in a front-engined, rear-drive car.

The steering may be pure and direct, but I realise that it must be treated with respect. The steering on a skinny-tyred standard 911 feels nervous, seeking out all the irregularities in the road. The Turbo's is attached to 205/55 VR16s. They're not as communicative through the wheel, but their immense grip means that I have to commit to every corner as the car thunders through, because there's little scope for delicate line adjustment mid-corner - the wrong twitch at the wrong moment could send this 300bhp missile dangerously off-course.

But get it right, and your reward is a great sense of achievement. To successfully drive a 911 quickly entails a strong sense of discipline, rather like motorcycling. Riding a bike is massively satisfying, extremely dangerous if done badly, and requires the rider to think

constantly about brake, accelerator and gear inputs and their effect. You can never really relax, but the intensity of the experience is utterly intoxicating.

It's the same with the 911. You never feel as though you can just lazily guide it along with one hand on the wheel, or lift the throttle mid-corner for the hell of it just to see what happens. But commit yourself to an intensive lesson in rear-engined physics, and the reward lies in the sense that you've mastered something so complex compared to conventional cars.

But is it reward enough to persuade Phil Litchfield to trade in his Ferrari 308? He thinks this over for a couple of minutes, then shakes his head. 'I'm afraid I'd have to say no,' he replies eventually. 'It's not that I didn't like the Porsche - far from it - but the Ferrari is still my dream car and I find its qualities and design so immediately appealing.

'However, I'd have the Porsche as well. It's a challenge that would take time to master - the clutch alone would probably take me weeks to get used to - but I know it would be worth it in the end. Like all hard work, I guess.'

Thanks to: *Karl Chopra of Design 911. 020 8500 8811; design911.com*

The Turbo's Eighties playground hovers on the horizon – London's financial district

1983 Porsche 930 Turbo

Engine 3299cc horizontally opposed six-cylinder, sohc per bank, KKK turbocharger, Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection
Power and torque 300bhp @ 5500rpm; 304 lb ft @ 4000rpm
Transmission Four-speed manual, rear-wheel drive
Brakes Ventilated discs front and rear
Steering Rack and pinion
Suspension Front: independent, wishbones, MacPherson struts, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar. Rear: independent, semi-trailing arms, transverse torsion bars, twin telescopic dampers per wheel, anti-roll bar
Weight 1300kg
Performance Top speed: 168mph; 0-60mph: 5.4sec
Cost new £29,250
Values now £29k-83k

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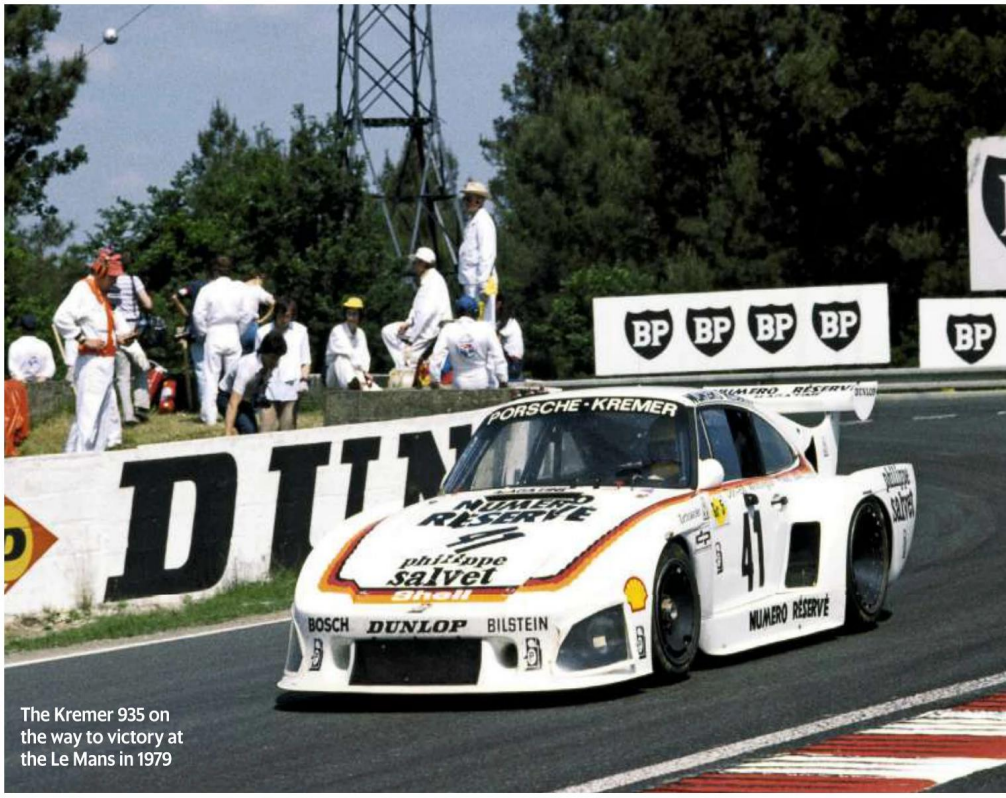

The Kremer 935 on the way to victory at the Le Mans in 1979

911 TURBO TAKES LE MANS

1979 was a strange year at the Circuit de la Sarthe – a year of rainstorms, Paul Newman and victory for a privateer's 935

THE PORSCHE 911 and the famous 24-Hour race are synonymous thanks in part to Steve McQueen driving one in the opening scenes of *Le Mans*, but surely in a world of sleek and ferocious sports-prototypes it would only ever be a production-class contender? Not so. In 1979, 911 Turbo racing variants managed an astonishing 1-2-3-4 finish. Seven of the top ten finishers were 934s or 935s. Even more surprisingly, not one of them was from a Stuttgart works team.

The 1979 race wasn't looking promising for Porsche. Jacky Ickx, looking for a fifth Le Mans win, ran into engine difficulties with his 936 after just 12 laps, and was disqualified after mechanics from rival teams helped to repair it. But as the race carried on, the sports-prototype class faltered.

Clutches, gearboxes and head gaskets, pushed to their limits by the latest engine developments, claimed many front-runners including Alain de Cadenet's Lola LM and Vern Schuppan's Ford M10. And then, just as many teams were sighing with relief at the sight of the dawn, heavy rain began to fall. An 18th-hour accident wiped out one of the works Ferrari 512 BBLMs and Jean Rondeau's eponymous M379. With Domes and Chevrons disintegrating, Roger Dorchy's rapid WM-Peugeot hitting the back of Marc Frischknecht's Lola T296 before Alain Prost had a chance to drive it and the Fords spending most of the race in the pits, the initiative swung to the Group 5 cars. The privateers who had entered in the worthy spirit of endurance racing and a possible class trophy were now in contention for the overall win.

'Seven of the top ten finishers were 934s or 935s. Not one was from a Stuttgart works team'

The Kremer team, led by Klaus Ludwig with American co-drivers Bill and Don Whittington surged into the lead, with the second Kremer car of Laurent Ferrier, Francois Servanin and Francois Trisconi sneaking into third. At his first Le Mans actor Paul Newman did what Steve McQueen could only pretend to do, putting his 935 second along with Dick Barbour and Rolf Stommelen. The combined talents of rally drivers Bernard Darniche and Jean Ragnotti could only place their Rondeau M379 fifth, the highest sports-prototype and the only non-911 in the top five.

The status quo was restored in 1980, with the 908/80 of Jacky Ickx finishing second, but never again could the Porsche 911 Turbo be regarded as a mere class-win contender. Le Mans grids have been packed with 911s ever since, their drivers waiting for the prototypes to slip up, praying for a repeat of Kremer's victory on that rain-sodden June day in 1979.

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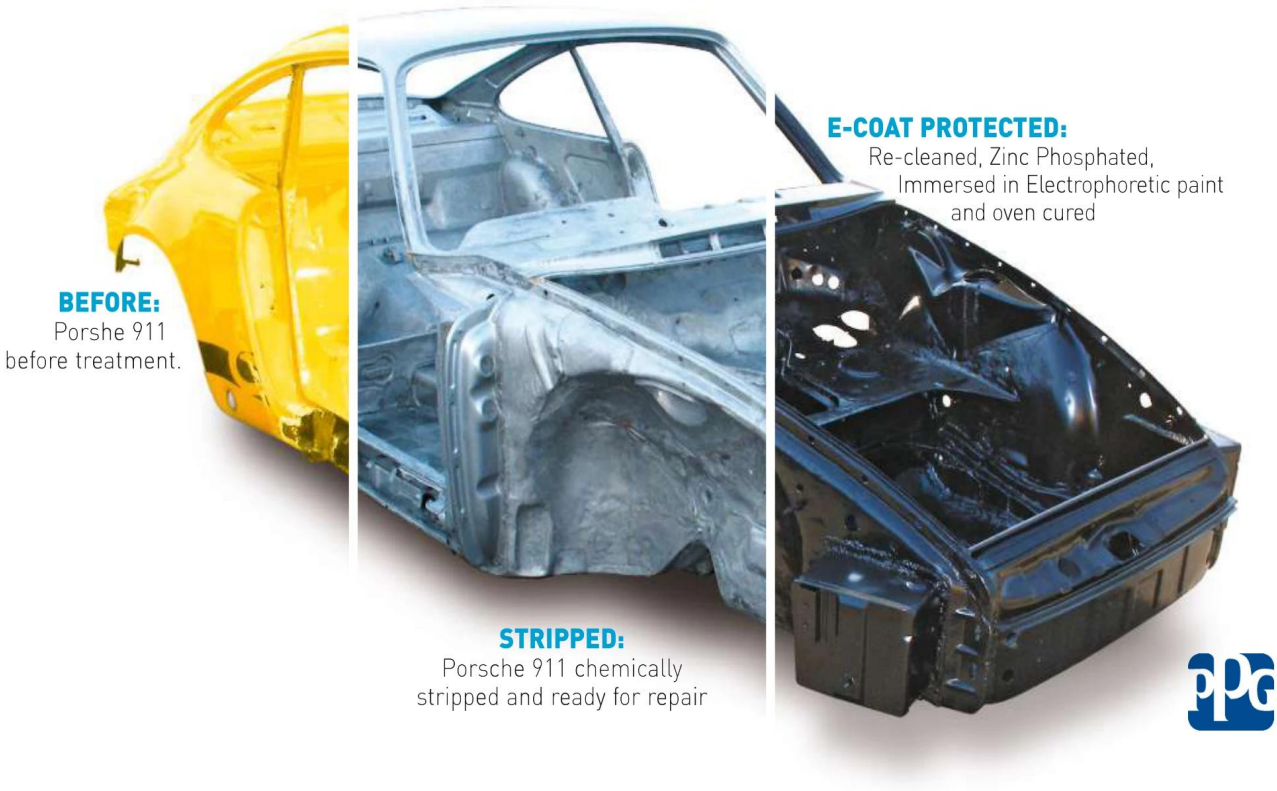

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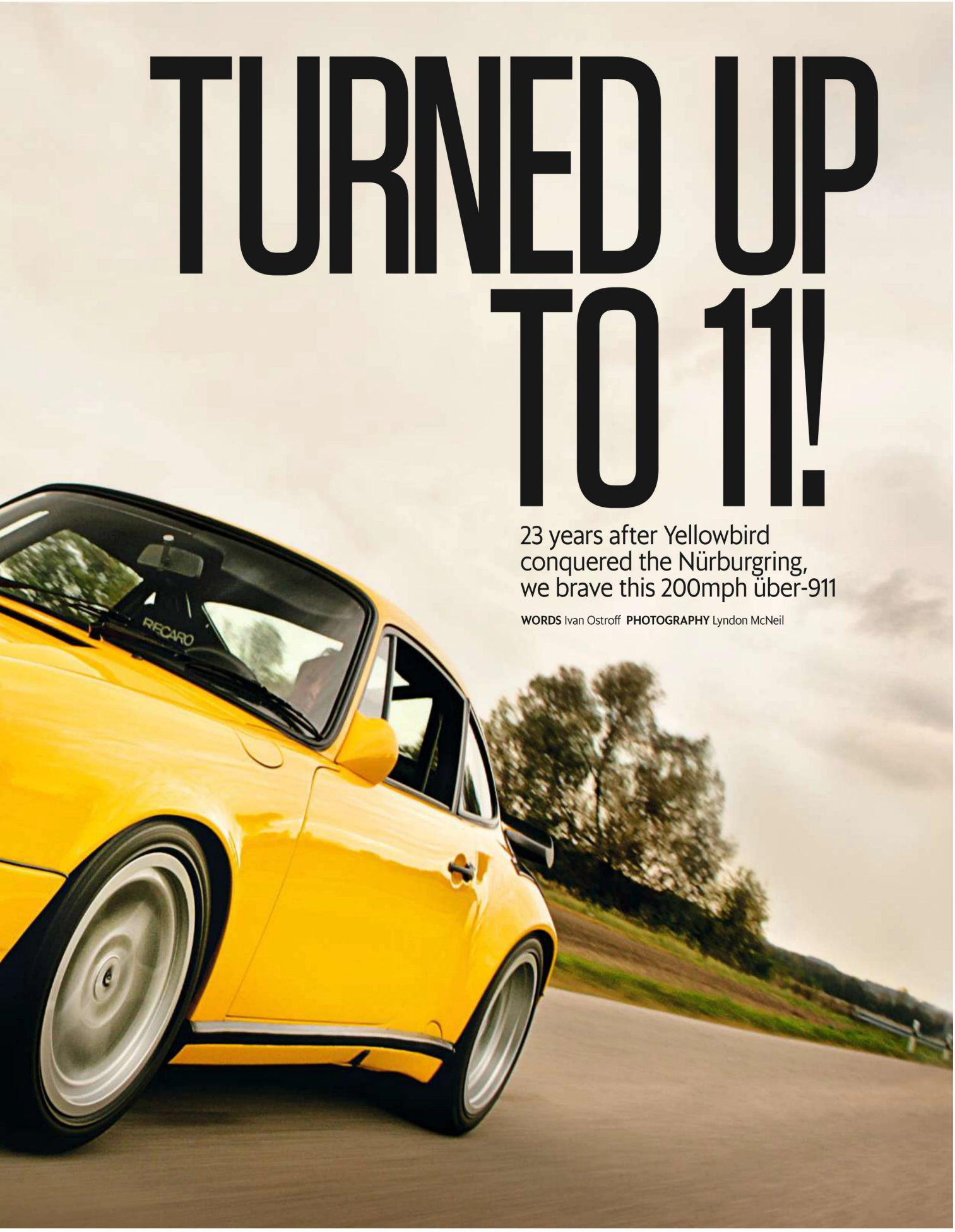
TURNED UP TO 11!

23 years after Yellowbird conquered the Nürburgring, we brave this 200mph über-911

WORDS Ivan Ostroff **PHOTOGRAPHY** Lyndon McNeil



Imagine it - Germany April 11, 1987. There's rain hanging in the air, it's dull and overcast. Alois Ruf has driven his highly modified Porsche Carrera, the RUF CTR, from Munich to Volkswagen's research and development track at Ehra-Lessien in Lower Saxony where racing drivers Phil Hill and Paul Frère are waiting to test-drive it for US magazine, *Road & Track*.

The car is painted chrome yellow, and it stands out in the gloom. Before it even turns a wheel someone whispers that it looks like a yellow bird against a black sky.

Then Frère and Hill take it on to the track and record a maximum speed of 339.8km/h (211mph). By the end of the afternoon the entire place is buzzing with stories about the devastating pace demonstrated by RUF's astonishng 'Yellowbird'. It's the beginning of a long-standing motoring legend.

A few months later the car hits 343km/h (213mph) at Nardo in Italy. Then test-driver Stefan 'Sideways' Roser laps the Nürburgring's Nordschleife in 8min 25sec, making the new CTR (for Group C Turbo RUF) the fastest production car in the world. RUF famously filmed that particular outing of Roser and Yellowbird doing their stuff in bellowing, smoke-billowing harmony, and called it *Faszination* - you can still buy copies of the DVD from the firm.

Fast-forward 23 years and here we are at Pfaffenhausen, the home of RUF Automobile, waiting to be let loose in that same Yellowbird on a public road west of Munich.

Considering the vast reservoir of power on tap, my first impression of the CTR is just how subtle it looks. Apart from the huge spoiler sticking out of the back and the unique NACA ducts over the rear wheelarches, you would never imagine that this car was so quick.

Company boss Alois Ruf recalls, 'I had been nurturing a dream to build the very best possible driver's car. I wanted a sort of slimmed-down Porsche 935, then when Group C came along with its great 956s and 962s I decided to build a road car with similar performance but which looked like a regular 911 - in other words, the definitive wolf in sheep's clothing.'

RUF started with a Carrera bodyshell. 'We worked hard on the aerodynamics, removing the gutter lines and fitting a lightweight aerodynamic nose housing an integral oil-cooler.' As well as the bespoke glassfibre bumpers front and rear, RUF specified aluminium doors and front wings, widened the rear wheelarches by 25mm to accommodate 10in x 17in Speedline-manufactured aluminium alloy wheels with 255mm tyres (8in-wide items up front), lightened the remaining body panels wherever possible and welded them together by hand to add extra stiffness. RUF also replaced the front seats with two lightweight shells and ditched fripperies such as the power-sapping air conditioning. That gave a 180kg weight-saving.

Inside are a businesslike roll cage and steering wheel to RUF's own design, but the Yellowbird retains its typically plain Eighties Carrera dashboard and instruments. If you didn't know better you'd wonder what all the fuss was about.

'You feel the turbo spooling up from about 3000rpm and after 4000rpm the power hits you with a gut-twisting wallop'

But I do know better and I'm filled with awe. I stop drooling, get focused, climb over the cage and get comfortable in the harness. Being a bit short, I want to make sure I can reach everything I can. The gearbox is a five-speed with a dogleg first; the clutch isn't too heavy but has rather a long throw. So far so good.

I twist the key and that familiar metallic sound made only by an air-cooled Porsche caresses my ears. I click the gearlever back into first and head into the countryside.

The Yellowbird's biggest innovation was the treatment given to its enlarged 3366cc engine, says Ruf. 'We endowed it with two KKK Type 26 turbochargers and a special management system similar to the Group C Porsche 956 and 962 race cars built for us by Bosch Motronic. While other turbos were still using K-Jetronic, the CTR had the very first turbo with an electronic engine management system. We made the special manifolds ourselves with twin injectors, which we also copied from the 956 and 962. It was an exciting achievement at the time because cars fitted with turbos were known for lag, but with the CTR there simply was no lag.'

Although its extreme power is immediately obvious, the CTR is easy to drive and I soon feel at home. All that rubber makes the steering heavy at slow manoeuvring speeds, but on the move it's precise,

Apart from the bespoke RUF steering wheel, shell seats and a roll cage, the cabin is pretty much standard Carrera

Top: 469bhp flat-six shattered the paradigm that turbo engines always suffered from lag
Below: original Yellowbird is the only one of 29 RUF CTRs to feature NACA wing ducts

perfectly weighted and offers plenty of feel. The Yellowbird feels better and better the longer you sit behind the wheel; the brake and throttle pedals are well-placed for heel-and-toe work and the gearbox is tactile, although you need to feed the lever in gently - rush it and there may well be an embarrassing crunch.

After an hour in the car I'm impressed, but not exactly blown away. Then I notice that the boost control knob on the tunnel between the seats is set at 0.75bar (350bhp). Back at the workshop, Ruf explains. 'Maximum is about 1.2bar - there's a huge difference. Take it out again with full boost; you have to feel that.'

Before subjecting myself to that I ask RUF test and development driver Hans Peter Lieb to show me how to make the car really sing - you learn a lot just by sitting in the passenger seat next to an expert.

Lieb waits until we've escaped town before switching boost to the full 1.2bar. Despite being harnessed into my Recaro bucket seat, I'm left speechless by the lateral forces tugging at my body. The way this 23-year-old car grips the road is surreal. Ruf says Lieb is every bit as talented as Stefan Roser - which, for a passenger in this 200mph-plus supercar, is good to know.

Roser has been a friend of Alois Ruf since 1977, but was only actually employed as RUF's full-time development driver from 1990-93. He first tested Yellowbird while working for German car magazine *Auto Motor und Sport* and still helps to develop the cars from time to time today. Lieb joined RUF in 1987 and it's clear that speed runs in his family - his son Marc is one of Porsche's works racing drivers.

Eventually he pulls over - it's my turn. With full boost and 469bhp propelling 1150kg, a little extra respect is called for. The CTR is gentle enough when you're not trying, but those whopping rear tyres are easy to provoke if you're heavy-footed.

The 3.4-litre twin-turbo engine is a gem. With a massive 409lb ft of torque between 3500-6800rpm there's ample flexibility for unfussed town driving and the car is as docile as you could wish. Power comes in progressively below 3000rpm - almost creeping up on me. But push it harder and everything changes, the tachometer needle hurling round the dial. I feel the turbo spooling up from about 3000rpm and after 4000rpm the power hits with a gut-twisting wallop. At low speeds the CTR sounded restrained, but now that screaming flat-six cacophony is one of the most exciting sounds you could experience in any car.

Approaching fast, sweeping bends, the 330mm Brembo disc brakes haul speed down as if the car is being grabbed by a huge electromagnet - they were taken straight off the Group C cars. But even at 130mph, when the rear end starts becoming a little loose, it still feels uncannily manageable. Don't be prejudiced by myriad tales of early 911s spinning off into the scenery at will - the RUF CTR is another breed, but you have to remember to keep your cool.

The CTR sits 40mm lower than a Carrera, with bespoke gas-filled Bilstein dampers, and back in 1987 it ran on Dunlop Denloc tyres developed specially for the car that were capable of running at 350km/h (217mph) with 2.5 degrees of camber. Today however it is wearing 205/50 and 255/40 Michelin Pilot Sports respectively.

1987 RUF Porsche 911 CTR Yellowbird

Engine 3366cc, horizontally opposed six-cylinder, air-cooled, fuel injection, two turbochargers **Power and torque** 469bhp @ 5950rpm; 409lb ft @ 5100rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Steering** Rack and pinion **Suspension** Front: independent, wishbones, MacPherson struts, longitudinal torsion bars, gas-filled dampers, anti-roll bar. Rear: independent, semi-trailing arms, transverse torsion bars, gas-filled dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Drilled and vented discs front and rear **Weight** 1150kg (2535lb) **Performance** Top speed: 213mph; 0-62mph: 4.8sec; 0-125mph: 11.4sec **Cost new** £96,000 (approx) **Value now** £400,000-plus

Rough road to RUF

'I had been nurturing a personal dream to build the very best possible driver's car'

ALOIS RUF

RUF AUTOMOBILE owes its existence to an untalented driver who lost control of his Porsche 356 in 1963. He had just overtaken a bus driven by Alois Ruf's father (also named Alois), who also ran his own garage, when he careered into a ditch and rolled twice.

'My father stopped to check that he was okay, arranged to tow the car in and ended up buying the wreck,' says Ruf. 'He repaired the 356 perfectly and ended up using it all the time – he simply loved that car.

'One day in Munich a chap offered to buy it for cash there and then. I was young, but I realised the business potential and suggested that we find another Porsche to restore and do it all over again. We did and that was the start of the RUF-Porsche connection and the RUF restoration and engineering business.'

Alois took over the family firm when his father died in 1974 and built his first performance-enhanced Porsche a year later. In 1981 the German authorities recognised RUF as an independent manufacturer, thereby allowing it to build complete cars.

Innovation runs endlessly through the company's history. In conjunction with Dunlop, RUF developed run-flat tyres for its own 17in wheels in 1985 and today the 65-strong company works its magic on modern diesel Porsches and has even developed an electric version of the 911 that can hit a 155mph maximum speed.

Throw it in too fast then back off and the tail will come out - you have to keep your foot down and, with an armful of opposite lock and smoke pouring off the rear wheels, out she comes. It's hard work, but the reward is well worth the effort.

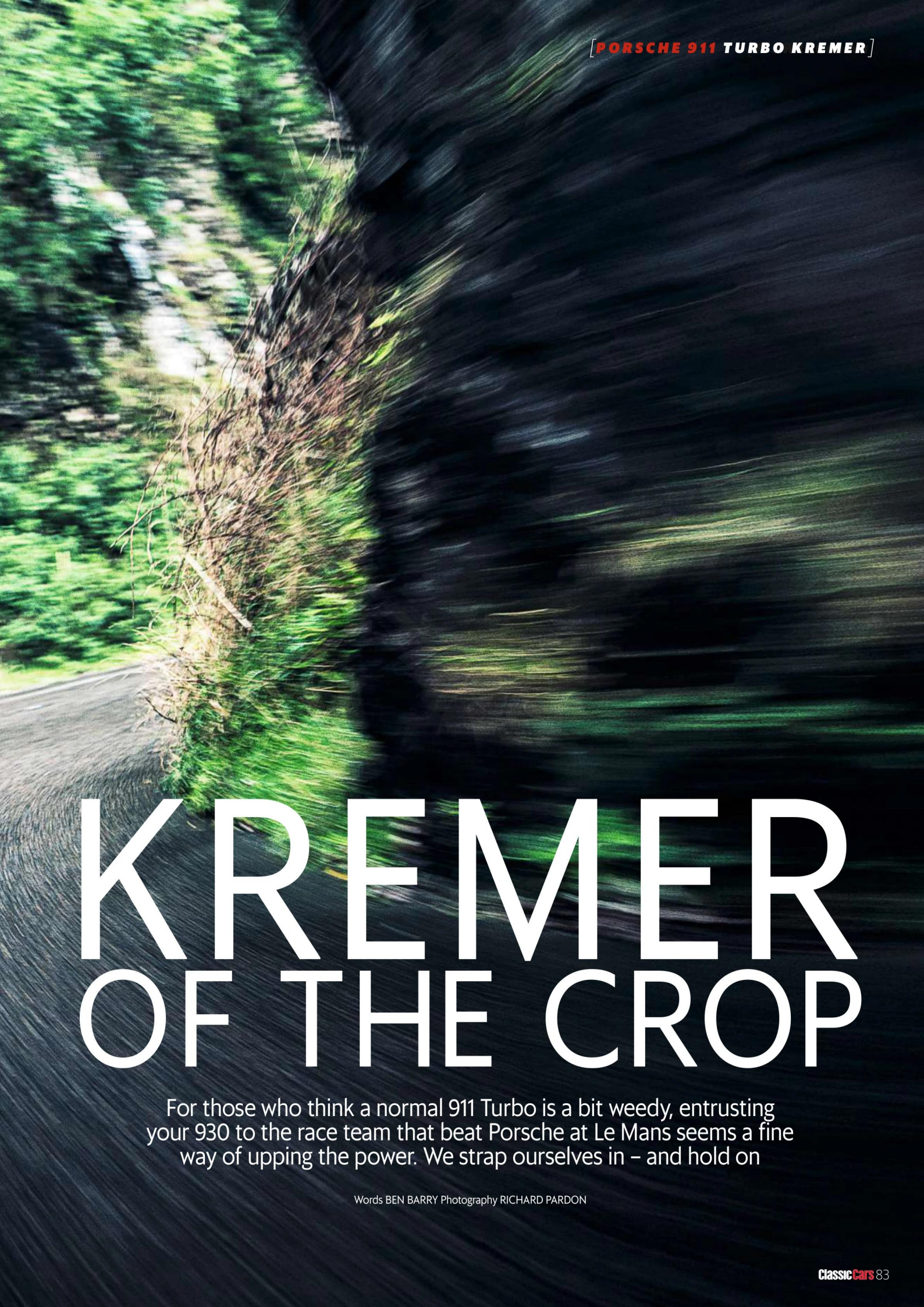
RUF built 29 CTRs. 'Only seven or eight were painted yellow, but they all had the same specification - with one notable exception, those NACA wing ducts. We discovered that they were superfluous,' says Ruf. And this particular CTR is still the company's most popular car. 'At the time I didn't understand the magnitude of what the Yellowbird meant to people, but they still talk about it today.'

I used to regard the Ferrari F40 as the definitive driver's car. It weighs less than the CTR at 1100kg and uses a twin-turbocharged 2936cc V8 with 478bhp to hit 62mph in 3.8sec and a top speed of 201mph. However, I now think that the RUF CTR Yellowbird eclipses it with superior turbo delivery and a better overall package. And at £96,000 it was less than half the price of the full-on Ferrari and only 30 per cent more than Porsche's own Turbo SE, which back in 1985 offered a mere 330bhp and 171mph.

I've always been wary of musclebound older-generation turbo cars - most would be all over the place with a surfeit of terrifying turbo lag - but the Yellowbird really does defy all expectations. Instead of feeling as if you're teasing an automotive Rottweiler who's already in a bad mood, you experience a thrilling, rewarding drive thanks to the stiff chassis and light weight. Crucially, that 469bhp twin-turbo flat-six works with you, not against you.

The Yellowbird really is the benchmark to measure all later high-performance cars against.


GB
WOC 998
Sportwagenzentrum Petermax Müller



KREMER OF THE CROP

For those who think a normal 911 Turbo is a bit weedy, entrusting your 930 to the race team that beat Porsche at Le Mans seems a fine way of upping the power. We strap ourselves in – and hold on

Words BEN BARRY Photography RICHARD PARDON

Flatten the accelerator in second gear and the essence of 911 Turbo squashes into just a couple of short seconds. The power delivery swells languidly at first, then suddenly rockets me forward in a visceral rush of boost as the rear end digs in and my tightening knuckles whiten over the steering wheel. Then... nothing. Game over. Insert more coins.

To drive a 911 Turbo hard is an adrenaline fix to chase and crave, changing gear and waiting for the intoxicating hit to wash over you all over again.

Contemporary atmospheric 911s might trump it for precision and linearity of power delivery, but the Turbo counters with a warp-speed mode that gobbles up straights, makes those cars feel lethargic and has unique appeal.

The singular intensity of this power delivery also puts the 911's dynamics under the microscope like nothing else. How fitting then that the modification responsible for this defining character also happens to be the car's name.

But for some that wasn't enough, even when the later Turbos were putting out 300bhp. Today, I'm here to drive an even more powerful example - one conceived by Le Mans-winning race team Kremer several decades ago with Stuttgart's blessing - on the amazing road that cuts through Cheddar Gorge. It puts a huge 389bhp through the rear wheels. And it just so happens to be wet.

The deluge has stopped for now, but the leaden clouds linger still, and the coil of tarmac that carves through the gorge's twists and turns glistens brightly. My nerves are jangling.

Standing next to me is Nick Paul, the car's owner. These are not ideal conditions for piloting any 911 Turbo, I think to myself as a knot winds up in my stomach, let alone one that's had its turbocharged flat-six fettled. Nick hands me the keys, looking an awful lot less nervous than I feel. 'Don't worry,' he reassures me. 'I think it's an easy car to drive.'

I sink down into the deep and comfy leather seats, then turn the ignition key; the 3.3-litre turbocharged engine begins to chunter boisterously behind me. This does nothing to assuage my nerves. So I build up slowly, simultaneously acclimatising to the curves and the car. The noise dominates the experience at first, even at a moderate pace. I press the throttle and there's a loud, if engagingly tuneful mechanical chatter to accompany my progress, but backing off seemingly ignites a fireworks display in the exhaust. It's impossible to be discreet, but it sounds incredible.

The interior is much less uncompromising. I instantly feel more comfortable than I often do in earlier 911s, a result I think of Nick adding a smaller-diameter steering wheel and tweaking the pedals so that the brake and accelerator line up nicely for heel-and-toe multi-tasking. Nick's tall and has a background in hillclimb sprints, so the modifications increase his enjoyment of the car. They make a huge difference, boosting my feeling of confidence and control.

There's a meatiness and sense of connection to this car. The unassisted steering is heavy, but feels slop-free and direct - I never need move my hands from the quarter-to-three position, even through the gorge's tighter sections - and it also conveys rich surface texture, providing a good sense of where the grip limits lie.

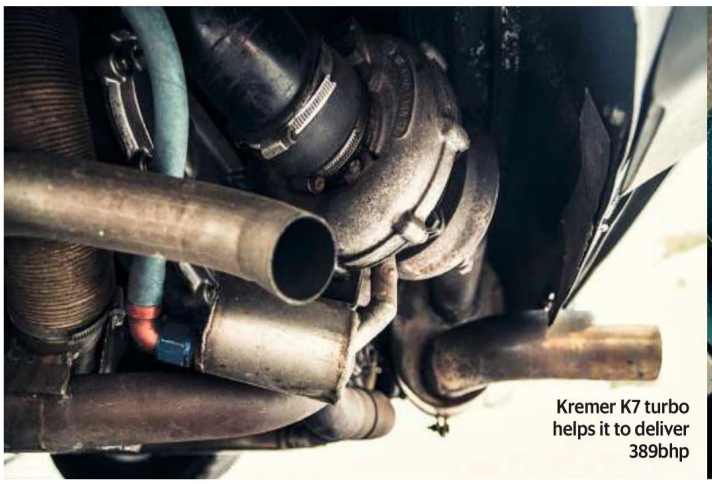
I press the brake pedal and can quickly feel strong pressure building under the ball of my foot. The clutch is reasonably heavy but far from excessive, and the gearchange is long but pleasingly tight - though the gaps between the four ratios are more cavernous than nearby Cheddar Caves. The four-speeder is necessary given that the type 915 five-speed gearbox proved to be the Turbo-based racecars' Achilles heel. Driven at a cruise, there are no bad manners, no unexpected spikes of turbo boost to give you a heart attack mid-bend. It's a perfectly workable daily driver and the controls imbue a sense of mechanical integrity.

Nerves easing, road recce'd, it's time to up the pace, to feel the kick of that turbo and experience its effect on the 911's sometimes tricky-to-manage dynamics. The 911 Turbo debuted in October 1974 at the Paris Motor Show, at a similar time to BMW's 2002 Turbo, but the good news is that the 911 is much more civilised - the four-cylinder BMW is completely flat below 4000rpm, then suddenly transforms into a speed freak, as though you've flicked a switch.

In the 911 you've still got a burly six cylinders and 3.3 litres to back you up so it's flexible down low, pulling without complaint with precious few revs on the dial. The throttle response is impressive, especially given that this is one of the earlier turbo road cars, and turbos so often anaesthetise response.

You can sense the Turbo getting out of bed at around 2500rpm, but it's into its stride by 3500rpm, and spitting forwards in a spike of boost by 4000rpm. It's all over long before the 6800rpm redline, but even today, more than three decades after the Kremer upgrade was first carried out, this narrow window of performance still feels sensationally urgent. No wonder - producing 389bhp but weighing just 1308kg, the Kremer Turbo loses just 10bhp-per-tonne to a 2015 all-wheel-drive, 513bhp 911 Turbo.

Despite my fears and the visceral performance, this car does not feel like an overpowered hot-rod. Like all 911s of the era, the front end pushes wide with an ease that initially startles, but it's also a progressive bleeding away of grip that's easy to back away from. However, it does mean that I must resort to the tried-and-tested slow-in/fast-out method of going quickly. Get the car slowed down with the 993-era four-piston brakes and key the 16-inch front Bridgestone S-02s into the damp tarmac, then get on the throttle early



Kremer K7 turbo helps it to deliver 389bhp

One of the few signs this is more than 'just' a 911 Turbo

Despite the extra power, it's no more hairy than Ben's arms

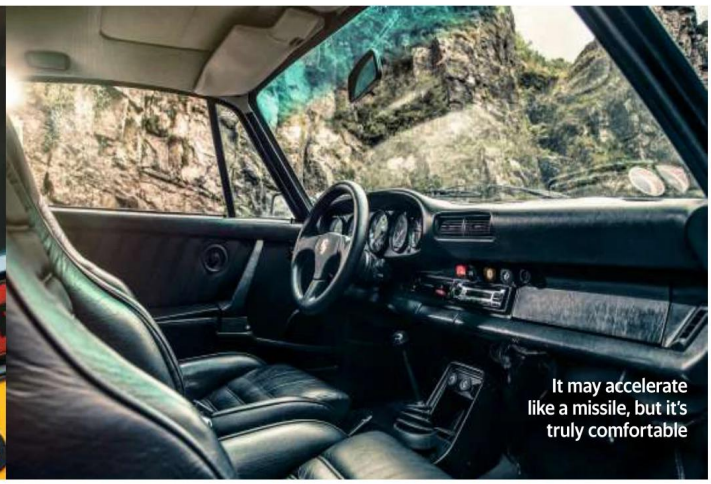
'You can sense the Turbo getting out of bed at around 2500rpm'

Suspension tweaks mean body roll is sharply marshalled

Slow in, fast out, that's the mantra. Well, very fast, actually...

'It bites and propels me forward with a ruthless intensity'

Massive Kremer wing slightly disguised by standard Turbo rubber edging


It may accelerate like a missile, but it's truly comfortable

on the exit. At first I expect some rapid breakaway from the rear end, but it simply bites and propels me forward with a ruthless intensity.

As my confidence builds, so does the eagerness with which I depress the throttle, and ultimately even heavy acceleration in first gear out of the tighter bends generates only the slightest oversteer. No doubt the Kremer-uprated suspension helps in this respect - upgraded torsion bars, firmer Bilstein dampers - and the ride quality continues to remain pretty cushy despite the greater focus on quashing body roll and increasing response.

Cars like this might be lumbered with the 'widow-maker' tag, but I think it takes a basic lack of feel for 911 nuances to get things seriously wrong - keep accelerating when you've already got an armful of understeer and let the boost come in and I suspect it would swap ends when you finally did get the message and snap the throttle shut. Disaster looms for the unwary, but this remains a very accomplished car, even when everything is turned up to eleven.

Like so many of its developments, the advent of turbocharging in the 911 has its roots in motor sport. It began when the FIA banned the Le Mans-winning 917 sports prototypes for the 1972 season after just two highly successful years, and Porsche looked across the Atlantic to the Can-Am race series. There the 917 lived again, but this time with a turbocharged flat-12 engine that produced as much as 1000bhp and crushed the previously dominant McLarens. When the 1974 fuel crisis made that series appear bloated and out of touch Porsche again returned to endurance racing, where the FIA's Appendix J categorisation was to be introduced in 1976, and the World Championship for Manufacturers was based purely on production cars.

Porsche was eager to put its new-found turbocharging expertise to good use and began experimentation in 1974 with the RSR-based 911 Carrera Turbo. Its engine was reduced to 2142cc so that it fell within the 3.0-litre class when the FIA's multiplication factor of 1.4 for forced induction was applied. Nonetheless, it made a thumping 172bhp-per-litre compared with the Can-Am cars' 200bhp per litre, and should have won Le Mans in 1974 had it not been for the failure of its five-speed gearbox. Finishing second to the V12 Matra-Simca, however, was no disgrace and proved to be a solid platform from which to launch the 911 Turbo in Paris later that year.

Known in the corridors of Stuttgart as the 930 Turbo and initially featuring a 3.0-litre flat-six engine, the 911 Turbo was also used to homologate two racing derivatives - the 934 ('4' for Group 4) and the 935 (Group 5), which would go on to spawn the legendary Moby Dick silhouette racer with its radically extended bodywork.

The 934 - running with most of the road car's luxury equipment including electric windows - made as much as 580bhp with the standard engine block, crankshaft, conrods, cylinder heads and K-Jetronic fuel injection. The more radical 935, meanwhile, was eventually boosted beyond 700bhp in 935/78 Moby Dick trim, while still using the standard crankcase and crankshaft.

On top of its production-car-based exploits, Porsche also ran the 936 sports prototype, winning Le Mans in 1976 and '77, but it suffered reliability issues in '78 and '79. And when the 936 faltered in 1979 along with rivals' 3.0-litre prototypes, it was Kremer's 935/78 - a Porsche racing customer - that won with Klaus Ludwig and American brothers Dick and Bill Whittington at the wheel.

No wonder an orderly queue soon began to form at the premises of Kremer brothers Erwin and Manfred, with owners of road-going cars wanting to share in that Le Mans magic. Then and now the tuning industry has a reputation for fantasy horsepower claims produced with little thought for reliability.

So what better peace of mind than to entrust your 911 to the people who'd doubled its power in racecars and still failed to explode an engine while going flat-out for 24 hours?

Apart from some Ruf models, it's hard to imagine that any other tuner's name would actually maintain a 911 Turbo's appeal, let alone enhance it, but I'd say that's the case with Nick Paul's extremely tidy car. Details of the exact timing of the conversion are still rather sketchy, with Nick only being able to say that his car visited the Kremer workshops at some point between 1979 and 1985. But what's for certain is that Kremer did treat the

THIS ONE'S MINE

NICK PAUL, KREMER PORSCHE 930 TURBO

'When I bought the Turbo it was solid, if in need of some TLC. I've spent £15k on servicing and maintenance, with £8k going on labour.

'I noticed the car was baulking into second gear when I first drove it, so I took it to specialist Steve Bull in Devizes, who found that the baulk rings on first and second were heavily worn. We replaced them, along with the selector bushes. The engine had to come out to do the gearbox, so it seemed logical to do the clutch at the same time. Steve also replaced the LSD, which was quite worn.

'I've been able to remedy a couple of problems myself, such as when turning an indicator on turned off that side's headlight. I took off the cowl around the steering wheel, removed the stalk and adjusted the various bits inside the switch – it's worked fine ever since!

'I also had a problem with the fuel pump – the engine was turning over, but the pump was dead. Thankfully, all the fuses are easy to access and carefully marked up under the 911's bonnet. I replaced the fuel-pump fuse and the problem was cured. Next, I plan to strip the interior out to check the condition of the bodyshell.'

A sight other road users see only briefly

'Nick has no plans to upgrade his car's 389bhp at a modest 0.85 bar'

car to its Street Racer conversion. The airbox, oil cooler, camshafts, manifolds and exhaust were all upgraded, but the most important additions were the larger K27 turbocharger and the vast, 800-cubic-inch, air-to-air intercooler that dominates the engine bay. Up to 430bhp is available on the standard injection system, but Nick has no plans to upgrade his car's more than ample 389bhp at a relatively modest 0.85bar.

Visually, there's very little to suggest that this is anything other than a very clean standard car. The engine lid had already changed when Porsche upgraded the 930 Turbo from 3.0 to 3.3 litres in 1977 because it needed to accommodate a bulky intercooler to cool the inlet charge. And at first you think that this car is a standard 3.3 because of the pronounced rear wing, which clearly doubles as a larger engine cover as much as a flamboyant aero aid.

Look closely, though, and you'll notice that it's significantly enlarged. It's made from glassfibre and so has a few imperfections, but Kremer cleverly incorporated the original 3.3's rubber spoiler surround, completing a factory look.

The final touch is a badge that includes both the Porsche and Kremer insignias, a neat little nod that this independent conversion had Porsche's blessing. The only other clues are a subtle chin spoiler and a slightly lower ride height.

Nick's left-hand-drive example was first registered in Germany in 1978 and imported in to the UK in 2001 after MCP Motorsport's Martin Pearse had verified its provenance at Kremer in Cologne. Prior to Nick's recent ownership his Kremer 930 Turbo was looked after at both 930 Motorsport and Autofarm, which rebuilt the engine and replaced the K27 turbo in 2006. Around the same time the Kremer centre-exit exhaust appears to have been removed; an Autofarm custom system now takes its place.

Despite - or perhaps because of - the previous owner spending some £30,000 on the rebuild, Nick reports that it was somewhat scruffy when he first set eyes on it. 'The paintwork hadn't been properly matched, and the interior was a bit tatty,' he reveals. 'That's why I've got the later Turbo seats in it at the moment.'

Nick has spent more than £15k on getting the car to its current standard and says that he's enjoying researching its past. To this end, he's already made contact with Achim Stroth, who was race manager at Kremer during the Seventies and Eighties, and has so far found evidence of only six 930 Turbos still in existence equipped with the Kremer Street Racer conversion.

Far from being a fragile glassfibre throwback to the mullet-and-moustache era of often tasteless German tuning, Nick's Turbo represents a seminal moment in Porsche's illustrious racing past and serves as a kind of missing link between the cars that were homologated for racing, and the team that, against all expectations, turned one into a Le Mans winner.

It sounds like one too as, my drive now over, it disappears into Cheddar Gorge, roars of turbo boost and that clattery overrun ricocheting off limestone rock faces as it goes.

Porsche 911 930 Turbo Kremer

Engine 3299cc flat-six, ohc per bank, Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection, Kremer K7 turbocharger **Power and torque** 389bhp @ 6900rpm; 370lb ft @ 4900rpm **Steering** Unassisted rack and pinion **Suspension** Front: independent, MacPherson struts, anti-roll bar, Bilstein dampers; Rear: semi-trailing arms, torsion bar, Bilstein dampers **Brakes** Servo-assisted discs front and rear **Performance** Top speed: 165mph; 0-60mph: sub 5sec **Length** 4290mm (168.9in) **Width** 1775mm (69.9in) **Weight** 1308kg (2884lb) **Fuel consumption** 14mpg **Cost new** £19,829 **Value now** £85,000

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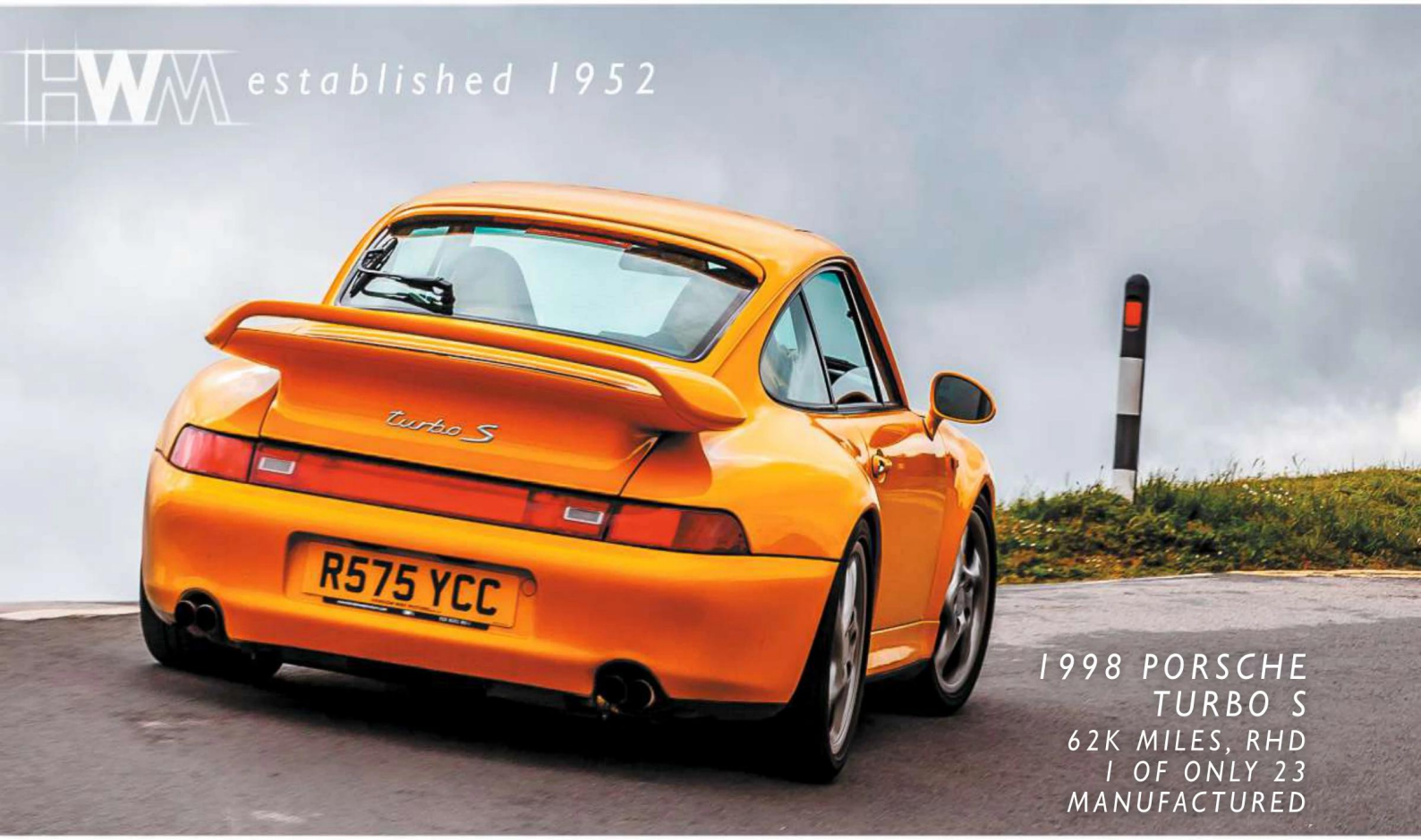

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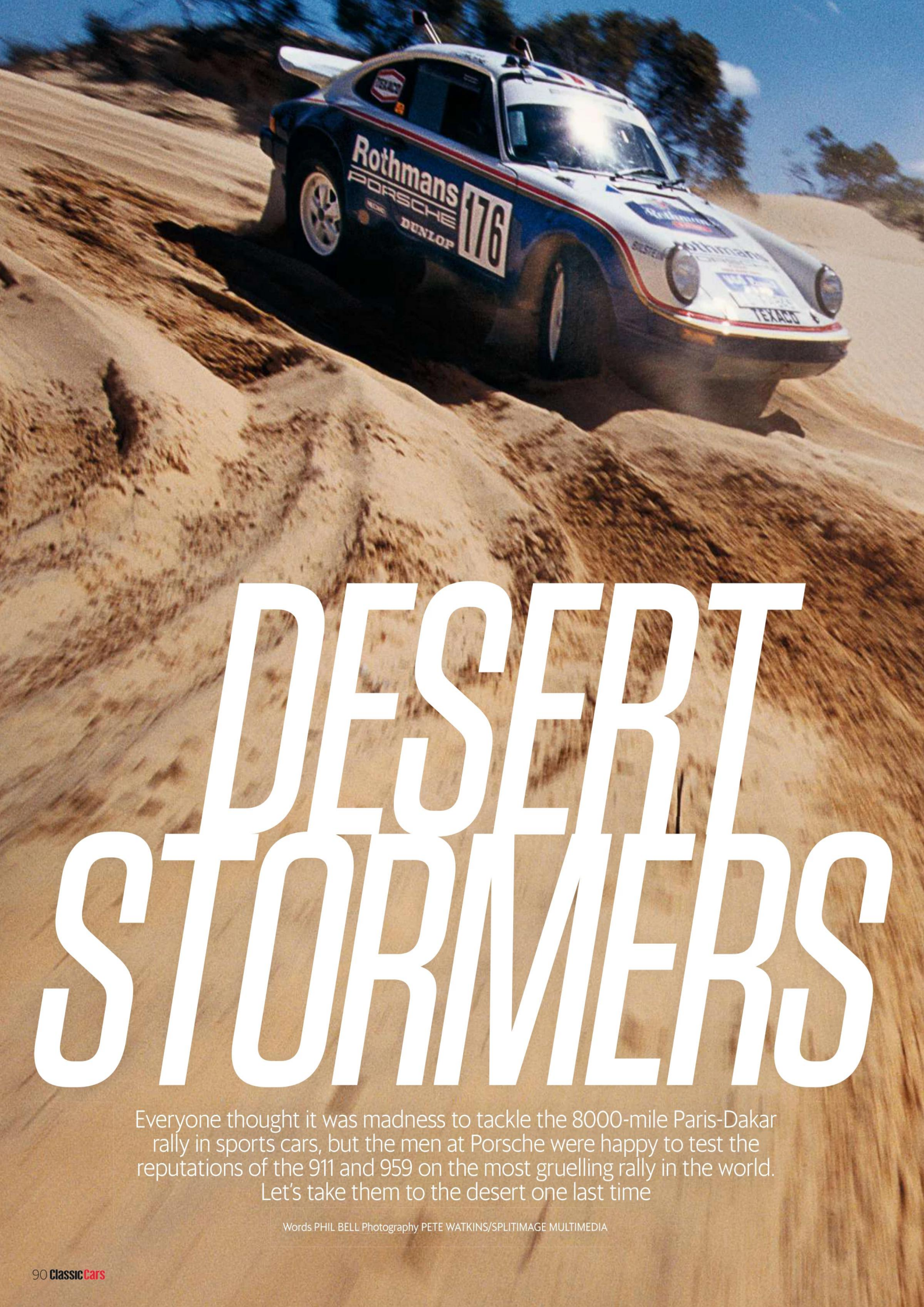


DESERT STORMERS

Everyone thought it was madness to tackle the 8000-mile Paris-Dakar rally in sports cars, but the men at Porsche were happy to test the reputations of the 911 and 959 on the most gruelling rally in the world. Let's take them to the desert one last time

Words PHIL BELL Photography PETE WATKINS/SPLITIMAGE MULTIMEDIA

Driving on sand – rather like driving on ice...*moving* ice

This is surreal, insane, exciting and panic-inducing all at the same time. I'm clamped into the competition seat of a Porsche 911 so tightly that only my arms and legs have the freedom of a battered interior stripped of all supercar luxuries and crammed with hard, functional rally equipment. Those limbs are occupied with the steering wheel straight out of the road car, a chunky handful of gearlever and the foot pedals respectively. There are other distractions, like the adjusters for the four-wheel drive and brake balance extending from the depths of the dashboard like arthroscopic surgical instruments, but we'll worry about these in a minute.

Right now I need to concentrate hard to make sense of the blindingly bright scene unfolding beyond the windscreen; a desert sandscape of sweeping dunes interrupted only by needles of harsh grass, half-buried rock and the occasional tree disfigured by sun and wind. This desiccated wilderness is just two hours' drive from the civilisation of Adelaide in South Australia, but it could be a scene faced by Frenchman René Metge as he drove this very car to victory on the 1984 Paris-Dakar Rally.

No wonder, then, that this 911, and Metge's 1986-winning 959 following in my sand tracks, look battle-hardened after their 8000-mile ordeals across the harshest terrain on the planet. All credit to Porsche for allowing these desert warriors to wear their scars and sand-blasted Rothmans livery with honour - it would be a crime against their considerable achievements to obliterate that history with shiny new paint.

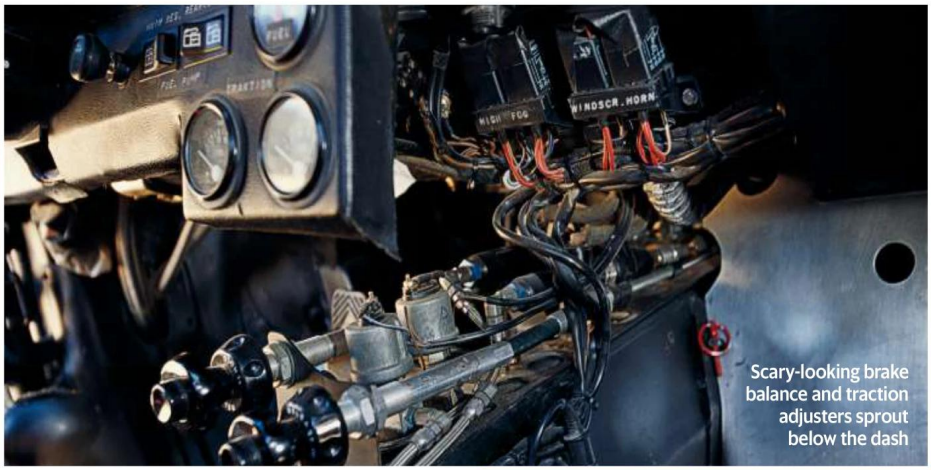
And what achievements - 12 months after six-times Le Mans winner and Paris-Dakar veteran Jacky Ickx persuaded Porsche to enter the event, his three-car team of four-wheel-drive 911 Allrads came home in first, sixth and 26th places, winning the team prize. The following year was beset with problems, but in 1986 the team of three 959s did even better, taking first, second and sixth positions.

'Typically 400-500 vehicles set off from Paris, and two-thirds fail to survive the 8000-mile ordeal'

Nearly 20 years later, Belgian Jacky Ickx - who scored both of those middle places - speaks proudly of what the team achieved. 'The cars were entered under the name of Jacky Ickx Racing Team. It was official without being official in a way. For all of the people in the off-road world of Paris-Dakar, bringing a Porsche was a nonsense - it was a rally for traditional 4x4 vehicles. Everybody kept smiling before, but they didn't smile so much afterwards.'

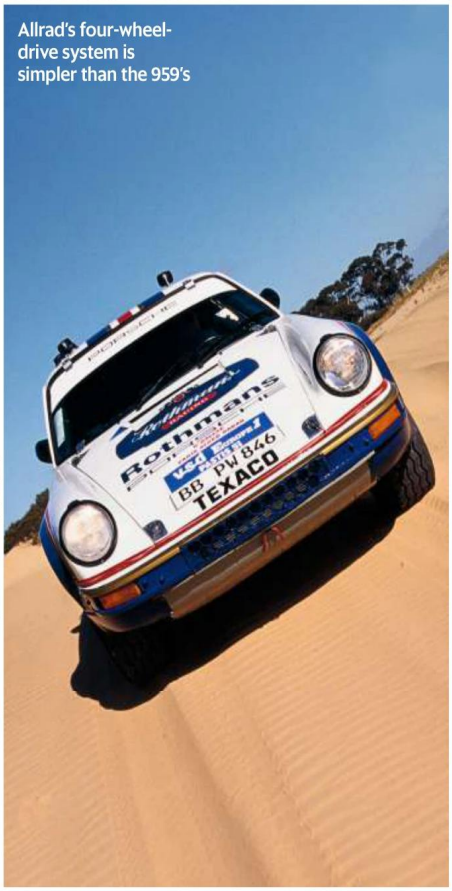
You can understand why the off-road establishment was sceptical. Here was a sports car manufacturer, albeit one with a record of victories in circuit racing and conventional rallying, taking on the most unforgiving motor sport event imaginable in modified road cars. This is an event that chews up cars, trucks and motorcycles and spits them into the dust. Typically 400-500 vehicles set off from Paris, and two-thirds fail to survive the 8000-mile ordeal. Accidents, vehicle fires and mechanical failure are a constant threat, but the weather can be even more cruel. In one year, 40 competitors were all lost at the same time in a sand storm. In another, a third of the field got stuck in the sand of the Mauritanian dunes.

The classic Paris-Dakar image today is of an eclectic mix of purpose-built vehicles streaking across an endless sea of sand like a scene from *Mad Max*. Jacky Ickx paints a different picture of the rally back in 1984. 'Back then, 95 per cent of the time we followed old tracks created by the French Foreign Legion before the independence of Algeria, Niger or Mauritania. These tracks



Scary-looking brake balance and traction adjusters sprout below the dash

1984 Porsche 911 Allrad
Engine 3196cc, horizontally opposed six-cyllnder, ohc, electronic fuel injection **Power and torque** 225bhp 5800rpm; 203lb ft @ 4700rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, permanent four-wheel drive **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear **Steering** Rack and pinion **Suspension** Front: independent, double wishbones, torsion bars, twin telescopic dampers. Rear: independent, semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, coil springs, telescopic dampers **Weight** 2723lb (1235kg) **Performance** Top speed: 131mph; 0-60mph: not tested



Allrad's four-wheel-drive system is simpler than the 959's


'Just' 225bhp, the better to cope with poor-quality fuel


Standard 911 steering wheel appears incongruous in stripped-out interior

were mainly sandy, rocky, terribly rough and destroyed by water.'

When I mentioned that this 1984 911 was a modified road car, that was half true. Certainly there's a lot more of the Carrera 3.2 here than just the three-spoke steering wheel and familiar silhouette of the bodywork, but this car represents the starting point of a process that would turn the classic rear-wheel-drive, air-cooled 911 into the techno-wonder 959. Porsche engineers Helmut Bott and Roland Kussmaul took the Safari rally version of the Carrera 3.2 and gave it four-wheel drive. The Gruppe B concept that appeared at the Frankfurt show in 1983 had most of the advanced features that would appear on the 959 in 1987, including a six-speed gearbox and electronic control to vary the torque to the front wheels, but the Allrad has a simpler permanent four-wheel-drive arrangement. It also rides a lofty 270mm off the ground on its special Dunlop tyres that look like bulging black doughnuts squeezed over the 15in Fuchs alloy wheels.

It feels tall from the driving seat as I look over the classic bug-eyed 911 wing tops to the unpredictable surface ahead. At any real speed I struggle to distinguish the changes in the way sunlight strikes the sand on dips, troughs, ridges and crests that conspire to pitch the car forward, threatening to tip me into a somersault. On the straight and level

270mm ride height and bulging tyres needed to cope with the rough terrain and shifting sand

the vast Dunlops barely break the sand as I skate over its surface. It's an unsettling feeling, like driving on undulating ice, but the difference comes when I turn the almost weightless steering wheel.

Gentle inputs have the car skating a mildly displaced trajectory, but turn harder or press the accelerator more and the front wheels dig in. The heavier my inputs, the more it tucks in until the effect of the tyres cutting into the surface starts to exaggerate the steering. I get the distinct feeling that if I were to overdo it, the tyres would wrench the wheel from my grasp as they tried to bury the nose and flip me into a barrel roll.

As if I didn't have enough to grapple with, my brain is liquidised by the racket of raw, unsilenced air-cooled flat-six impersonating a belt sander on loose floorboards. It sounds harsh, but spins with turbine smoothness round to the 6500rpm red line and feels keen to spin even harder. Despite the convincing noise, the 3.2-litre is detuned from the road car's 231bhp to cope with poor petrol available in parts of Africa. Its 225bhp gets to the four wheels via a close-ratio five-speed gearbox with the crispest short-throw action of any Porsche I've driven. Despite saving weight with composite doors, engine cover and luggage cover, and Perspex side windows, the four-wheel drive, oversize wheels, protective skid pans and roll cage add up to make it more than 50kg heavier than the road car.

The rest of the interior is a mixture of familiar 911 road car and pure competition. The lozenge-shaped instrument binnacle sits in a dash stripped of all padding and trivia. In its place, a proto-GPS navigation device, extra switches and dials mounted on plain metal plates. A pair of pressure gauges tells me how much torque is being fed to the front and rear wheels and beneath them are control wheels to alter the brake bias and torque split. Metge and co-driver Dominique Lemoyne had a lot to think about as they hurtled along those unpredictable tracks. 'There are lots of traps so you need to be used to off-road driving,' recalls Ickx. 'You don't know if a bridge is going to be destroyed, and most of them are, so you have to go down in the dried river bed. And it's fast. you may be down to 20 or 40km/h where it's rocky but in the Ténéré you can easily reach 200km/h. But more than that is the concentration you need to drive for sometimes ten hours - there's no question of stopping for lunch - to avoid falling into one of those traps.'

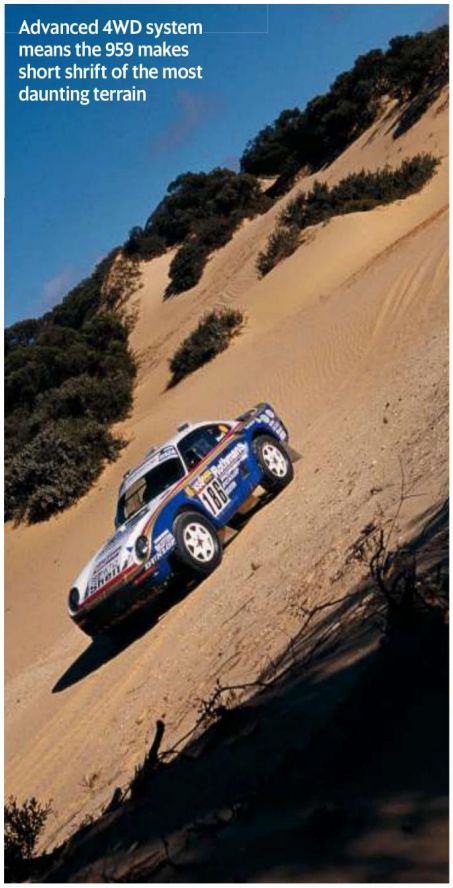
'The Dunlops barely break the sand – it's an unsettling feeling, like driving on undulating ice'

January 1, 1984, and the 427 vehicles set off from Place de la Concorde in Paris, including the 911s of Metge/Lemoyne, Ickx and co-driver Claude Brasseur, and in the third car, engineers Roland Kussmaul and Eric Lerner to provide spares and back-up expertise when the support trucks get too far behind. The Rothmans Porsche team numbers fewer than 20. It didn't seem much to guarantee success in what lay ahead - 7500 miles across France, Algeria, Niger, Upper Volta, the Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Senegal. Half of the distance was on special stages.

Once in Africa, the Porsche team got off to a bad start when Ickx was delayed by a puncture on the second day then an electrical fire on day four between In Salah and Tamanrasset, which also delayed Kussmaul as he made repairs. Ickx rejoined in 139th place so any chance of victory was left to Metge, who was now in the lead. 'I always concentrate the team to give the best possible

René Metger drove this 911 (front) and 959 to 1984 and 1986 Paris-Dakar victories

Speedometer is displaced to the centre console by warning lights for the four-wheel-drive system



Advanced 4WD system means the 959 makes short shrift of the most daunting terrain

1986 Porsche 959

Engine 2847cc, horizontally opposed six-cylinder, four overhead camshafts, two sequential KKK turbochargers, single intercooler, electronic fuel injection **Power** 400bhp @ 6500rpm **Transmission** Six-speed manual, electronically controlled four-wheel drive via multi-disc viscous clutches, rear differential locked **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear **Steering** Rack and pinion **Suspension** Front: double wishbones, twin coil over-damper units, anti-roll bar. Rear: double wishbones, coil springs, twin telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **Weight** 2778lb (1260kg) **Performance** Top Speed: 131mph; 0-60mph: not tested

400bhp flat-six boasts twin KKK turbochargers and a single intercooler

Imagine this is your home for the next ten weeks – without a break

959 delivers effortless shove practically from idle

chance to the best placed car,' explains Ickx. Despite his setback, he set the fastest times on the subsequent stages and the two Porsches dominated the Ténéré desert and much of the remaining rally. Disaster never seemed far away, though – Ickx crashed on the Agadez to Niamey section and lost three hours with suspension damage. Next it was Metge's turn when his car ploughed into a herd of cows.

The rally sets a punishing schedule and only allows six hours' sleep each night to recover. 'In the evening you have to bivouac in a tent, or maybe without, next to your car,' says Ickx. 'You have sandstorms and cold - people think it is hot in the desert, but in January at night the cold is the problem. In Algeria it was typical to wake up with ice on my sleeping bag.' And it's worse for the support truck drivers, who take longer to reach the night stops and for the mechanics working late making repairs.

Customs hold-ups at the border between Nigeria and Upper Volta resulted in the stage being cancelled but Metge continued to hold his lead over nearest rivals, Frenchman Patrick Zaniroli in a Range Rover and Opel Manta pilot Colsoul. With Metge maintaining the lead in the closing stages, some of the lower-placed cars put on a sprint for stage victory. Frenchman Lacaze got his 15 minutes of fame by winning the 62-mile

Tambacounda-Koupetoum stage in a Citroën Visa and Kussmaul's Porsche claimed victory in the final run to Dakar.

When the team returned in 1985 with a new car that represented another step towards the 959 specifications, they must have been full of confidence. Although the engine was still normally aspirated and producing a modest 231bhp, the cars were fitted with a more sophisticated six-speed transmission and new coil and wishbone suspension. But it proved to be a disappointing year. After a good start, tough conditions took their toll with Jochen Mass and Jacky Ickx crashing out and Metge suffering a catastrophic oil leak at half distance, leaving victory to Zaniroli in a Mitsubishi Pajero.

No manufacturer can walk away from a motor sport challenge with a single victory. To prove the point it must repeat success.

Porsche's answer for 1986 was even closer to the final 959 production car in terms of sophistication. After the bizarre spectacle of the standard 911 perched high on its desert tyres, the similarly high-rise 959 looks better proportioned and more stable thanks to its greater width, length and more generous tyres. Once I've manoeuvered myself over the roll cage that cuts straight across the door aperture and have sunk into the seat, I find a similar scene to the 911. But in here there's a fuzzy-grip Momo racing wheel, and behind it the speedometer has been ousted in favour of a collection of red tell-tale lights for the four-wheel-drive system. I notice the small boost gauge set into the tachometer, while to the right is the displaced speedometer and above it three more dials including a pressure gauge labelled 'Traktion' with dymo tape.

Even in its detuned state to cope with poor-quality fuel, the 959's 2.8-litre flat six produces 400bhp – nearly twice the power of the 911, but with just 45 extra kilos to push. It's a huge step for Porsche, its water-cooled cylinder heads breaking with 23 years of air-cooled flat-six tradition. This engine uses a pair of KKK turbines electronically controlled to deliver their boost sequentially and a single intercooler to increase the charge density. Fire it up and the fuel pump whines and drones in frantic competition to the savage engine noise, still hard enough to judder your skull, but more muted than the 911.

'Ickx crashed on the Agadez to Niamey section. Next Metge collided with a herd of cows'

Where the 911 starts to deliver its best with a characteristic shove around 4000rpm, the 959 offers a seamless surge of power from little more than idling rpm. Under light throttle load, the boost gauge stirs into life at around 0.5bar, but push hard on the accelerator and its needle overtakes the tachometer with a sinister whoosh from somewhere over your right shoulder.

The 959 shudders as the tyres and differentials struggle to find traction on such a loose surface, spewing plumes of sand into the air. Once the tyres - 205mm up front and 225mm rear - overcome momentum the car feels more stable than the 911. Bobbing over crests and trying to ignore the way my crash helmet is butting the roll cage, I imagine that the 959 would fly straight and true at racing speeds, but I don't feel inclined to test that theory. Even a fearless pro like Ickx was cautious of getting carried away. 'With the extra power and the six-speed gearbox. René Metge told me he reached 230km/h in the desert, and it's not like driving on the salt flats of Bonneville. I didn't; I wasn't brave enough.'

Changing direction I find that I can get the 959 to flow, using the accelerator to steer the rear wheels. But when I'm going slow enough for the tyres to bite into the sand, the

Porsche 911 and 959 float across the Australian sandscape

rears tend to rotate in a staccato sequence of steps as the four-wheel drive tries to work out how to get out of the mess I've put it in. Reassuringly, it always does.

For 1986 the rally started in Versailles, and Roland Kussmaul was back in the third car. This time there were 486 competitors brave enough to take on the longer 9300-mile rally and its 4800 miles of special stages. Things looked bleak as competitors had to battle though a snow storm then a sand storm even before they'd left France.

Once in Africa, Metge and Ickx faced stiff competition from 1985 winner Patrick Zaniroli, whose Mitsubishi set fastest times on six stages until gearbox problems spoilt his chances of victory.

Ickx lost time with a punctured radiator but was soon trading fastest times with Metge until they both got stuck in the enormous sand dunes between Dirkou and Agadem.

They were back in the running again when tragedy marred the 1986 rally. Competitors had always been able to rely on event founder Thierry Sabine to come to their rescue in his helicopter if they got hopelessly lost or ran into trouble, but on the 14th day of the rally Sabine's helicopter crashed, claiming his life and those of four others.

Rally official Patrick Verdois decided to continue with the rally, though the route had some stages cut following the accident.

Despite losing more time stuck in mud, Metge and Lemoyne clung on to their overall position and carried on to win the event again, this time with Ickx and Brasseur in second and Kussmaul and Unger sixth.

'I imagine that the 959 would fly straight and true, but I don't feel inclined to test the theory'

Of 486 starters, just 100 reached Dakar 21 days later. 'It was a hell of a pleasure to organise and to create a team and be part of it,' recalls Ickx. 'And to have a win at the end made everyone so happy. During the race one of the MAN support trucks rolled over and we had to do over half the race with just one truck for back-up. It was unbelievable to have such a sophisticated car with all of those electronics for the four-wheel drive and the turbo and be able to do it with such a small team. But it's like that in life. If you don't believe it's possible you don't do it.'

Sitting in this very special 959 today, my eyes following that endless mass of sand to where it kisses the dazzling blue sky on the horizon, I struggle to get my head around the scale of what these cars, the drivers and the team achieved. Try to imagine what it's like to race for ten hours at a time on such difficult terrain, day after day for nearly three weeks to a destination 8000 miles away - it seems almost impossible. Even in the blistering heat of this Australian desert, the thought of it makes me shiver. Jacky Ickx told me that the Paris-Dakar is without doubt the hardest rally in the world. I have no doubt.

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