

# The Real Deal

Replica 911s are nothing new, granted. But specialist Jasmine Motorsport has created a 964RS that, for once, won't break the bank

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**Y**awn. Another month, another replica. What is it this time? Hasn't anyone got anything original up his sleeve? Here we go again...

Fed up with yet another 911 replica/recreation/interpretation? It would be perfectly understandable, given the current craze of turning sad old basket cases into lightweight versions of their former selves, usually to an RS specification and usually with an RS badge on the engine cover. Surely, it's been done to death by now?

Evidently not – and Brian Goff, owner of Porsche specialist Jasmine Motorsport in Lancashire, has invited *911 & Porsche World* to take a look at his own efforts. So, curious as to what he could possibly offer that's different to

the rest, here we are in the breezy north, admiring a very black, very lovely 964 that's been given the RS replica treatment.

Imitation, as they say, is the sincerest form of flattery. Just consider, for a moment, the AC Cobra. It's a car with an image so strong, so overtly masculine, so politically incorrect that it does something peculiar to most men: it turns them into quivering wrecks, salivating at the prospect of being seen in the most unapologetic sports car to ever grace this planet's highways. And, with originals costing 250 grand, the only way that most Cobra fetishists can get their fix is to build or buy a replica. Like it or not, it's a free country.

And on Planet Porsche, the AC Cobra of the 911 community will have an RS badge on its rump. The

RS ticks the same boxes as the Cobra: raw, focused, uncomfortable, unforgiving, noisy and exciting – there's nothing out there quite like them, and the market isn't exactly overflowing with them. When a decent 2.7RS does come up for sale, it can easily stretch to £100,000 and beyond for a really stunning example. The 964RS, after languishing at around £30,000 for a tidy model, can now demand a lot more than that – with some exceptional ones selling for really big money.

For purists, there's only ever been one choice if you want the RS experience: bite the bullet and reach for the wallet. But there's a steady demand out there for 911s that offer all the heart-stopping thrills and drop-dead gorgeous looks of an RS, but without the provenance and





correct matching numbers. Enter, if you will, the murky world of the RS replica...

I've never had a problem with replica 911s, so long as they started out as 911s in the first place. There's a man who lives not far from me who drives a red Ferrari F355 – and he turns heads wherever he drives. But not mine. What the man in the street fails to realise is that the Ferrari is actually a Toyota MR2 – and I hate that. I hate the fact that the dimensions of the car are not quite right, that the interior is still a plastic mess, that the in-line four sounds nothing like a V8 and that, if I were to race him with a Mini Cooper, I'd win by a country mile. He might convince the hapless women falling out of the seedy nightclubs at the rough end of town, but I just think he's an arse.

If you've ever seen a fake 911, you'll know what I mean when I say they're a pitiful mess. Back in the 1980s there were a fair few knocking about, more often than not with bastardised Beetle innards under the feeble 930-esque panel work. Anyone with even a passing interest in cars would know these were fakes – and I despised them as much as Mr Chest-wig Ferrari's disguised MR2.

The replica 911s we're dealing with these days did at least begin as 911s. Their core DNA is correct and they're often as good as the real thing – only at half the price. Owning a replica RS can be an extremely liberating experience on many different levels. For one thing, if you do smash it up on a slippery B-road, you're not ridding the world of another rare or classic

Porsche. This realisation, in turn, allows you to feel much freer about when and where you use it – which has got to be a good thing, hasn't it?

The fact that you can turn a tired SC, 3.2 Carrera or 964 into something as deeply desirable as an RS has been well documented in these pages over the years – and the bandwagon has had its fair share of jumpers on to it – but, until now anyway, Jasmine wasn't a name you'd have associated with the trend. And Brian Goff, like anyone worth their salt in business, views customer service and satisfaction as top priorities. So when a customer mentioned he'd like Brian to build him a 964RS, he set about doing just that. And this is the result.

'The idea for this really came about when I was



talking to the owner of a 993GT2, a guy I used to race with in the Carrera Cup in the early Nineties,' says Brian. 'He'd come here to have that car's wheels refurbished and I asked him how many track days he did with the car in a year. He said: "None". This turned out to be because the thing is just too rare and valuable to risk having a prang.'

I asked him what he does with the car and he said it never goes out, that it's only done 19,000 miles since new and that it spends its life sat in the garage. We both came to the same decision: that the ideal scenario would be to have a car like a 964RS that you could enjoy on track, without the inherent problems with value, and one that could be built to a specification.'

What Brian decided to do was to build a replica 964RS, but keep the costs at a ceiling of about £35,000. As he points out, if you start spending £60,000 or so, you may as well go and buy a genuine 996 GT3RS. He floated the idea on his website, produced some flyers and, soon enough, someone with the same idea came along and commissioned the one you see here.

The guy had never owned a 911 before this, but had been looking for a suitable machine to

enjoy at weekends and the occasional trackday. He'd seen a number of right-hand-drive 964RSs for £60,000 or thereabouts, and some left-hookers for half that. The only problem for him was that the cars at £30,000 needed an awful lot of work to bring them up to scratch. Jasmine's solution was obviously one that made a great deal of sense to him.

'He told me to go and buy a car and build it, so I did,' says Brian. 'It started life as a Slate Grey 1990 C2 – which to me is the ideal starting point, as a C4 would need too much work to remove all the transmission components up front.'

Keeping the costs on the right side of sensible meant not being too anal about making a direct facsimile of the real thing. 'Let's be honest, thinner glass makes no difference to the way one of these performs or feels,' he says. 'And an aluminium bonnet would be nice, but then it's another couple of grand on the price.'

The car was stripped down as far as was required and, because the customer wanted it, the shell was sent away to have a welded-in rear roll-cage fitted. From there it went to the body shop for a full respray, and then it was sent back

to Jasmine for the rest of the transformation.

'The motor was sent to Unit Eleven, in Warrington, which does all of our engine work, where it was completely stripped and rebuilt before fitting an RS flywheel and clutch,' remarks Brian. 'Just those two items make an enormous difference to the feel of the car, as a dual-mass flywheel is such a big, heavy thing. Having the RS item means the engine is much easier to rev and the clutch, being much heavier in feel to a standard Carrera's, simply adds another dimension to the whole driving experience.'

Engine management was taken care of, too, and Brian says that the ECU remap has retained reliability and usability. At 285bhp, the balance of the car is still right – and pushing it to 300bhp or beyond would have necessitated different cams and other items, which was never on the agenda.

The exhaust is a standard 964 item, but with the centre silencer replaced by a straight-through pipe. The difference in sound to a Carrera is remarkable and the noise quickens the pulse, enticing you into the driver's seat. And what do you know? Opening the door reveals a very authentic RS cabin.

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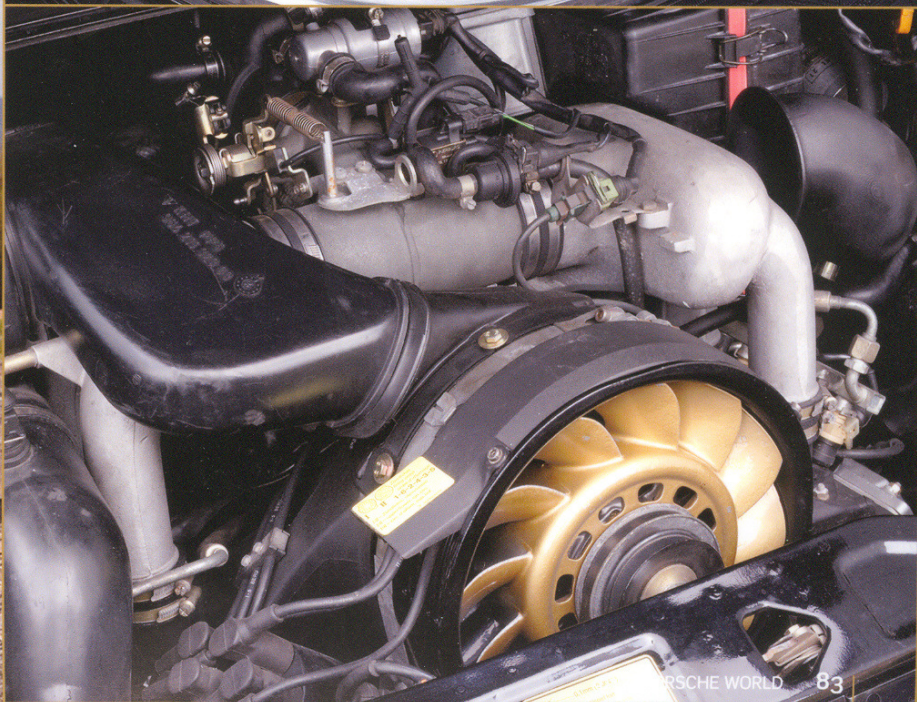


Southbound Motor Trimmers, in Hampshire, supplied the lightweight interior, including the door panels, and it's a truly brilliant job. 'The customer wanted to retain the electric windows,' recalls Brian, 'and the sunroof, which is the beauty of this process. He ended up getting the exact car he wanted.' The suspension was all replaced with genuine RS components, except for the shock absorbers – which were Cup items from Bilstein. The brakes came from a 993.

The car's owner also wanted his black 911 to be fitted with gold-coloured wheels instead of the Cup style alloys. So he got them. The BBS cross-spokes do look great and give it a real competition car vibe, perfectly suited to the race track, which is where it will spend a lot of its time. When it came to rubber, he wanted a road tyre that would give good performance in all weathers. Michelin Pilot Sport Cups would have been a struggle in the wet, as he's a novice track driver, and Brian recommended Pirelli P-Zeros.

At Jasmine, Brian is able to refer to the complete Porsche parts program and see

**With 964 RS prices currently spiralling into orbit, Jasmine's replica makes a lot of sense at £35,000 all in. However, spec the fabulous BBS split-rims, and you'll be looking at a bit more**







Above: Lightweight interior has all the RS hallmarks. Cage adds to the effect, as does the carpeted rear seat area. Suede-trimmed Momo wheel feels good

what components were fitted to the RS when it was new. These parts are all numbered and available off-the-shelf, meaning you never need to struggle to build an exact recreation. This project took five months from start to finish, but that was down to the fact that it had to fit in with the normal day-to-day business. And business at Jasmine is always brisk. Brian says that if enough orders pile up, staff would need to be recruited, and this would enable a faster turnaround.

Taking the keys and heading out to some twisting country roads, I'm impressed by the authentic feel of the thing. It's, err, just like a 964RS. That means it's gloriously noisy, heavy to steer, uncomfortable and bouncy because it's so bloody stiff. In other words, it's marvellous stuff but probably wouldn't be ideal transport on a first date. On a smooth track this car will be revelatory – and I just know that its fortunate owner will be for ever smitten.

Brian Goff is a man who strongly believes in using Porsches. Being afraid to drive them because of their monetary value is criminal and a waste of time in his eyes. And I'm with him on that one. As driving experiences go, 911s offer something unique and deeply satisfying. I get fed up with internet forums where owners go on and on about residual values when the cars are sat in their garages under their dust sheets. They're built to be driven.

If replicating an RS or any other Porsche, for that matter, enables people to do this, then there's surely nothing wrong in transforming an unloved rotter that's struggling to make ten grand in the classifieds into a fabulous, achingly desirable track weapon. This black one took just over £35,000 to complete – and that includes the cost of buying a donor car. For this, the owner received the car he alone wanted, with a bodysell, interior, suspension and engine that are essentially brand-new. You can't argue with the maths – these replicas make a lot of sense, whichever way you look at them. P

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