

EVEN BETTER THAN THE REAL THING?

Can a 964 Carrera be turned into a 964 RS beater? Jasmine PorschLink certainly thinks so, and having experienced its new toy, so do we.

Words: Stuart Gallagher Photography: Max Earery

The 964 RS divides opinion like very few Porsches. To its loyal followers, of which there are many, it is the purest breed of the RS models to have been registered for use on the road. To its detractors it is little more than a race car with illusions of grandeur as to its on-road ability. Where its followers dine on a diet of pin sharp responses and a chassis anchored to the bitumen beneath, others consider the controls overly heavy and the chassis lacking finesse and any level of detail. In short the 964 RS is the Marmite of the Porsche 911 RS world – you either love it or loathe it.

Despite this split there is one area that all would appear to agree on when it comes to this particular breed of 964, and that's its value and

how it has strengthened in recent times, to the point where this once track day regular is swapping Paddock Hill bend for the rather safer confines of a heated paddock garage.

The 964 RS has become the recent 911 of choice for the collector and aficionado alike, which means as the values rise the once affordable Porsche RS route has all but dried up. Which is where 964's such as this Peppermint green example come in.

As the pictures may suggest this is a 964 RS, but should you ever get a look at the log book the model description will read Carrera 2. Just as the replica market has taken fondly to the burgeoning 2.7 Carrera RS Rep models that have appeared from established workshops over the last decade, so it is that the next logical step is to

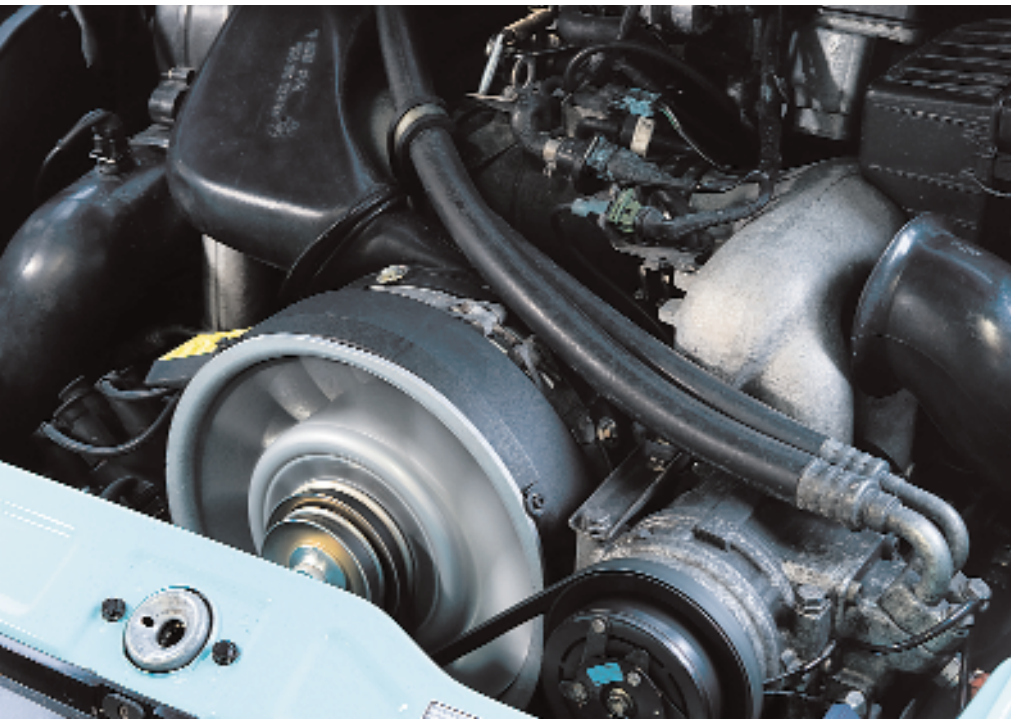
create a replica market for the second generation 911 RS: the 964 RS. Just as Brian Goff and his Jasmine PorschLink team has done here.

Based on a 1992 Carrera 2, this example is one of the first to be completed by Jasmine and has undergone the full RS programme, and it's a very intensive one. First the car is stripped to a bare shell with the running gear (engine and gearbox), bodywork (doors, bonnet, engine cover, bumpers), windows and interior all removed and the shell stripped back to bare metal before the fun can begin.

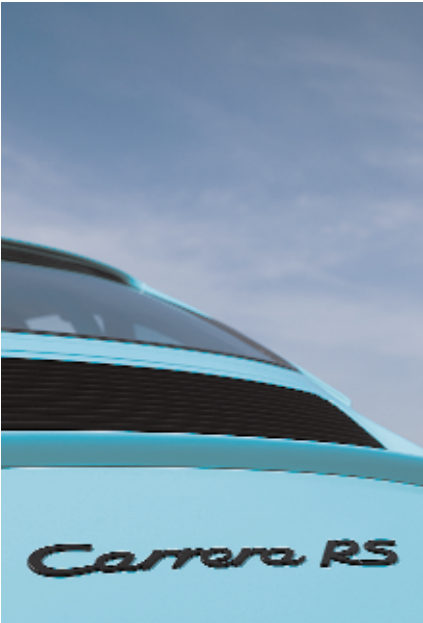
Back on go the 964 RS front and rear bumpers – the front unit including the distinctive brake cooling ducts, Cup mirrors (complete with the donor car's original electrical adjustment as per the owners' request) and a little artistic licence in



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the form of a Carrera RS badge on the engine cover. As well as carrying over the electric gubbins for the mirrors, this shell also retains the electric sunroof.

Internally a half roll-cage is bolted in and the original headlining refurbished and installed, while 964 RS door panels are sourced and fitted, but this time complete with the electric motors for the windows which have been retained, unlike the original seats, carpets and rear quarter panels that have been replaced in favour of RS items. The seats in this example are Recaro Pole Position items, but once again these are down to individual requirements. This example also features an Alcantara-trimmed Momo steering, ally pedal set and a stainless steel handbrake and gear lever. Think of it as an RS Comfort Plus.

This RS Rep' goes further than the cosmetic niceties, however. Beneath the repainted shell lies a total mechanical overhaul and this is where you appreciate the ability to make a modern interpretation of a classic.

The brakes are made up of a combination of 993 Turbo front discs and callipers with a

custom setup on the rear axle using 964 RS components. The pads are supplied by EBC, the hoses are stainless steel braided items and the fluid Castrol's high temperature mixture.

The suspension has equally been thoroughly thought-out. Starting with the 964 RS 'base' settings, Brain has used his motorsport background (rallying, Porsche Cup) to come up with a setup that utilises Bilstein dampers valved to his specification and RS springs and top mounts as well as the anti-roll bar and links from the same model. A carbon fibre strut brace runs the width of the front luggage compartment. It's the same ingredients at the rear, although the Bilstein dampers are valved identical to an RS.

The heart of the Rep' is its 3.6-litre flat-six. Once removed from the 964's tail it is stripped to a bare block and overhauled to within an inch of its life. The crank and rods are balanced and polished and the bottom end reassembled with new shells and rings. The cylinder heads, once stripped, are polished and gas flowed and new valve guides, chains and head studs are all

used to put it back together again. A new oil pump is also installed along with a new flywheel and clutch assembly from a 964 RS. Filters, plugs and all the ancillaries and hoses are new, as too is an oil cooler fitted at the front of the car. Once remapped and the fruity straight-through exhaust is in place, the headline power figure is 293hp, 33bhp up on the original 964RS.

On first acquaintances any 964 follower will be hard pushed to distinguish this example from the genuine article. The three-piece BBS wheels may be non-standard but that's not an uncommon occurrence these days, and it's only when you catch sight of the window and sunroof switches that the dedicated RS follower will spot a fraud. But these are tiny distractions in an otherwise flawless product.

The flat-six fires into life with the same ferocious bark of the genuine article, and from here on in the experience intensifies as this Rep' takes you on a journey of discovery.

Across the edge of the Pennines, where we've stopped for photography, are some wondrous

roads that twist and buck across the ever-changing scenery, and from behind the wheel of this 964 the experience is even further intensified. The engine's performance is beyond question as it flies through the rev range and each gear of the standard five-speed 'box feels perfectly matched to it as that distinctive 964 bark gets ever louder over your shoulder. The engine's performance is, in some respects, a given and the deciding factor as to the success of this conversion is how the car behaves as you exploit its talent. And it's got talent by the bucket load.

Criticism of a genuine 964 RS always focuses around its unforgiving ride and harsh approach to coping with UK roads. The constant movement at the helm as the front tyres skip and dive from one camber to another can become tiresome, and the unforgiving ride qualities have seen many drivers have their chiropractor on speed dial. Thankfully, Jasmine has taken this opportunity to address this criticism of the standard car. From the moment you set off down an encouraging road, this 964



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feels nothing but planted, its ride striking a perfect balance between a level of comfort that you can live with in return for a chassis that still responds with all the razor-like sharpness of the trad' RS. The nose is more planted, it hooks in as cleanly and hangs on as resolutely as any RS and allows you to pick up a higher pace with more assurance and confidence sooner than the enthusiastic amateur would in the genuine article. Fitted to a regular 964 Carrera, this chassis setup would revolutionise the car. As one of the key components to this conversion, it's the icing on the cake.

Mention also needs to be made of the brakes; with their lovely feel and weighting they are the perfect complement to that shining chassis and addictive engine and inspire a level of confidence that encourages you to push harder from exit to turn-in. It's a sensational package.

Is this 964 RS Replica better than the real thing? It all depends on where you are coming from. There is no denying that a genuine 964 RS

delivers a sensory overload experience. But by Porsche standards it is most certainly not the easiest car to extract the very best from. It requires precision, patience and a great deal of time and skill behind the wheel that many of us don't process, which is why we walk away from the 964 RS feeling short changed and negative about the car. But it give it time and yourself exposure to the genuine article and the rewards are there for the taking.

In Jasmine's Replica you have a car that delivers 85, maybe 90 per cent of the 964 RS experience without having to work through those long, dark days of getting to know it. It's as cossetting as a regular 964 Carrera, yet is more involving than a RS can ever be away from the race track. The way in which Brian has taken the fundamentals of a 964 RS and made them work here is nothing short of breathtaking, and while the 964, in all its guises is often misunderstood, I finally think someone gets it, and thankfully now we can too ●



The white 964 in the foreground will undergo a similar transformation as the Peppermint green example driven here, but will retain its four-wheel drive transmission