

BLACK POWER

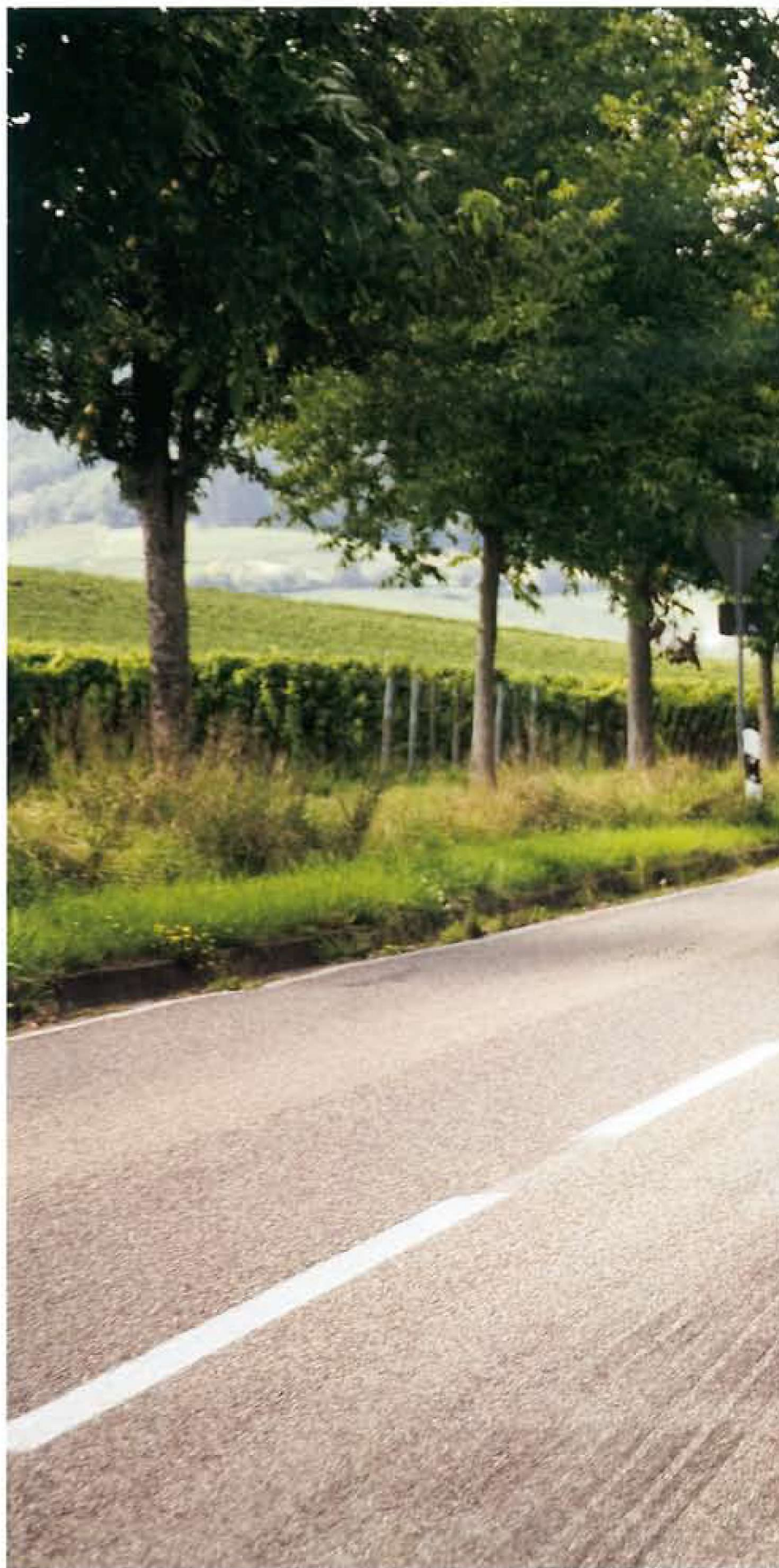
The fastest production 911 just got quicker. We head to Germany to experience Cargraphic's GT2 RSC 3.6. And yes, it's as menacing as it looks.

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Landau, Germany; a city surrounded by vineyards and the wine-growing villages of the Palatinate wine region. The locals are going about their business, and a particularly pleasant day sets the tone for what promises to be an exciting occasion. However, what lurks behind the shutter doors of this well-established Porsche tuning company is a far more sinister creature.

Bathed in the dry heat of the morning sun, my eyes become transfixed upon the carbon lipped front end of a rather menacing looking 911 (997) GT2. Its nose, set low and sheltered from the sun's intensifying heat by the company's workshop, provides an intimidating face-to-face acquaintance. Few cars, even powerful Porsches, manage to keep me awake at night in anticipation; however, this is no run-of-the-mill 997. Before I get to grips with the 630hp rear-wheel drive 911 standing before me, we set off for an exploratory scout of the countryside for potential photography locations.

Venturing south, toward the majestic setting provided by Germany's Südliche Weinstraße, a beautiful mix of Tuscan style architecture lines the village's narrow streets. A magnet for holidaymakers from the colder Northern districts of the country, it possesses an inviting and genuinely charming







"I flatten the accelerator. Boost builds, whistling evolving into a fully fledged whoosh and as the needle pushes past 4000rpm, all hell breaks loose"



Sharp, precise steering combined with tremendous mid-range shove makes fast sweeping bends a joy. Cabin identical to standard GT2. Performance, however, is not



appeal. The horizon, dominated by grandiose hills and clear blue skies, is blessed with meandering roads that carve through the charming hilltop forests to provide the perfect setting for the day's drive.

On the face of it – especially from the front – the GT2 RSC 3.6 appears to be like a relatively standard GT2. Though, by adhering to the less-is-more philosophy, it receives a firm thumbs up in the styling department. Dressed modestly in touches of weight saving carbon fibre, the end result is something that would set Darth Vader's circuits pulsing. As is the usual practice from tuner Cargraphic, the car's body modifications are a blend of substance and style, with the front lip spoiler providing an additional 10kg of downforce.

Moving from front to rear, the mirrors, air vents and tip of the rear wing all receive the carbon fibre treatment. Observing the car on this cold workshop floor, it focuses my attention with the sort of magnetic ability usually commanded by Maria Sharapova on Centre Court. Breach the car's cockpit and aside from the steering wheel being on the opposite side, familiarity is the name of the game. It's very much business as usual, the only indication of the cataclysmic performance that is to follow provided by the heavy-duty upgraded clutch.

Dip the clutch, twist the Stuttgart crested key, and a purposeful hum fills the cabin. Cautiously edging out from the company's premises, the car's front end clears the change in gradient with no embarrassing scrapes. Clamped firmly in the grasp of the GT2's carbon fibre-backed bucket seats, the dominating force of the initial experience is the six-cylinder twin-turbocharged engine perched at the rear. For many, the sound of a wailing normally aspirated unit is hard to beat; however, the machinations of noise created by this forced induction flat-six are something that every petrolhead should experience.

Shifting through the six-speed 'box – featuring a 25 per cent shorter throw – results in each release of the throttle

generating an addictive flutter from the turbocharger's wastegate. As I entertain the engine's desire to be stretched, the whistling from the turbochargers increases. Now the engine is getting into its stride, the turbochargers fulfil their role in forcing air and fuel into the cylinders at a rapid rate. A bark from the exhaust and a glance at the traffic lights sees them change to amber, prematurely halting my intention to experience the car's full-on war cry.

Within the city streets of Landau, the soundtrack and accompanying shove in the back provide an enticing hint of what lies in store higher up the rev range. Debuted in the (997) 911 Turbo, Porsche's VTG technology has virtually eliminated the classic turbo lag that dominates the older (pre 964) air-cooled Turbos, and even though Cargraphic's tuning program eliminates most the low rev lethargy that affects the standard car, the turbocharged lump is not so responsive as a normally aspirated 997 Series or 977 Turbo for that matter. Though, to pick a fight with the GT2 RSC with either of these would be like bringing a cap gun to the gunfight at the O.K. corral.

Keeping hold of first gear with the yellow rev-counter needle hovering around 4000rpm and upon fully flattening the accelerator, the car's, and my own, frustrations momentarily abscond as the GT2 is let off its leash. Chirping tyres meld with the sound of sucking turbochargers, accompanied by a savage snarl from the quad-tailpipes and a gunshot-style bang as I come off the throttle. The noise reverberating around the building lined streets disturbs the city's mid-morning bustle, causing bemused onlookers to stop and see what just blasted past. This GT2 is brutally serious, be under no illusions.

Leaving the smooth asphalt of the inner city, we permeate the villages that nestle upon Landau's outskirts to embark upon the roads that make up Cargraphic's suspension test route. Here, the Bilstein developed suspension is provided its first independent test. Riding on 19-inch Monoblock forged alloys, the ride is notably firm; however, nothing unbecoming of a machine of this nature. As the contours of the road become more granular, the suspension soaks up the bumps with satisfying compliance. Hands, lightly gripped around the Alcantara-trimmed wheel, are receiving plenty of feedback through the direct and precise steering.

Getting the nose turned in requires minimal effort, this GT2 responding to steering input with a vigour that separates it from its predecessor by a huge evolutionary leap. Now, with no visible traffic, I flatten the accelerator. Boost builds, whistling evolves into a fully-fledged whoosh and as the needle pushes past 4000rpm, all hell breaks loose. The traction control light flickers and a devilishly powerful roar from the exhaust is sent echoing around the countryside.

Mesmerised by the car's phenomenal acceleration, I call upon the brakes to shave off some of the car's momentum before focussing my attention on the sweeping S-bend fast approaching. Adjustable, composed, planted, incredible. The manner in which the GT2 RSC 3.6 speedo advances its digital readout, something only Michael Night is accustomed to.

Porsche's Ceramic Composite discs nestle behind Cargraphic's 19-inch monoblock forged alloys, providing more than enough braking force to deal with the car's extra power





Modest touches of carbon fibre distinguish exterior from standard. The car's performance, however, is somewhat less discreet





I'm left with one poignant impression etched into my thoughts by the brief display of power; this car is outrageously fast, far beyond most motorists' comprehensions of fast. Keeping it pinned through second and third reveals the kind of accelerative forces that alter my fundamental perceptions of a quick car; however, 3000-4000rpm is all that is needed to keep almost all traffic in check.

Should you stay committed and take advantage of the entire breadth of the rev range, then the top end thrust would reduce almost anything in your rear view to a small speck. Though, due to the turbocharged nature of the engine, there is a very small window of opportunity, as boost builds, to prepare for the next corner before the next monumental slug of acceleration commences. Plus, should the mood take you, you can also slot the car in sixth and trundle along below the full strength of the turbocharger's reach.

But to discover just how rapid the GT2 RSC 3.6 is, and where it makes gains over the standard car, we utilised the car's Racelogic timing gear to provide some hard data. A less than perfect black top and 27 degrees centigrade sets the stage for the first full-bore launch. Dubious of how effectively the GT2's launch control will deal with the car's additional 104lb ft of torque and 100hp extra horses, I compose myself for the run. SC & TC off, fully depressed clutch pedal and a flattened accelerator instruct the CPU to hold 5600 revs.

Sidestepping the clutch, the rear tyres light up, the back end squirms for traction and a measure of corrective lock is required, followed by re-application of the throttle, upon which the GT2's fat rear writhes in the opposite direction. Coming slightly off the gas, the rears gain traction and the needle shatters into the rev limiter. Grabbing second, the car disappears up the road in spectacular fashion, leaving an incriminating trail of rubber and smoke. Our first attempt reveals an indicated 0-60mph of 4.3 seconds and a 100mph post of 8.1. You'd never deem those performance figures



As per usual, Porsche's 5.6-litre twin turbocharged flat-six reveals little. Now, however, with 630hp and 605lb ft of torque, on tap performance is sensational

disappointing, especially from a production 911, but I'm confident there's a much quicker time to be had. The method to be adopted is to shift into second well before the limiter. After several attempts and torrents of wheel spin, our optimum launch displays a 0-60mph of 3.9 seconds and 100mph in 7.3. Given the conditions, it's impressive stuff.

The sun, located directly overhead in a blue sky shared only with a few fluffy white clouds, bears down upon the GT2. Satisfied with the performance figures and with no desire to exert the car's transmission and clutch to unnecessary stress, we rendezvous with the second of the Schnarr brothers, Thomas, who suggests a stretch of derestricted autobahn to attempt a top speed run.

Thomas, who is vastly more experienced at driving at high speed on Germany's autobahns, takes the helm. The anticipation provided by the prospect of doing a 200mph+ run, and with the car's air conditioning not blowing any cool air to ensure none of the car's 630hp is unnecessarily wasted, leads to a film of sweat building on my forehead.

Joining the twin lane autobahn, the onslaught of acceleration commences and continues unabated through fourth, fifth and into sixth. It's here, from 200km/h upwards, that the GT2 RSC 3.6 delivers its most impressive work. Wearing a nervous smile, I glance at a GPS indicated 290km/h. At 200mph, the upcoming traffic approaches at an unusually quick speed, Thomas is forced to back off and we patiently bide our time to allow the conditions to dictate a safe run. This time, with no traffic in sight, the GT2 RSC can venture past 300km/h. 310, 315, 323, 332km/h (206mph). Frightening, exhilarating, liberating - it's an unforgettable experience.

Back at Cargraphic's workshop, the car is parked in the shade to cool down, the fly-splattered front end and sound of pinging exhausts, the only remnants of the afternoon's goings on. A joking tap on my left shoulder sees Thomas exclaim, "You're a braver passenger than me, I'd have been sh***** myself." I succinctly reply, "Maybe I was." ◻

