

PORSCHE 911 CARRERA 2

The best has yet become . . . the best



PHOTOS BY RICHARD M. BARON

THE BATTLE FOR the title of "the best Porsche ever" continues. Porsche has been working double over-time besting its own products. A year ago Stuttgart introduced the second-generation 911, called it the Carrera 4—as in 4-

wheel drive—and drove away with the hearts, minds and superlatives of anyone lucky enough to get behind the wheel (R&T, February 1989).

It was the best 911 ever.

And now it's the 911 Carrera 2's turn to step into the spotlight. Using the most interesting signature as-

pects of the original 911—the distinctive shape, the rear-engine/rear-wheel-drive layout—and the most impressive elements of the Carrera 4—a bigger engine, redesigned floorpan, ABS, power-assisted steering—Porsche has trumped the Carrera 4, producing a car for the Nineties that

even the most diehard, tail-wagging 911 purist can put his stamp of oversteering approval on.

In short, this is the best 911 ever.

The someday-to-be-classic 911 profile is held over on the new Carreras (the Carrera 2 and Carrera 4 are indistinguishable from each other by anything but the rear badging). Its familiar outline is updated by a flush-mounted windshield and integrated front and rear bumpers. Like the Carrera 4, the Carrera 2 is available in coupe, targa and convertible body styles.

The craftiest exterior feature on the new Carrera 2 is the extendable rear spoiler. The spoiler deploys automatically at 50 mph and retracts flush into the rear decklid when the car's speed drops below 6 mph. The spoiler can also be raised and lowered from inside by a switch located on the center dash console. At an indicated 240 km/h (149 mph), on the *Autobahn* near Stuttgart, the Carrera 2 remained planted securely, front and rear. This is clear testimony of the car's aerodynamic efficiency, which results in a coefficient of drag of 0.32 (versus 0.39 for the 1989 Carrera) and near-zero coefficient of lift.

Whatever your chosen speed might be, getting up to it couldn't be easier, thanks to the Carrera's air-cooled 3.6-liter flat-6. The most powerful normally aspirated powerplant a 911 has ever used, this 247-bhp engine is complemented by an electronic engine-management system controlling fuel injection and ignition, and a 2-sparkplug-per-cylinder design. When the spoiler is extended, the area of the engine air intake grille is effectively doubled.

Very smooth and almost too quiet for some of our spirited staffers, the 3.6 pulls strongly and evenly from the initial clutch engagement in 1st gear all the way to the 6800-rpm red-line in 5th. "This engine's a great argument against turbos" was how one editor put it. "It's torquey, tractable and never leaves you with the feeling that you need to downshift to keep up with even fast-paced traffic." And the smooth-shifting 5-speed gearbox is the perfect accompaniment.

In objective performance numbers, a 5.4-second 0-to-60-mph sprint speaks for itself, as does a 14.0-sec. quarter-mile time, despite

the Carrera 2's tendency to shake and experience severe wheel hop when starting off the line.

The Carrera 2's suspension is almost identical to the Carrera 4's, which is to say it is descended, in principle, from the first 911, with coil springs replacing the original's front and rear torsion bars. Front suspension is by MacPherson struts, lower A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar, with semi-trailing arms, coil springs, tube shocks and anti-roll bar at the rear. The only difference is in the diameters of the anti-roll bars, the Carrera 2 getting a thicker 0.83-in. bar versus the 4's 0.71.

A quick tour of the Carrera 2's four corners reveals BFGoodrich Comp T/A tires (205/55ZR-16 front, 225/50ZR-16 rear) on cast alloy wheels. These wheels and tires, in turn, house the Carrera 2's excellent 4-wheel disc brakes. When the 4-piston calipers clamp down on the Carrera's vented discs, they can haul the 3105-lb. car down to a stop from 80 mph in an impressive 236 ft. This superb braking performance is aided by anti-lock brakes, now standard on all Porsche models.

To drive this newest 911 iteration is to dispel old memories and create a lot of fond new ones. You'll be amazed to find yourself running harder into and out of corners than you ever thought possible in a car with a 41/59-percent front/rear weight distribution. With the Carrera 2, the same drop-throttle maneuver that in the original 911 would likely have given the driver a panoramic lesson in vertical-axis rotation now results in an extremely settled, controlled tuck and tightening of the intended line.

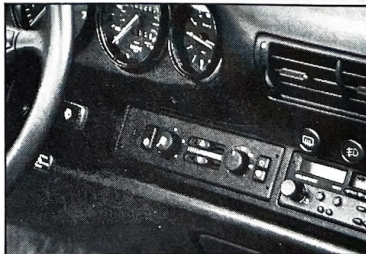
The power-assisted steering—now



standard throughout the Porsche line—is unobtrusive where it ought to be, helpful where it needs to be, and communicative where it has to be.

The Carrera 2 is a car that still appreciates being driven with skill and one that can reward such skill as never before. In extreme situations, however—our slalom, for instance—there is still no hiding the fact that a 911 is basically a pendulum, with a significant tendency to swing.

A Carrera 2 exclusive is Porsche's Tiptronic automatic transmission ("Ampersand," November 1989, page 177). Briefly, the Tiptronic is a ZF 4-speed automatic (with lockup torque converter in 2nd, 3rd and 4th gears) connected to a console-mounted gear selector that is operated in one of two parallel channels. When the selector is in the channel on the left, the transmission functions just like a normal automatic. Moving the selector into the right-hand channel,



■ No more groping around the handbrake lever to adjust the interior heat level—the climate controls have now been consolidated on the dashboard.

PORSCHE 911 CARRERA 2

0-60 mph5.4 sec
0-¼ mi 14.0 sec
Top speed est 162 mph
Skidpad 0.85g
Slalom 64.0 mph
Brake ratingexcellent

PRICE

List price, all POE**\$59,900** Price as tested**\$60,400**
Price as tested includes std equip. (air cond, AM/FM stereo/cassette, elect. window lifts, ABS, elect. adj mirrors, cruise control, anti-theft system), gas-guzzler tax (\$500).



ENGINE

Typesohc **flat-6**
Displacement220 cu in./3605 cc
Bore x stroke3.94 x 3.01 in./
100.0 x 76.5 mm
Compression ratio11.3:1
Horsepower (SAE): **247 bhp @ 6100 rpm**
Torque**228 lb-ft @ 4800 rpm**
Maximum engine speed6800 rpm
Fuel injectionBosch Motronic port
Fuelprem unleaded, 91 pump oct

GENERAL DATA

Curb weight**3105 lb**
Test weight**3250 lb**
Weight dist, f/r, %**41/59**
Wheelbase89.4 in.
Track, f/r54.3 in./54.1 in.
Length168.3 in.
Width65.0 in.
Height52.0 in.
Trunk space3.5 + 4.0 cu ft

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission**5-sp manual**
Gear Ratio Overall ratio (Rpm) Mph
1st3.50:112.04:141
2nd2.06:17.09:169
3rd1.41:14.85:1101
4th1.09:13.75:1131
5th0.87:12.99:1est (6720) 162
Final drive ratio3.44:1
Engine rpm @ 60 mph in 5th2490

CHASSIS & BODY

Layout**rear engine/rear drive**
Body/frameunit steel
Brakes, f/r: **11.7-in. vented discs/11.8-in. vented discs;** vacuum assist, ABS
Wheelscast alloy; **16 x 6J f, 16 x 8J r**
TiresBFGoodrich Comp T/A; **205/55ZR-16 f, 225/50ZR-16 r**
Steering**rack & pinion**, power assist
Turns, lock to lock2.8
Suspension, f/r: **MacPherson struts**, lower A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar/semi-trailing arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar

FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving18.0 mpg
EPA city/highway16/24 mpg
Fuel capacity20.3 gal.

INTERIOR NOISE

Idle in neutral63 dBA
Constant 70 mph74 dBA

Subjective ratings consist of excellent, very good, good, average, poor.

ACCELERATION

Time to speed Seconds
0-30 mph2.2
0-60 mph5.4
0-80 mph9.0
Time to distance
0-100 ft3.0
0-500 ft7.7
0-1320 ft (¼ mi)14.0 @ 103.0 mph

BRAKING

Minimum stopping distance
From 60 mph136 ft
From 80 mph236 ft
Controlexcellent
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop20 lb
Fade, effort after six 0.5g stops from
60 mph22 lb
Brake feelexcellent
Overall brake ratingexcellent

HANDLING

Lateral accel (200-ft skidpad)0.85g
Balancemild understeer
Speed thru 700-ft slalom64.0 mph
Balanceneutral

however, gives the transmission a more manual personality: From a position in the middle of the short channel, a driver nudges the selector up to upshift and pulls it down to downshift. The transmission takes care of all clutch work for you, and the spring-loaded gear selector always returns to the middle of the channel after a gear selection is made.

The comforting exterior familiarity of the new 911 is also reflected in the comfortable interior. The best has not been bothered—big, readable analog gauges by day, leather-faced bucket seats—and the worst has been redesigned—a revented heating/air-conditioning system with the controls consolidated in one place, illuminated needles on backlit gauges by night. Porsche is now installing driver- and passenger-side airbags as standard in all of its cars as well.

As befits a Porsche, the list of standard appointments on the Carrera 2 is long and luxurious, while the option list is fairly short. The add-on extras include front-seat heating, full leather upholstery, a limited-slip differential and compact disc player.

Like being hit with your credit card balance after the best Christmas you've ever given, thinking about Porsches means thinking about what Porsches cost. Prices have moved steadily higher in recent years, prompting one company executive to say, "The used Porsche is today's entry-level Porsche." But if you insist on only the best, prices start at \$58,500 for a Carrera 2 Coupe and extend to \$69,580 for a Cabriolet with the Tiptronic transmission. ☼

Test Notes . . .

■ Though filled with amenities, the Carrera 2 retains the purposeful feel necessary in a great sports car. Driven forcefully, its steering, shifter action and brakes show refinement while still being aggressively direct and sensitive.

■ The new twin-sparkplug engine is impressively torquey at low rpm, powerful at high rpm, and provides excellent acceleration despite the Carrera 2's tendency toward axle hop off the line.