

AND YOU  
THOUGHT THEY  
COULDN'T  
IMPROVE ON  
THE GT3



It is the ultimate incarnation of the 911 GT3, and it could quite possibly be the one of the greatest 911s of them all.

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Experience tells us that today's 911 GT3, the 'plain' narrow-bodied car enjoyed so enthusiastically by Richard Meaden at Spa this month (p.66), is so very close to perfection it hurts. It takes everything that has made its predecessors the desirable, lust-over 911s of choice and melds them into one of, if not the greatest all-round sports car you can buy today, and one of Porsche's genuine great cars. Improving on it would be not only a fruitless task, but a thankless one, too. Wouldn't it?

Thankfully for us, and the few lucky enough to have bagged an RS when the order book was still open, Porsche, and more specifically Andreas Preuninger – Mr GT3 to you and me – and his team, did attempt to improve on the company's current GT3 model. And the result is not only one of the Porsche's greatest 911s, but one of the greatest Porsches full stop.

To consider the new GT3 RS as a pumped-up, hardcore GT3 that has had an unfortunate accident with a vinyl sticker set is to not only do the car an injustice, but to overlook the immense level of expertise, experience and considerable effort put into this 911 by Preuninger and his team.

The detail will be well-known by those who live and breath GT3s and RS models, but it is worth reminding ourselves of the DNA that makes up this machine. By donning the RS badge this GT3 comes in XL wide-body guise only, meaning rear bodywork that is 44mm wider with a 30mm wider rear track. For this RS, Porsche has also seen fit to give the car a wider front footprint too, by an extra 26mm, allowing for the front track to be widened by an additional 12mm. The extra girth is accommodated by plastic front wing extensions which are as integrated into the bodywork as you would expect a piece of plastic glued to the front wing to be. They're not as evocative as those riveted to a 993 Series GT2, but they're a nod to the intent of what lies beneath this 911. The rear wing supports follow function rather than form, their openings offering both strength and lightness, and sitting on top of these supports – 50 per cent higher than on the predecessor – is the adjustable wing that generates the huge increase in downforce the RS enjoys over its predecessor.



At 192mph the Gen 1 997 RS produced 50kg of downforce, at the same speed this current model musters 170kg, and at 90mph it boasts as much downforce as its predecessor could manage at 190mph. The top plain of the wing is based closely on that found on the RSR race car with the aerodynamists incorporating 'two-levels' into the design of the wing in order for it to deal better with the different angle of airflow that comes off the roof compared to the air that flows over the rear arches and on to the wing. It's this attention to detail that enables the new RS to generate 3.5 times the downforce of its predecessor, and why a 911 that normally produces around 300kg of lift at 180mph, in this RS battledress generates 170kg of downforce, a 470kg shift.

The ducktail-style rear wing is also a crucial element in the latest RS' new-found downforce, and has resulted in further tweaks having to be made to the front of the RS in order to reduce the airflow under the car. This has been achieved with a new front splitter that stops air from going under the car, directing it instead to the brakes to aid cooling. The opening on the leading edge of the bonnet also sucks air away from the front of the car where air can swell and generate unwanted lift. Porsche is proud to call this the most aerodynamically advanced street-legal 911 it has built. You can see why.

There's more. The Hans Mezger flat-six has been reworked once more, possibly for the last time. Capacity grows to 3.8-litres, up 200cc, the

VarioCam valve timing has been upgraded and the tappets are smaller cup items for better high-speed running. The intake system features variable openings to improve the engine's torque delivery and the exhaust system is manufactured from titanium and generates less back pressure. The 15hp gain over the standard cars' 435hp is achieved via a freer breathing cylindrical air filter and an intake manifold designed to accelerate the flow of air into the cylinders by around 20 per cent. There is also a single-mass flywheel installed, itself bringing a 1.4kg weight saving over its predecessor, resulting in an 8kg saving over the dual mass item found on a regular GT3. The 450hp produced at 7900rpm and 317lb ft of torque churned out at 6750rpm not only equates to one of the most potent normally aspirated 911 engines Porsche has produced, but a frankly rude 118hp-per-litre, itself one of the highest figures ever achieved by a normally aspirated engine.

Connected to the front of the flat-six is a conventional H-pattern six-speed manual gearbox – how quaint – that, apart from the casing, shares very little with a GT3's self-shifting 'box. The first five ratios are around 11 per cent shorter than a GT3's, with sixth 5 per cent shorter, all done in the name of providing the very best on-track performance at the sacrifice of headline-grabbing maximum speeds.

Other mechanical changes include: recalibrated PASM and revised rates for the springs; the stability control (SC) and traction



control (TC) electronic driver aids have also been recalibrated; and the compound for the Michelin Pilot Cups tyres is unique to the RS, too.

This being an RS means there are a number of 'must have' components. The rear window is plastic, the sound deadening is kept to a minimum and Porsche has even stripped the doorcards of conventional door pulls and bins, replacing the former with finger pulls made from seat belt material. The spartan interior program continues with radio and air-con being sidelined to the options list. But take it from us, a GT3 RS will not suffer any dynamic shortfall if you have the 8kg of air-conditioning put back in the car. Leaving it out isn't worth the laundry bill.

For all its purposeful intent on the outside, slipping into the RS' bucket seat is not one of the most drama-filled automotive moments

you'll ever have. Once in place your hips aren't going anywhere and the Alcantara-trimmed steering wheel, complete with its yellow telltale strip at 12 o'clock, can be adjusted to suit. The big centre-mounted tachometer stares back at you and apart from its grey face, yellow needle and GT3 graphic the view is a trad' five-dial 911 layout. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

It's the same approach Porsche obviously took with its flat-six. Twist that dash-mounted key and over your shoulder wakes one of Stuttgart's most pure bred engines. First thing in the morning there's a flare of revs as those six-cylinder's glug their first mouthful or two of '98 brew and as the revs hover above the 1k mark for a moment or two your hands go clammy with anticipation of what lies ahead. Access to one of the most impressive, intoxicating and

addictive drivetrains in the business is what is on offer as it goes, strapped into a mind-altering device of what is possible in a car with its engine hung behind the rear axle.

As you await the vital fluids to warm through there are a number of elements that vie for your attention during those first miles. Instantly there's a different feel to the helm. A percentage or two of a 911's traditional light steering touch is gone; there's more resistance across the rack and you feel your hands have a tighter grip on the Michelins beneath. The PASM soaks and absorbs the surface beneath as you gently stir away at the short-throw gear lever making a mental note that Porsche has managed to remove yet another layer of resistance that has hampered the company's short throw linkage in the past. If you are anyway inclined to buy a six-

figure 911 with bucket seats and half a roll-cage installed in the back and use it as everyday transport, the RS will do the job. Not as cosseting as anything normal, such as a Carrera, but it will fetch and carry from A to B with more ability than it has any right to do.

Not that your average RS owner should be prioritising such practicalities when signing for custody of a GT3 RS. The beauty of this 911 is in the detail, and specifically when those details meld together to deliver on the promises that the bulging arches, towering wings and, yes, those graphics promise when you first approach the RS, key in hand and your favourite route mapped out in your head ready to be driven.

Kiss 3500rpm and the engine note awakens with a hard edged *wharr* as the valve in the exhaust opens to coincide with the Variocam



## 911 997 – GT3 RS

**ENGINE**

Six horizontally-opposed cylinders, water-cooled, Porsche Active Drivetrain Mounts (PADM)  
 Bore x stroke: 102.7mm x 76.4mm  
 Capacity: 3797cc

**Cylinder head:** Four overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder, VarioCam

**Compression ratio:** 12:2:1

**Max power:** 450hp @ 7900rpm

**Max torque:** 317lb ft @ 6750rpm

**Max engine speed:** 8500rpm

**Power to weight:** 329hp per tonne

**Ignition & Injection:** DME engine management

**TRANSMISSION**

**Gearbox:** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

**SUSPENSION**

**Front:** McPherson strut, coil springs, PASM

**Rear:** McPherson strut, coil springs PASM

**BRAKES**

**Front:** Six-piston callipers, 380mm cross-drilled and ventilated disc, ABS, PSM

**Rear:** Four-piston callipers, 350mm cross-drilled and inner ventilated, ABS, PSM

**WHEELS & TYRES**

**Front:** 9.5x19 & 245/35ZR19

**Rear:** 12.5x19 & 325/30ZR19

**MEASUREMENTS**

**Weight:** 1370kg

**Length/Width/Height:** 4460mm/1852mm/1280mm

**Track (front & rear):** 1509/1554mm

**PERFORMANCE**

**Max Speed:** 192mph (claimed)

**0-60mph:** 3.8 seconds

**0-100mph:** 8.2 seconds

**HOW MUCH?**

**List price:** £104,841

**Options fitted to test car:**

Porsche Ceramic Composite Braking System (PCCB) £5,801

Lightweight sports bucket seats £3130

Seatbelts in Silver/Grey £162

Floor Mats £71.00

Lightweight headlamps £ No Cost Option

No radio £ No Cost Option

No Air Conditioning £ No Cost Option

**Total price as tested:** £114,005.00

**On-sale:** Now



Plus getting in on the act. Knock on the door of 5k and the engine goes nuclear, your senses sharpen and for a split second you're mesmerised by the large capacity, normally aspirated engine lunging towards a 9,000 red line. Not that you have much time to admire the view as another one of those shorter ratios will be needed sooner than you anticipated; the changes don't come as thick and as fast as they do in a torque laden Turbo, but your left peg and arm are given a serious workout when you start to play with the RS.

If your idea of playing is set firmly at the traffic light GP the RS won't disappoint. With the electronic systems switch off, 4,500 revs dialled up and just the right amount of slip from the rear tyres the RS will crack the 0-60mph benchmark in 3.8 seconds, pass 100mph in 8.2 and at the end of Millbrook's mile straight it will be knocking on the door of a true 165mph (170+mph plus on the digi speedometer). To save you looking, that's two-tenths quicker to 100mph than a Gen 1 997 Turbo, and a whole 1.4 seconds quicker to the ton than the same vintage of 997 GT3 RS. The in-gear times are equally boggling too, and you should be looking again at the Gen 1 997 Turbo for comparisons, where it matches its 50-70mph in third (2.1 seconds), 80-100mph in fourth (2.8 seconds) and is only two-tenths off the pace when it comes to 90-110mph in fifth, at 3.7 seconds. The Usian Bolt impression out of the blocks is helped by that gearing, with second good for 71mph and third 103mph, but another contributing factor is the way this engine devours revs. This side of a Carrera GT's V10 there isn't a modern Porsche lump whose crank has revved with such freedom.

There is more to an RS than its engine, and it's the way this Gen 2 example conducts itself on the road that impresses more than its performance against the clock on the mile straight. There's a composure to how it performs that is so unexpected of the RS that it provides the confidence to push further and deeper into its limits. The bobble from the nose is kept to a minimum, the turn-in is sharper, the grip from those wider front boots – now 245 section – are set to a limit you'd be foolish to approach on the road unless you knew the stretch of Tarmac intimately, and that it was closed to oncoming traffic, for their sake as well as yours. The way the damping is perfectly in tune, to compensate for the car's unique weight distribution, is the best you'll ever experience in a 911. And it adds to the confidence it inspires as you take more speed into, through and out of a corner that you never felt possible in a car developed in a workshop with a Weissach postcode. When the grip does go it transgresses into a progressive slip with all four-corners breaking away as the rubber loses its fight with the Tarmac. Unless you provoke it to do more conventional and intentional skids that is. And all the time you're working to your limits, you're setting the boundaries and dictating the



## 997 911 GT3 RS

### Through the gears

Speed (mph)	Time (seconds)
0-20	1.0
0-30	1.6
0-40	2.0
0-50	3.1
<b>0-60</b>	<b>3.8</b>
0-70	4.6
0-80	6.0
0-90	7.1
<b>0-100</b>	<b>8.2</b>
0-110	10.0
0-120	11.6
0-130	13.9
0-140	16.3
0-150	19.1
0-160	24.2

### In gear acceleration

Speed (mph)	Gear				
	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
20-40	1.7	2.6	3.5		
30-50	1.6	2.4	3.3		
40-60	1.5	2.2	3.2	4.2	
50-70	1.5	2.1	2.9	4.0	5.5
60-80		2.0	2.8	3.9	5.3
70-90		2.1	2.8	3.9	5.1
80-100		2.2	2.8	3.7	5.3
90-110			2.8	3.7	5.4
100-120			3.0	3.8	5.5
110-130			3.3	4.0	5.7
120-140				4.5	6.1
130-150					5.0

pace. After every journey you step back from the ticking engine, cooling brakes – PCCB are optional, but tempting on a car with this level of performance if you intended to use it in its natural track habitation – inhale a whiff of hot oil and wear a satisfactory glow that the last drive has added something to your driving CV.

GT3s and RSs in the past have required you to have faith in the chassis' ability to take hold of the situation presented to it and deal with it with aplomb; which they have always done. In this RS that leap of faith has been bridged, the transition from merely making progress to maximum attack is a seamless one that no longer requires an Alcantara steering wheel to absorb the perspiration from your palms. It's only when you experience a car of the current RS' ability that it brings to your attention areas that you never thought needed addressing on lesser models. Driving quickly and to your limits has never been easier than in this 911. Whether you can reach the 997.2 GT3 RS' limits is a question only you can answer ○

