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997 GT2
530
BHP

997 GT2

THE LAST WIDOWMAKER

Nobody knew it at the time but 2009 would see the final 911 GT2 roll off the production line – so how does it compare six years on?

The words provoke an awkward shuffle in my seat. "This road is the most dangerous in the UK according to the Road Safety Foundation," I'm told as I shoot along the A285, a fast yet twisty route from Petworth to Chichester. It's not the thought of the ill-fated road that's caused my buttocks to clench though. Despite tackling the sweeping bends while carrying good speed, it's the vehicle I'm in that's the source of mild worry.

The 997 GT2 is the last in a long line of fearsome turbocharged Porsche 911s, served according to the usual GT2 recipe of big power garnished with minimal traction assistance. It's a 911 that only the bravest of drivers dare pilot at the best of times, let alone on what my passenger has declared a road that's a magnet for trouble. I Best keep my wits about me as I suss out this potent Porsche, then.

Launched in 2007 as successor to the 996, the 997 GT2 is seemingly the last of its kind, throwing a

mighty 530 horses of brutal forced-induction power at the road via the rear wheels only. Mediators in this 911-shaped fracas are the six-speed G97/88 gearbox as found in the GT3 (albeit with different ratios), along with lenient stability and traction controls, both of which can be turned off separately or altogether.

As scintillating as it is terrifying, the very remit of the GT2 is decidedly against anything Porsche currently offers in the 991 generation, where ➔



993 GT2: Where the Widower story began

As we discovered in our Clubsport and Evo test drives in issue 121, the first 911 GT2 was spawned as a homologated race car based on the 993 Turbo, but with substantial revisions that included rear-drive only, riveted plastic arch extensions housing wider rubber, and heavily revised aero at the front and rear. Developed with the help of Jürgen Barth and Roland Küssmaul, just 173 examples were built (800 were needed for FIA homologation for the then-new GT2 race class). This means the 993 GT2 is substantially rarer than the water-cooled 996 and 997 generations of the famous Widower, which had 1,200 examples built apiece.

993 GT2 race cars were ready for the start of the 1994 season, though as we previously reported, 21 road cars were available – badged ‘911 GT’ – by April 1995 and boasted a whopping 430 horsepower. Prices of the 993 GT2 are currently sitting around the £750,000 mark.



all GT models use the admittedly magnificent PDK semi-automatic gearbox and active rear-wheel steering, while all-wheel drive is bestowed upon any blown variant. Such huge engineering revisions to the chassis and drivetrain of new GT models makes the 997 GT2 feel like a comparable classic already – and it's not yet a decade old, don't forget.

1,242 997 GT2s were built from 2007 to 2009, each costing £131,000 plus options. Despite a £30,000 levy over the Gen1 997 Turbo, the fire-breathing GT2 lured wallets from the pockets of many who found appeal in a 911 boasting elements of both Turbo and GT3 in its DNA.

The GT3 cues are obvious from the outset. While the feel of the soft Alcantara-lined steering wheel does justice to invoke visual connotations of its naturally aspirated GT sister, substance of the mechanicals between it and the wheels is provided by the time the first apex has been aimed at. The car's steering is exquisitely weighted and makes for a glorious ode to the merits of mechanical power assistance. The throw of the Alcantara-lined gear shifter is wonderfully short and direct (if a little clunky) between gates, and the ratios are superbly engineered to allow for more time on the gas despite the instant power surge. This is particularly satisfying as the clutch pedal is without doubt the heaviest I've ever had to push in a modern 911.

The ride is firm yet forgiving with PASM disabled (despite utilising motorsport-derived engine mounts stiffer than that of the Turbo), but

enable it and the difference is startling. Riding over mere incremental imperfections on the road's surface now induces a harsh, crashy sensation that at times provides an unwelcome bodily experience, tugging sharply at body fat I didn't even know I had prior to my test drive. Rolling tyre noise is noticeably loud thanks to the sheer girth and profile of the Michelin Pilot Sport Cup tyres (measuring a meaty 325mm at the rear), yet this is a small caveat for their sheer ability to dig hard into the asphalt and provide tremendous – and much-needed – grip to the GT2, once they have a bit of heat in them. The hallmarks of a fabulous 911 GT car are clearly evident then, yet I'm surprised to learn just how tame the GT2 can actually be. Certainly, there's no sign of a Widower tag just yet.

However, everything changes with a dab of the throttle. There is a second or so where nothing happens, then all hell lets loose as the twin turbochargers kick in, thumping oodles of compressed air into the GT2's Mezger heart on intake. The 997 is catapulted forward with venomous pace and the steering lightens as the load of the car is thrown to the rear. Despite this, the back of the GT2 proves fidgety, and you can feel the differential wrestling to mitigate the sheer torque on offer under boost (which, incidentally, is higher than that of the Turbo). Bizarrely, it's not a situation that proves worrying though; Porsche have expertly dialled in a good blend of leeway in traction to offer flare and pizzazz to the 997



From top left: ram air scoops return to the 997 GT2; revised turbocharged flat six gives a mighty 1.4-bar boost; exit vents help relieve pressure at the rear; PCCBs are much needed to halt the GT2's frenetic pace

Model Year	997 GT2 2007-2009
Engine Capacity	3,600cc
Compression ratio	9.0:1
Maximum power	530hp @ 6,500rpm
Maximum torque	680Nm @ 2,200-4,500rpm
Any modifications	Quicksilver titanium exhaust; factory aftermarket bolt-in rollcage
Transmission	Six speed manual, rear-wheel drive
Suspension	
Front	MacPherson struts; coil springs & dampers; anti-roll bar; PASM
Rear	Multi-link; coil springs & dampers; anti-roll bar; PASM
Wheels & tyres	
Front	8.5x19-inch alloys; 235/35/ZR19 tyres
Rear	12x19-inch alloys; 325/30/ZR19 tyres
Dimensions	
Length	4,469mm
Width	1,852mm
Weight	1,440kg
Performance	
0-62mph	3.7 secs
Top speed	204mph

“Many found appeal in a 911 boasting elements of both Turbo and GT3 in its DNA”



The fastest 911s

1 997 GT2 RS (205mph)



2 997 GT2 (204mph)



3 991 Turbo S (197mph)



4 996 GT2 (196mph)



4 991 GT3 (196mph)



6 997 Turbo (195mph)



GT2 driving style without compromising its ability to stay clear of ditches or tyre walls. Despite my confidence in them, I'd be mad to turn the traction and stability controls off on a public road though...

Then there's the noise. If the gut-punch of acceleration or dancing rear end doesn't captivate you, I guarantee the concert of sounds overriding your ears will. This particular example is fitted with a titanium Quicksilver exhaust, which neatly amplifies the resonance offered by the factory item (which is also titanium), but this is a mere backing track to the spooling and hissing of the delightfully loud VTG twin turbochargers. There's also a beautiful induction noise to be had, largely thanks to those ram air scoops on the fixed rear wing and exposed panel filters beneath as they attempt to suck the entire atmosphere into the Porsche's flat six. Even at idle, the GT2 is more settled than a GT3, and those titanium tailpipes emit a deep, bassy note that's far more evocative than the vocals of any other forced induction 911 I've heard.

Typical of any Porsche GT car, the 997 GT2 is a brute that demands a bullish operating style from the driver. There is a sedate side to this sports car for sure, which makes it relatively tractable as a day-to-day 911, but press it hard in its intended environment of a track or fast road and you'll find that it'll respond in kind to offer a simply thrilling experience at the wheel. You simply won't want to park it up again.

It may have lost a degree of that sheer rawness in comparison to its 993 and 996 siblings, but the 997

GT2 is nevertheless a Porsche GT that demands your full attention and respect at all times. While there's less lag from the turbochargers than before, peak torque arrives at just 2,200rpm and is seemingly unrelenting for the majority of the journey round the tachometer to its redline at 6,800rpm. Boost builds at a startlingly quick rate too, so you have to be clever with pedal applications to not get caught with too much of it at the wrong time – a predicament that will almost certainly send the car spinning at a rate so fast that you'll simply have no time to catch it.

In terms of comparative performance, if the 993 is an outright hooligan of overwhelming magnitude and the 996 a devilishly deviant assailant, the 997 is the reformed associate, capable of outright annihilation but providing maturity and accomplishment where necessary to the GT2 package. For me, it's the perfect balance and perhaps the best of the entire lineup. That it is likely to be the last era of GT2 to leave the factory for the foreseeable future only makes this particular 911 even more special than it was at launch.

What's the ownership experience with the GT2 like? Custodian of this example, Paul, uses it as a weekend toy, ensuring its sensational performance is put to good use by attending many of the increasingly popular VMAX 200 events. Paul tells me quite frankly that he's had the car at 201mph and said it still had more to give, and I believe him. Paul promptly recalls one of his more memorable duels at VMAX against a GT2 RS,

where he claims there was nothing between the two cars until well after the 150mph mark, when the RS started to pull away. Nevertheless, for a GT car that currently costs around the same as a 991 Turbo S, that really does represent a staggeringly good Porsche performance package.

As I hand the GT2 back, I realise my drive in this special 997 shouldn't just be about celebrating a chapter of Porsche's ever-illustrious past. Far more purposeful than that, it also provides me with a great deal of confidence about the future.

You see, despite this being a year where the 911 is to switch to turbocharging for its entire model lineup, I am no longer worried. After all, the 997 GT2 is a timely reminder of what Porsche can do with a forced-induction 911, and that the company is adept – and have been for some time – at building sensational turbocharged models for us to enjoy. Absolutely, recent iterations of 911 Turbo have sacrificed a degree of involvement for a human being in the push for an invincible supercar experience, but the GT2 shows just what's possible with the setup – and thankfully, Porsche know exactly how to achieve it.

As for the future of the 997 GT2? Well, not surprisingly values of these are going up and still have room to climb, as we told you in issue 126. This is for good reason: even on the back of what we've seen from the expansive 991-generation thus far, the 997 GT2 is still one of the very best 911s ever built for sheer driver involvement and astonishing performance. It really is *that* good. **911**



Though rear seats remain elusive, the 997 cabin is far more refined than the 996, with PASM, traction control, stability control and Sport Chrono technology now at the mercy of the driver. Bolt-in roll cage is an optional extra

