

THE FORGOTTEN 911

The short-lived Carrera 3.0 might just be the most significant 911 that nobody knows about. Total 911 studies its backstory...

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Carrera 3.0: the forgotten 911

The short-lived Carrera 3.0 might just be the most significant 911 that nobody knows about. Total 911 studies its backstory...

Written by Kyle Fortune



Photography courtesy Simon Jessop

The curiosities of the 911 are almost infinite. No other car is so obsessively detailed in its history, so loved by enthusiasts and praised by experts.

Now in its 61st year of production, and with over a million constructed, Porsche's rear-engined oddity is without doubt a motoring icon. It defines the company to this day, and remains the benchmark for any rival manufacturer intent on taking on Porsche's sports car. Whole publications exist because of it. Communities thrive on it. The 911 really does transcend the mere definition of 'car'.

Naturally, within the 911's history there are models that receive more acclaim than others. More often than not, these cars are defined by motorsport success, a seismic technical change, or sheer proliferation and longevity. Others are relegated to supporting roles, sometimes overlooked or – dare we say it – forgotten about. If there's one 911 variant that falls into this final category it's the Carrera 3.0. This model has become something of an enigmatic footnote in the 911's lengthy and varied narrative.

Puzzlingly, the Carrera 3.0 (or Carrera 3) has acquired this reputation despite the car meeting a lot of the criteria that would otherwise mark it out as distinct and interesting. Not least is the fact that it's relatively rare, with the most commonly quoted production number – and the one in Total 911's Data File – suggesting that 3,687 were built.

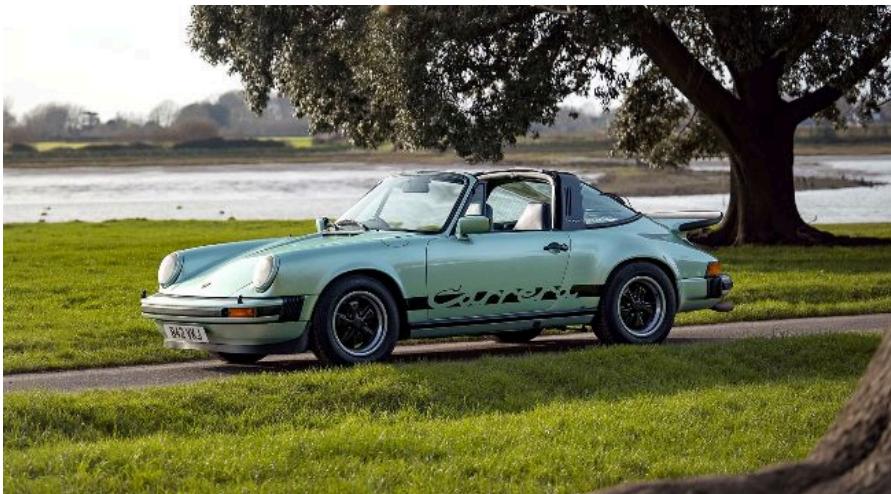
That number is apparently split roughly into two-thirds Coupe (with 2,564) and one-third Targa (1,123). The majority are manuals that use the 915 gearbox, with either four- or, optionally, five-speeds. A little in excess of 400 would also be ordered with Porsche's two-pedal, three-speed semi-automatic Sportomatic transmission, which was a no-cost option according to Porsche UK's 1977 price list.

Furthermore, the Carrera 3 is listed at the same price in either Coupe or Targa guise, with the standard Carrera 3 costing £13,999 and the Carrera 3 Sport coming in at £14,999. At the time the base 911 2.7-litre cost £9,999 and the Turbo £19,499. Over the standard Carrera 3 in the UK the Carrera 3 Sport would benefit from standard M409 sports seats, M473 front and rear spoilers (the rear being a whale tail) and M474 Bilstein shock absorbers over the standard Koni items of the non-Sport model. No-cost options included an electric sunroof, the five- as opposed to four-speed manual or the Sportomatic transmission, and Targa bodywork. Interestingly, the standard fitment in the UK of a rear wiper was deleted should you option air conditioning. The original owner of the beautiful '77 car pictured here, which was recently restored at Philip Raby Specialist Cars, took that option for the Targa body and it looks sensational.

The standard specification was, for the time, seen as luxurious. The Carrera 3.0 Sport's equipment levels were comparable to the Turbo above it and, in the case of standard sports seats (on the Sport) and the possibility of a five-speed transmission, actually better than that of the flagship Turbo model. Outside, matt black trim around the windows as well as matt black badging was fitted, although this could optionally be returned to chrome. Electric windows, a new locking system, high-pressure headlight washers, automatic heater controls situated between the seats, a 38cm leather-covered sports steering wheel, standard leather seats, thick carpets and revised door cards with deep, rigid door pocket were also fitted. The Carrera 3 would also debut the electrically operated 'flag' rear-view door mirrors that would run right up to and into the 964-era 911.







Those mirrors might have had a long life, but the Carrera 3's production run would be brief, running from 1976 to 1977. In its final year it benefitted from a new dash with central air vents, a smoother operating clutch after Porsche installed an omega spring, as well as improved brake pedal feel and response thanks to the addition of a brake booster. As its pricing reveals, it would be sandwiched in the line-up between the regular 911, which retained the 2.7-litre engine, and the new 930 Turbo above it.

That the Carrera 3 wasn't sold in North America perhaps goes some way to explain why it's often been forgotten, although this does the Carrera 3 a

serious disservice. Another factor in the relative obscurity and overlooked nature of the Carrera 3 is that the 930 Turbo arrived a year earlier in 1975. Its impact was such that Porsche's regular models would be largely ignored in the presence of the turbocharged powerhouse. The 3.0 also followed the 2.7 MFI Carrera, with all the mystique that comes with that engine capacity, and this fact hasn't helped this two-year curio find its rightful place in history, either.

The Turbo engine of the 930, itself related to the rare 1974 Carrera 3.0 RS, is key in the Carrera 3's specification. Essentially, the Carrera 3 is a Turbo engine without the KKK Turbo. Obviously, there's a bit more detail than that, but the 3.0-litre engine shares the same die-cast aluminium crankcase and 2,994cc capacity. Its designation of 930/02 (930/12 for Sportomatic cars) highlights the link with its force-induction relation. Indeed, that 930 series engine code would continue through to the SC that followed the Carrera 3 and on to the 3.2 Carrera series after that, before the 3.6-litre M64 series arrived in 1989.

With its 95mm cylinder bore (up from the 2.7's 90mm), the same stroke of 70.4mm as the Turbo, and lined with Nikasil (see page 90 for more on this technology), the 3.0 Carrera came fitted with cast-aluminium pistons that were domed to increase the compression ratio. The pistons were

attached to a crankshaft from the 2.7 RS, which was fitted with a six-bolt flywheel. The valving sizing matched that of the 3.0 RS, with a 49mm inlet and 41.5mm exhaust. The 39mm intake port on the 3.0-litre engine was larger than that of the Turbo. The 3.0-litre came with its own cam profile and was fuelled by a more powerful fuel pump: Bosch's K-Jetronic injection. Here, the K refers for the German spelling of continuous, as opposed to pulsed injection. This more sophisticated fuel-injection approach improved power, economy and emissions.

“Simplistically yet accurately put, the Carrera 3.0 is a Turbo engine without the KKK Turbo”



The 3.0-litre was fitted with a more powerful oil pump and a faster-running cooling fan (some 38 per cent quicker than the standard fitment). Uniquely, this was a five-vane design, with a shallower pitch and around an inch in diameter

smaller compared to Porsche's more usual 11-vane fan. Quickerrunning crank pulleys were added to achieve this. This was necessary to keep the alternator charging even at lower engine speeds. The net result of all the revisions Porsche made for its Carrera 3.0 was a power output listed at a nice, round 200hp at 6,000rpm. That's actually 10hp shy of the Carrera 2.7 that went before it, but as with everything relating to the Carrera 3.0, that deficit requires some clarification. There's only around 300rpm between the peak outputs for both cars, with the 2.7 Carrera's 210hp arriving at 6,300rpm and the 3.0 Carrera's 200hp produced at 6,000rpm. However, power only tells part of the story.

Where the bigger engine revealed its advantage is in relation to torque. The output of 255Nm is the same as its 2.7-litre relation, but how it's delivered creates a different type of performance. The Carrera 3 would match the 2.7 Carrera's 6.3s 0-62mph time, yet with its peak torque produced at 4,200rpm compared to the 2.7 Carrera's 5,100rpm, the Carrera 3's performance is more readily accessible at lower engine speeds. Contemporary tests of the cars conducted back-to-back by the famously analytical German automotive publications noted that the Carrera 3 could pull from 25mph to 100mph in top gear some three seconds faster than both the 2.7 Carrera and its RS predecessor.

Those tests also highlighted Porsche's famously conservative quoting of performance figures, with the stopwatch revealing 0-62mph was possible in under six seconds and a top speed of 145mph, with Porsche quoting 142mph.







“The Carrera 3.0 is lighter than its lower-powered SC replacement in 1978”

Helping here is a kerb weight listed at just 1,120kg. This was partially achieved by Porsche’s adoption of more aluminium components, including the rear semi-trailing arms, front suspension cross-member, gearbox and steering gear housings. The upshot was that despite the Carrera 3’s additional luxury equipment, it was lighter than its lower-powered SC replacement from 1978, with the earlier, more powerful car quietly revered among drivers thanks to not just the immediacy and ease of its power delivery and performance, but the deftness of its chassis. Raby’s a fan of how it drives, saying: “it’s really nice to drive, in fairness, it was before we restored it, it feels light, lighter

than the cars that followed it, but with great performance from the 3.0-litre engine.”

The Carrera 3 featured 20mm thick front and 18mm rear anti-roll bars, as well as 282mm front and 290mm rear brakes. These were situated behind standard 15-inch alloy wheels that were six inches wide on the front and seven on the rear, with the option for these to be seven inches front and eight inches on the rear. Porsche subtly flared the wheel arches to accommodate the wider wheels and tyres.

Put all this together, and the Carrera 3.0 makes for a driving experience that’s easily the equal to its predecessor, the 2.7 Carrera. On paper, it’s certainly a car that stacks up favourably not just to the car it replaced, but the car that followed it: the SC, which produced less power.

Indeed, its lineage, relative rarity, the driving experience, the fact that it benefitted from hot zinc galvanisation (the stainless steel bar on the Targa also gained improved corrosion resistance) and the introduction of equipment that was at the time fairly revolutionary in the sports car marketplace should mark it out as a remarkable, desirable car. The Carrera 3.0 also improved on economy while matching, and in reality, bettering the performance of the 2.7 Carrera.

In the history of the 911, it's therefore staggering that the Carrera 3.0 has been largely forgotten about. This is partially down to the model rarely referenced either by Porsche itself or in Porscencentric publications. It's certainly never been pored over with the sort of obsessive, multiple book-filling detail of models such as the 2.7 Carrera, 2.7 RS, 930 Turbo and later 3.2 Carrera. The car's only known to only a few, and we suspect that those who have experienced it first-hand may be keeping quiet about it for good reason.

Enigmatic and understated then, but really quite brilliant – as is so often is the case with the most interesting people in the room. The Carrera 3 is a car that's worth seeking out and experiencing, especially in this 50th year celebration of the impact bumper 911s. Just don't tell anyone, right?

THANKS

The example in our photographs was recently restored by Philip Raby Specialist Cars. For more details on Philip Raby's restoration services please telephone +44 (0) 1243 780389 or visit philipraby.co.uk.