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911 GT2 RS not extreme enough for you? Try this 691hp weapon

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REGULARS

010 NEWS

We pay a visit to a great new motoring event; Chelsea AutoLegends, and pop along to the Goodwood Revival for a bit of nostalgia. We also have the latest news and products from the world of Porsche and a Binatone sat-nav system for one lucky reader to win.

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Welcome to
THE FAMILY

We introduce Porsche's Boxster Spyder to its illustrious –
and rare – forbearers, the 930 and 964 Speedster.

Story: Dominic Holtam Photography: David Smith





“I enjoy driving the tent,” quips one of the chaps from the office. Jealousy. Pure jealousy. He’ll be tapping away at a keyboard all afternoon while I head north towards the purple heather-hazed expanses of the Yorkshire Moors at the wheel of a Porsche Boxster Spyder. It’s a car I’ve thus far only experienced in mildly-modified form courtesy of Speedart (and enjoyed immensely). I can’t see any reason why today should be different.

Except that, thinking back, the German weather proved to be delightful and the Spyder’s flimsy roof remained stowed at all times. But there’s the odd shower in the air and I decide to leave the lid up today. I’ve travelled less than five miles before my colleague’s words ring in my ears. A bizarre fluttering sound fills the cockpit and I glance up to see the whole roof flapping like a startled crow. By the end of the trip I will have tinnitus ringing in my ears, too.

I wonder if the government might consider fitting this type of roof to every new car on sale today – it would almost guarantee that drivers would adhere to the speed limit as the assault on your ear drums beyond 70mph makes illegality a painful exercise.

The rest of the cabin has a Spartan purity to it, certainly. By which I mean there’s little of the luxury that drivers of modern sports cars will have become accustomed. There’s no air-con, no sat nav, no leathered-up dash; there is a radio, but you have to drive very slowly to be able to hear it. Even the door handles have been replaced with fabric pulls in classic Porsche lightweight fashion.

The tent (Porsche doesn’t really call it a roof, and with very good reason, referring to it as a sunshield/weather protector) itself weighs just 6kg, the carbon frame that locates it all barely another 5kg (a total saving of over 20kg). Ultra-light 19-inch wheels shave 12kg more off

crucially unsprung weight from the standard car, aluminium doors a further 15kg. In total, the Spyder is 80kg lighter than the Boxster S on which it is based.

All-in-all I approve of this way of thinking. This is supposed to be a focussed driving tool. Less weight means more go – and Porsche has a happy knack of getting away with charging more for less. But in this instance there is more as well as less: 10hp extra and more revs to play with, plus a lightly-beefed torque curve underpinning things, too.

So you know that your extra £4000 has gone somewhere, although that’s an extra £4000 on the list price, and that’s before you start to get imaginative with the options list or plan to restore those missing luxuries, such as air-con. The average spend on options by UK customers is 20%. You have to wonder if that really makes for a shrewd investment of funds.

Talking of investment, it is perhaps worth taking a broader look at the marketplace here. Something remarkable has happened to the used Porsche sales in recent times. As mass-produced models such as the 996 and Boxster reached the public in a (relative) flood, used values of these models are pretty depressed. A 3.4-litre 996 is barely worth £10,000 today. Half that amount will buy you an early Boxster 2.5.

However, by contrast, some models are going through the roof. “Basically, anything that’s been produced in limited numbers is proving hugely popular,” explains John Hawkins of Specialist Cars of Malton. “For example, the 964 RS and 3.2 Club Sport have rocketed in value. We’ve got an immaculate right-hook 993 GT2 heading to a customer overseas for £300,000. But there were only a handful ever built and that’s what makes it so collectable.”

As the puny interest rates, antsy FTSE and depressed property market are offering such feeble returns for investors, there is a definite



trend towards spending money on things that can be enjoyed as well as being potential money-spinners. Vintage watches and classic guns have soared in price as people have got creative when spending their bonuses. The same is true of classic cars – and rare gems from Stuttgart have become the most sought after.

Few Porsche models carry a more evocative name than 'Speedster', and a brace of white beauties are been preened and polished on the Malton forecourt as I rock up in the similarly liveried Spyder.

Rarity is certainly a trump card for both of these machines. Just 139 right-hand drive 911 Speedsters (based on the 3.2 Carrera) out of a total production run of almost 2000 were ever built. Porsche built just 14 right-hook 964 Speedsters, and there were less than 1000 examples built in total. You're more likely to have to clean up after your rocking horse than

stumble upon one of these specimens in the local supermarket car park.

Interestingly, the original 356 Speedster, built for the Californian market and the inspiration for all of these subsequent beasts, was much more popular and around 4000 (pre-A and A examples) were built in total. The fact that it was significantly cheaper than the ordinary 356 was a key factor here – Porsche take note.

The first iteration based on the 911 appeared in 1989 and was designed, like the 356, to boost flagging sales in the crucial US market. Porsche was selling barely a third of what it had been just three years earlier. The car was an instant hit with collectors and purists but although the production run sold out, it did little to reverse the company's fortunes in the face of a tough financial climate.

Despite being the tail end of the holiday season, and despite glorious sunshine, our

favourite moorland photographic RVP is all but deserted. A keen wind makes a mockery of my T-shirt 'n' shorts and gives a foretaste of the autumn ahead but it does little to diminish the anticipation of driving these fabulous Porsches. Parked up as a trio they make for a bloody spectacular sight.

I'd taken to the 930 Speedster on the run over from Malton. It's quite familiar, really, if you've ever sat in a 930-generation 911 – or any flavour 930 for that matter. It's all conventional early 911 inside: the seats, dash and doorcards are all 'normal' fare.

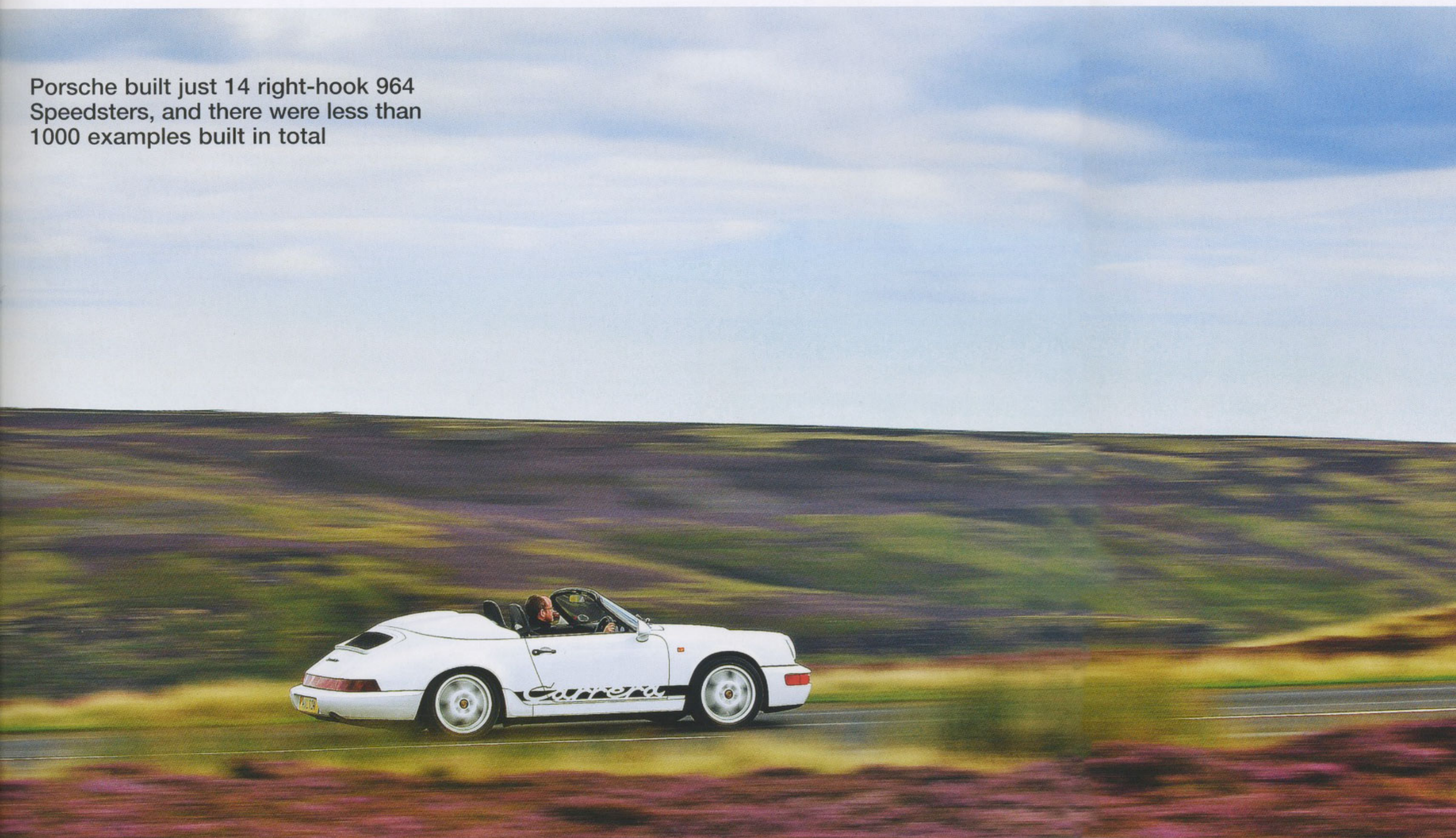
The familiar bassline from the air-cooled 3.2-litre engine is all the easier to appreciate with the roof stowed and the deceptively lazy delivery demands an occasional double-take at the speedo, so effortlessly does it pile on the pace. 231hp might be hot hatch territory these days, but at little over a tonne, the Speedster is

significantly lighter than a modern hot hatch. A 0-60 time of around five seconds and a top speed of 150mph means this is still a brisk piece of machinery.

There is more buffeting than in a standard cabrio, of course. The stubby, steeply raked screen and shortened side windows allow more of the gloriously fresh Yorkshire air to pummel you about the head. Somehow, it only adds to the experience but I appreciate that Venice Beach would be a better match than Scarborough beach. The view rearwards, however, works anywhere: every time I sneak a peek in the mirrors I get a glimpse of the Speedster's hunched haunches, muscular and distinctive.

The steering is mightily meaty at low speeds but beautifully lucid once up and running, fidgeting gently and nibbling away at changes in camber and road texture. The brakes are adequate by modern standards, nothing more.

Porsche built just 14 right-hook 964 Speedsters, and there were less than 1000 examples built in total





The way the Spyder handles is staggering. A 20mm reduction in ride height enhances the car's already polished dynamic credentials



You have to pay attention when you are punting along, and every time a sheep looks as if it might wander on to the road, my heart skips a beat.

Stepping out of the car and having a more detailed look round confirms what a funky shape it is. The shorter windscreen gives the impression of a very low-slung machine. The broad hips give

it a sensationally sexy rear view – and the high-level brake light is very cool, too. Black Fuchs wheels lurk in the turbo-spec arches (even more so than in the rest of the 930 range, the wide-body was very much the volume seller, with less than 200 of the total Speedster production run not ticking the Turbo-look box). In fact, only the

gawky impact-bumpers of this generation let the car down aesthetically – a legislative issue that Porsche wasn't alone in struggling to resolve.

The 964 Speedster was introduced to the Porsche model line-up in 1992. Based on the established Carrera 2 platform it wasn't available (unlike its predecessor) with the Turbo's wide-

body (although 20 special editions were later produced using the wider body). Porsche had relatively high hopes for the production figures, planning to build some 3000 during that first year. However, the financial climate in 1992 had deteriorated further, with many countries in the grip of recession. In fact, just 936 Speedsters were

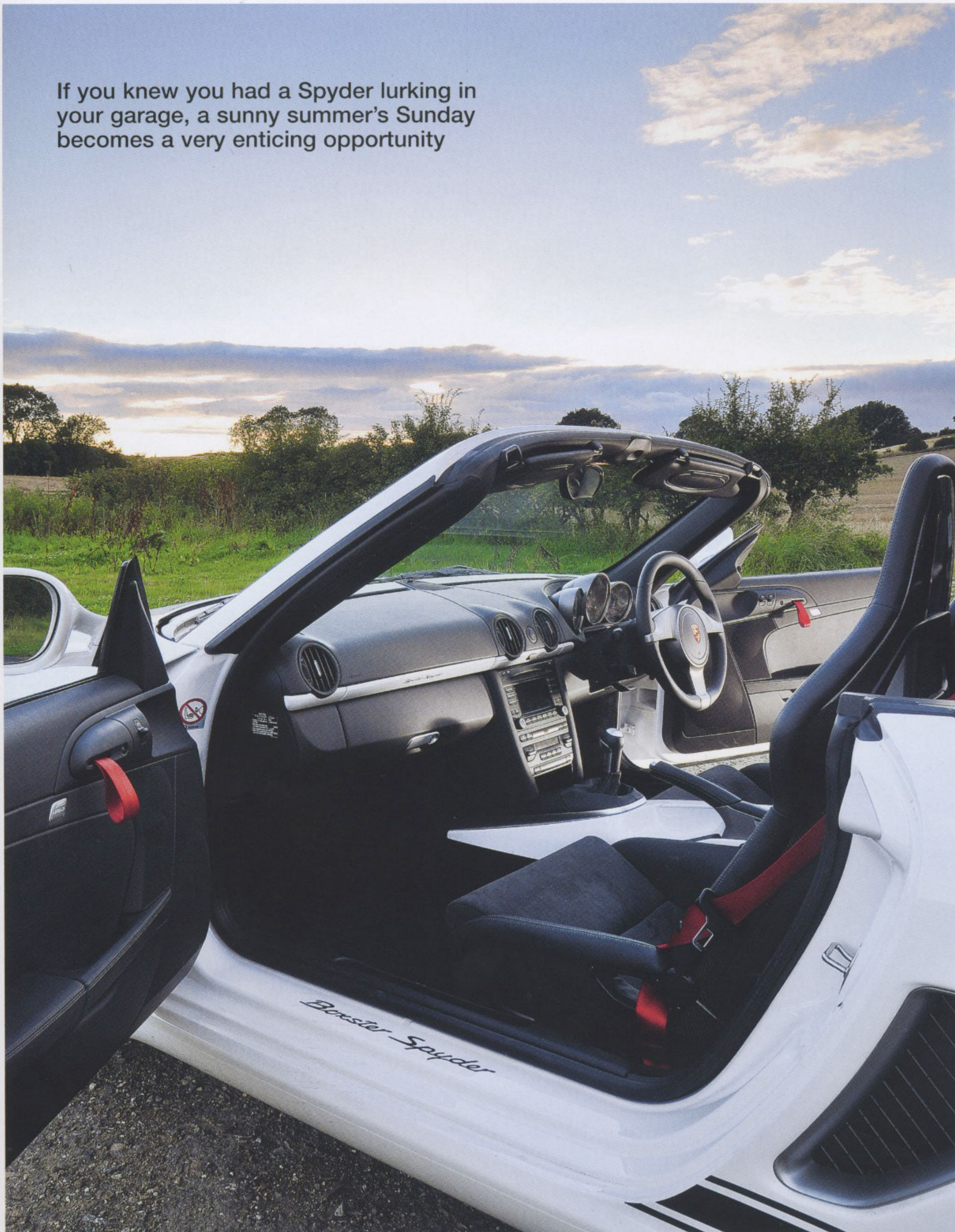
built during a two-year production run with barely more than a dozen being built in right-hand drive. This really is a very rare car indeed.

I prefer the delicacy of the narrow body. It makes it look much closer to the original 356 Speedster. Jump in and it feels quite different in character, too. Stripped-out and spartan with

lightweight bucket seats, fabric door pulls, there is almost nothing at all to distract from the business of driving.

As with its predecessor (and indeed successor) the soft-top is really only for wet-weather emergency use. It remains packed away during our tenure. Fiddling and faffing with clips and

If you knew you had a Spyder lurking in your garage, a sunny summer's Sunday becomes a very enticing opportunity



canvas is for camping holidays, not sports car driving experiences. And I don't really do camping holidays.

Behind your head beats the watercooled 250hp 3.6-litre engine found in the Carrera 2 but it sounds that little bit more purposeful as you are utterly uninsulated from it. With power assistance for the steering it's appreciably lighter than its predecessor at low speed. The chunky wheel feels perfect in your palms, too. The 964 feels surprisingly tiny, even on the move, the upright wings defining the outer limits and making it easy to place on the road. Its narrowness offering plenty of scope for flattening out tighter turns without having to pinch much, or any, of the opposite lane.

The Speedster was supposed to offer some of the driving purity of the 964 RS but its softer spring and damper setup makes it much more user-friendly over these roads. There's no sloppiness in the tub and the dampers do a good job of filtering out the worst of the bumps. Brakes are strong and progressive but require a fairly hefty shove to get the best from them.

It hits the mark much better than the earlier car, this one. It has significantly improved dynamics and a fair turn of speed but feels every bit a classic Porsche. In fact, in some ways it feels

more of a classic than the original 911 Speedster.

Finally, it's time to return to the 'Flying Tent' and experience it in the environment and the way it was intended to be enjoyed. Open roads, clement weather, no traffic. It looks more feminine than either of the 911s. The mid-mounted engine gives it a more elegant waistline and despite the double-bump engine cover, the tapered tail means you don't have the hunched rear quarters. More elegant, but less distinctive, in my view.

It seems monumentally fast, even after the 964. With over 300hp on tap it is capable of sprinting to 60mph in under five seconds, although interestingly (and academically) its top speed of 166mph is both lower than the Boxster S (170mph) and little better than the 964 (160mph). Put the tent back up and Porsche tells you not to go over 124mph.

It never feels anything other than mighty, though. I'd definitely eschew PDK in this application: not only to save nearly £2000, but because the manual gearshift is superb. Tight and precise, it adds that extra dimension of driver interaction to proceedings that you demand from a proper sports car.

The air-cooled engines have a more leisurely, low-revving feel and sound. This 3.4-litre water-

cooled unit is more highly-strung, delivering harder and faster the more you use the rev range. Closing in on the redline it has a race-car howl that is wonderful to hear.

The racing car analogy is worth sticking with for a while, because the way the Spyder handles is simply staggering. A 20mm reduction in ride height certainly doesn't do much for suppleness, but it only serves to enhance the car's already polished dynamic credentials. I know we bang on about it but there's no escaping the fact: the Boxster is a fabulous driver's car – balanced, poised, full of feel and feedback. The Spyder is just a little bit more everywhere: a bit more go; a bit more noise; a smidgin extra grip; and a hint of extra agility. It really is a question of honing the razor's edge but the cutting tool you are left with is as sharp as you could wish for without ever offering any bad attitude.

As a cross-country machine, it has few peers. And it is truly involving, too, putting the driver centre-stage and responding with such purity to every command. If you knew you had a Spyder lurking in your garage, as opposed to lots of spiders, a sunny summer's Sunday becomes a very enticing opportunity.

Of course, this type of car has to be about more than just the driving experience. The last 20



years have put the Boxster a country mile ahead dynamically. But even in its war paint, is it really different enough from the regular Boxster we all see pretty much every day? I'm not sure.

The Speedsters have big advantages here. First, they are based on a 911 – still the icon... and always more compelling than a less exclusive sibling. Then there's the rarity factor. I know even a modern Porsche is hardly ubiquitous, but nor is it a shock to see. A

vintage 911 is something out of the ordinary – and this distinctively different variant may as well be from another planet. And there is the crux of it all.

Will the Boxster Spyder take its place in the pantheon of Porsche legends, alongside its driving companions from today's shoot? The answer is, unequivocally, no. By making it a series production model rather than a limited edition, too many will be made.

A quick *Autotrader* search flags a dozen or so up for sale right now. Remember that figure I quoted for the 964 earlier? Just 14 right-hand drive examples built in *total*.

And that's the problem. The Boxster Spyder is 'just' another production model, its case not helped with the new limited-run 911 Speedster debuting at this month's Paris Motor Show. The Spyder is a special car, but the Speedster is a 911, and 911s always rule the roost ◊



The Final Cut

Porsche has started the wind down of 997 production with the reintroduction of one of its most famous models. Meet the new 911 Speedster...

Story: Stuart Gallagher Photography: Porsche AG

In a little over 12 months, lucky customers of Porsche's first totally new 911 since the 996 Series was introduced back in 1997 will be taking delivery of their new pride and joy. A new 911 that will mark the beginning of the future for Porsche's sports car line-up. But before the first pictures are leaked on to the internet and magazines that should know better begin speculating about the technical highlights of Porsche's latest 911 (one has already started by saying it will have a seven-speed manual gearbox!), there is the small matter of the final run out models to be launched. And Porsche isn't holding back.

On page 28 you can read about the Carrera GTS; a series production model that could quite possibly be the best value 911 Porsche has built. But here is where you will find the final, flagship, limited-run model: the new 911 Speedster.

The new 911 Speedster comes from the same stable as the Sport Classic, with production limited to 356 units; 20 right-hand examples are expected to come to the UK



It's been 16 years since Porsche last built a 911 Speedster, and this latest example pays homage to Porsche's original sports car; the 356 Speedster

It's been 16 years since Porsche last built a 911 Speedster (which you can read about in our Speedster and Spyder special starting on page 48), and this latest example pays homage to Porsche's original sports car; the 356 Speedster. The new 911 Speedster is not only a final sign-off for the 997, but it also marks the 25th anniversary of Porsche Exclusive – the department responsible for the design and build of the 356 examples of the 911 Speedster which Porsche is going to build, around 20 of which are expected to come to the UK.

Porsche Exclusive's most recent work was the Sport Classic; the 911 coupé that took its inspiration from one of Porsche's most famous models, namely the Carrera 2.7 RS. The Speedster takes a similar route to the Sport Classic in its design and exclusivity. The car is based on the wider Carrera 4/4S Cabriolet body and features the same Powerkit 3.8-litre flat-six found in both the Sport Classic and the Carrera GTS models, resulting in 408hp and 309lb ft torque. The Speedster will, Porsche claims, crack 190mph and reach 62mph from a standstill in 4.6 seconds, or 4.4 if you activate the standard Sport Chrono Plus. With the Speedster being a run-out special, it is – as you would expect – packed with standard kit. The company's seven-speed PDK transmission is the only gearbox offered and drive is to the rear wheels only. Porsche Active Suspension Management is also standard, as are the company's weight-saving PCCB brakes and the 19-inch Sport Classic Fuchs-style wheels.

As with the Sport Classic, the Speedster benefits from its own unique look, with design elements exclusive to this limited model. The most obvious is the domed roof cover that is fixed over the canvas roof when it is (manually) folded flat. The design of the canvas also means that it has to be stored differently to the standard 911 Cabriolet's roof, which means there are no rear seats. Porsche Exclusive has also chopped the height of the new car's windscreen by 40mm, to complete that authentic Porsche Speedster look.

The front and rear bumpers are identical to those from the Sport Classic and are from Porsche's Exclusive range. The front bumper incorporates a lower lip spoiler and a black finish for the grille inserts, while the rear bumper features a pair of side vents. The side sill extensions are body coloured – either in the Speedster's unique Pure blue paint or Carrara white – and the black rear wheel arch protectors give it that 3.2 Carrera look. The front headlights are bi-xenon units with black surrounds and body-coloured cleaning jets. The rear lights are clear glass LED units.

Inside, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the Speedster is an extra from a World of Leather advert. Like the Sport Classic, every conceivable surface – the standard adaptive sports seats, complete with a chequered flag design element to the three-spoke steering wheel, the dashboard including the tops of the instrument dials and even the door handles – are covered in the stuff. Other standard features include black stainless steel, illuminated kick plates, a BOSE sound system and satellite navigation for the PCM 3 system.

911 SPEEDSTER

Engine: 3800cc, flat-six, water-cooled

Max power: 408hp @ 7300rpm

Peak torque: 319lb ft @ 4200rpm

Transmission: Seven-speed PDK, rear-wheel drive

Weight: 1540kg

Wheels: 8.5Jx19" (front), 11Jx19" (rear)

Tyres: 235/35ZR19 (front), 305/30ZR19 (rear)

PERFORMANCE

Top speed: 190mph*

0-62mph: 4.6 secs*

Price: £144,100

On-sale: January 2011

(* claimed)

While the new 911 Speedster shares much of its componentry with the new Carrera GTS Cabriolet, it will cost nearly twice as much when it goes on-sale in the UK in January 2011 at £144,100.

The arrival of the 911 Speedster is the 21st generation two example of the 997 – a line-up that stretches from the Carrera 2 at £65,889 to the GT2 RS at £167,915 a price range of £102,026. It's a considerable achievement for a car that only went on-sale two years ago.

This latest Speedster is also the fourth of its type – a series that began in 1953 with the original 356 Speedster – with its bucket seats, plastic windows that needed to be slid into place with the door open and the now trademark shortened windscreen. In just two short years, 1234 examples were delivered. The 356A Speedster was introduced in 1955 with a further 2910 examples produced. It wasn't until 1989 when the Speedster's name first appeared on the rump of a 911 when the oldest of our trio of cover stars, the 3.2 Carrera, was released and was soon followed by the 964 Series example in 1992. However, if it's rarity value you're looking for, it's the 993 Speedster you're after, with just two being built by Porsche for individual customers.

The cynical amongst us may consider this latest Speedster as just another marketing ploy to shift more 911s before the new car arrives. But while this is undoubtedly the case, in the Speedster and the Carrera GTS, Porsche has at least gone that extra mile to produce models that are individual, exclusive *and* true to the company's spirit ○

