

THE RED ARROWS

High, wide and handsome – well, OK, they may not be high, but they're definitely wide and, to our eyes at least, most certainly handsome. We bring together a trio of fat-arched 911s that represent the best of 1980s excess, including a very special Ruf-built Carrera. OK, get ready for take off as we hit the byways of Devon in the ultimate time-warp trio...

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In these days of wide-bodied excess, such as the conversions carried out by chain-smoking, grinder-wielding Japanese 'artists', it's hard to imagine just what an impression the first factory-built road-legal turbo Porsches made when they hit the scene in the mid-1970s. Sure, anyone who attended race meetings would have become familiar with the wide-ass RSRs, but road cars? No way. Until then, the Carrera RS and its siblings had been about as radical as things got.

But all that changed in September 1973 when Porsche pulled the covers off a silver 911 on their stand at the Frankfurt motor show. It was quite unlike any other 911, except for, maybe, some of the more extreme race cars of the era. It wore the fattest rear tyres yet seen on a road-going Porsche, and a deep RSR-inspired front air dam incorporating a mesh-covered oil cooler intake, either side of which was a pair of brake ducts. It looked like a race car. But it was the oh-so-wide wheel arches that gave the display car such presence.

The panels fitted to the prototype were essentially those of the new Carrera 3.0 RS, and were necessary to accommodate the wider track, front and rear, that gave the Turbo its characteristic aggressive stance, along with the deep 15in-diameter wheels. 'Porsche' graphics in white along each side left no doubt as to who had built the car, and the even more bold 'Turbo' graphics on the rear wings hinted at what lay beneath the engine lid, which itself carried a crazy 'whale-tail' spoiler.

In truth, although the display material talked of a race-developed turbocharged flat-six, the engine of this Frankfurt show car was a mock-up, with a wooden crankcase and dummy induction system. No wonder the lid stayed firmly closed for the duration of the event. Inquisitive visitors to the stand were told that this special wide-bodied 911 was powered by a 2.7-litre engine producing some 280bhp, which would give the car '160mph potential'.

The prototype marked a parting of the waves with regard to the development of a turbocharged Porsche. On the one hand was a call to prepare the turbo 911 for production as a road car, on the other was

the desire to develop a full-race 911, which would ultimately grow to become the mighty Turbo RSR.

However, Porsche made no promises that the show car would go into production – it was a teaser to gauge public reaction as much as anything. The initial plan was that it would maybe serve as the basis for an entry into Group 4 GT competition, which meant that Porsche would have to build a minimum of 400 examples, after which the idea of a production turbocharged 911 could have conveniently dropped off the radar.

Even if the car was to remain a limited production homologation model, there was still the matter of how to market it. Here there were two schools of thought, one being that it should be sold as a sparsely-equipped lightweight at as low a price as possible, the other to dress it up and market it as a luxury supercar. Both had merits – a no-frills version would be easy to build, easy to sell quickly and hence turn a fast profit. A luxury version would be a flagship, showcasing what Porsche was capable of in terms of technology and build quality. Fortunately, among the supporters of the latter was Ernst Fuhrmann, head of Porsche since 1972 and no mean engineer himself. It is him we have to thank for making the decision to put the 911 Turbo (aka Type 930) into production.

A year passed before Porsche showed off the production-ready 930 at the 1974 Paris Salon d'Auto – it was a well-spec'd model that marked the company's first real venture into the world of road-going supercars, previously the domain of arch rivals Ferrari and Lamborghini. Public response was overwhelming, press reviews equally as supportive of the project. The legend of the Porsche Turbo was born.

The first 930s were, in hindsight, relatively modest in today's terms. The single-turbo 3.0-litre engine, based on the normally-aspirated unit used in the Carrera 3.0, displaced 2992cc courtesy of a bore and stroke of 95mm x 70.4mm. It produced 260bhp at 5500rpm in European spec, with 253lb ft of torque at 4000rpm, but a more modest 246bhp and 246lb ft in US spec, thanks to the smog equipment necessary to allow the engine to meet the increasingly





Above: From the rear, you get the full impact of the 930's wide-body styling. In its day, this was a familiar sight, as the KKK turbocharger spooled up and left other road users gasping in its wake

Below left: It's not a pretty engine by any stretch of the imagination, the large intercooler and the air-con pump dominating the 930's engine bay

Below right: Black leather interior replaces the original white trim installed by the factory

strict anti-pollution legislation in North America. In 1978, the engine was then increased in capacity to 3.3-litres (3298cc), courtesy of a longer stroke crankshaft (74.4mm), resulting in a power output of 300bhp and torque of 420lb ft.

The transmission was initially a four-speed unit, derived from, but stronger than, the contemporary 915 unit. Porsche believed that the greater torque of the turbocharged 'six' meant that a five-speed unit was unnecessary, although in 1989 a five-speed gearbox was installed, this being based on the stronger G50 unit of the Carrera 3.2.

At its launch, the Turbo came with the same brake set-up as the 911S and Carrera RS, with aluminium 'S' calipers at the front and cast-iron 'M' calipers at the rear.

However, in 1978, with the introduction of the 3.3-litre Turbo, big four-pot aluminium calipers and matching vented discs derived

from those of the mighty 917 race cars were installed, resulting in huge reserves of stopping power.

As for wheels and tyres, the first Turbos came with relatively slim 7Jx15 fronts with 185/70x15 tyres and 8Jx15 rears with 215/60x15 tyres, Pirelli CN36 being the standard fitment on UK-spec cars. A popular option was Pirelli's grippy P7, and the tyres' size changed to 205/55 (front) and 225/50 (rear) in this case. In 1987, rim diameter was increased to 16in, with the fronts staying at 7J width, while the rears grew to 9J. Tyres were 205/55 and 245/45x16, respectively.

In terms of performance, the Turbo was pretty spectacular by standards of the day, with the 3.0-litre capable of hitting 60mph from rest in around 6.5 seconds before topping out at a shade over 155mph. Not blistering by today's standards, but enough to raise a few eyebrows in the mid-1970s.

The later 3.3-litre Turbo was credited with a similar top speed but the greater power and torque of the revised engine whisked the car to 60mph in just five exhilarating seconds.

The example we tracked down belongs to Perry Tonking, a fastidious owner/collector who instantly fell for the 1985 3.3-litre four-speed Turbo in Guards Red. 'The car is totally unmolested and in excellent condition for the 51,000 miles showing on the odometer,' says Perry. 'We stumbled across it at JZM and didn't hesitate to purchase it due to the excellent underbody and engine condition. The only modifications I made were the replacement of the all-white pimp-style red-piped interior with a more conservative black offering and the installation of window tinting, which has subsequently been carefully removed to return it to a more original look.'

'The vehicle is listed as a Tourist Delivery in 1985 and was designated "C26" –





Above: Can't afford a Turbo? Then here's the answer – a Carrera SSE. You could choose between a coupé, a Targa or even a full Cabriolet

according to our research this is either a Singapore or South African specification. Interestingly it never made it south and remained in UK ownership all its life. However, we think it was most likely to be a Singapore vehicle judging from the nationality of the first owner.'

So many people loved the wide-body Turbo styling (and who can possibly blame them?) that the factory offered customers the opportunity to order the normally-aspirated Carrera 3.2 with the look of the 930, but without the turbocharged engine and matching transmission. This was carried out by the 'special wishes' department under the option code M491.

For the 1985 model year, this package was made available as a model in its own right, known under the lengthy name 'Turbo Look – Special Sports Equipment', or 'SSE', but in 1987 it became officially known simply as 'Super Sport'. Incidentally, the model enjoyed its greatest success in the UK market, where a large proportion were ordered with body-coloured piping to the leather seats.

The complete M491 package consisted of the wide 930 wings – to begin with the flares were welded to the original wings but from 1986 they became one-piece pressings. This was the same for the rear wings, too. The front apron featured a flexible spoiler, while the engine lid sported the trademark tea-tray spoiler of the 3.3 Turbo. Incidentally, under option code

dampers were not fitted, and neither were the uprated so-called 'Turbo tie-rods'.

The performance of the Turbo Look Carrera was little different to that of the regular Carrera 3.2, with the exception of reduced top speed (as much as 12mph) thanks to the greater drag created by the wider arches. In the real world, the difference is so small that you'd be hard

“ So many people loved the wide-body Turbo styling... ”

Below left: Black trim with beige carpets is an unusual choice, but that's the way the first owner spec'd his Carrera Targa

Below right: As redolent of the 1980s as red braces, striped shirts and enormous city bonuses, the 'tea tray' rear wing is an icon of its time

M490, a customer could order his SSE without these front and rear spoilers.

The brakes were those of the 3.3 Turbo, as were the front (23mm) and rear (initially 20mm and then 22mm) anti-roll bars. The wheels and tyres were the same (7Jx16 and 9Jx16 with 205/55 and 245/50x16 Pirellis) but the Turbo's green Bilstein sport

pressed to notice any loss of ultimate performance. However, there's no denying the effect the M491 options have on handling and, most particularly, braking. Here the SSE scores over the Turbo as its lower weight means it feels easier to flick through a series of bends, while the big 917-style brakes do an impressive job of





hauling the car down to a crawl.

The car shown here is a low-mileage (a shade under 65,000 miles, in fact) which has been in the same ownership for the last 24 years. With an exhaustive service history, it's on sale at Cornwall-based Williams Crawford for roughly £1 for each mile it's travelled in its life. What makes this 1986 SSE different is that it is a rare Targa version, most being coupés. It was ordered with black leather trim but beige carpets, which seems an odd combination, and looks pretty stunning.

Personally I'm not struck on the combination of grippy, firmer Turbo suspension and the less rigid Targa bodyshell, but that's probably more psychological than anything. In real terms, I think you'd probably notice little real difference in handling, especially with the roof secured in place. And you most certainly can't dispute its good looks: Guards Red, black trim and Turbo profile. What's not to like?

So, a pair of wide bodied Porsches, both in that iconic red, so beloved of the city boys spending their first bonus, both with those wide arches, steam-roller tyres and extravagant rubber-lipped tails. The choice as a customer in the 1980s would have been a hard one: turbo or non-turbo, coupé or Targa (or even the full Cabriolet). Each of them had their appeal and even today it's

difficult to choose. Or is it?

To be frank, from the author's point of view, the choice is an obvious one: if money was no object, it has to be the 930 Turbo. It's a personal favourite of mine, having driven an early example back in 1976 and never forgetting the experience of that lag before the KKK spoiler spooled up to catapult you into the future. But that's not to say the SSE isn't a great car and, if you can't afford the near six-figure prices that good 930s are achieving, then this makes for a compelling alternative.

And talking of alternatives, check out the third in our trio of wide-bodied wonders: a very rare Ruf Carrera. Yes, you read that right – not a turbo, not a CTR but a Carrera 3.2 that's been given 'the treatment' by the famous German tuning company headed by Alois Ruf Jr.

The project largely came into being due to Porsche's reluctant decision to pull the Turbo from the US market in mid-1977. Its failure to meet the strict emissions regulations meant that, short of carrying out a total engine revamp, left Porsche little option. This decision added weight to the development of the Turbo Look models, which had all the pizzazz of the flagship model but without those evil exhaust emissions. It wasn't until 1985 that the Turbo was allowed back into the US following the adoption of the Motronic

engine management system.

Also owned by Perry Tonking, the red Ruf (chassis #13) is an interesting vehicle with an equally interesting history, having originally been delivered to Canada. 'The project was allegedly abandoned in late 1986 following the resumption of the sale of the 930 Turbo in North America, with the base model 930 retailing for as much as \$20,000 less than Ruf's pricing point,' says Tonking. 'According to Alois Ruf's wife, Estonia, they only ever sold a handful of Canadian-specification vehicles while they had a licence for Canada.'

'Allegedly their licence was revoked in 1990 and there were only ever a few Ruf vehicles delivered to Canada – one of which was a signature CTR in India (Guards) Red. I also established that they sent vehicles to Canada as they were unable to secure a licence to retail their vehicles in the USA; this may not necessarily be true but we have found no evidence of purebred Ruf vehicles being sold new in the United States.'

The story is taken up by Bob Carswell, the original owner of this unusual Porsche, who wished to help promote Ruf conversions in North America. 'A realtor named Werner Molicki (a person with contacts throughout the Porsche scene in Canada) and his wife Sylvia held a lunch at their home, to which I was invited, when Alois Jr came to Canada to forge a

Above left and centre: Ruf steering wheel and logo'd gauges hint at the bespoke nature of the Carrera

Above: Blueprinted engine produced 240bhp, thanks to hotter cams and careful assembly...

Below: Ruf Carrera certainly cuts a dash, but only a trained eye will immediately spot the differences between this and a regular Turbo. It sits lower and sounds altogether more purposeful than a stock Carrera 3.2





business relationship. My Ruf was the test car for Canada.

'The arrangement to buy the car was made directly with Alois; he was a super fellow to deal with and very, very honourable. The arrangement was to have the first Ruf in Canada and to test drive it to Canadian standards, meaning drive year round, in sun, snow, ice and rain. Alois wanted to know how the car handled and how the oil cooler and engine would perform in the winters down to minus-40°C. Ruf did an amazing job with this car – it was a fun and exhilarating machine and we had very few issues with it. It certainly stood out amongst the other plain Porsches in the city in those days!'

Paperwork shows that the vehicle, a turbo wide-bodied 911 Carrera, was ordered on 1st December 1984 with an expected delivery quoted by April 1985. The first invoice was for a CAD \$10,000 deposit,

but the final price paid for the Ruf was CAD \$60,000. However, this was evidently a special price agreed in return for the information gained during the 'test' driving.

Tonking again: 'Amongst the documentation that came with the car we found a specification sheet dating back to 1985 that perfectly describes the vehicle invoiced except that the base model price was quoted at \$60,750, meaning that the additional features installed would have resulted in a total price of approximately CAD \$83,000.' Some discount!

The specification included a blueprinted 3.2-litre engine producing 240bhp. This was at a time when Carrera 3.2s destined for the North American market were only rated at 207bhp, compared to 231bhp elsewhere. The increased output was down to revised camshafts and breathing, the engines being assembled by hand in Ruf's own workshops. The five-speed transmission

was also a Ruf speciality, being less clunky than the factory-built 915 unit.

And while 240bhp may not sound like a lot today, back then it was snapping at the heels of the 'forbidden' Turbo's 265bhp in US-spec and a definite improvement over the output of the Federally-approved Carrera 3.2.

When Bob Carswell went to collect the car from the docks, he was in for a bit of a shock: it had been removed from its shipping container and moved elsewhere in the facility, where it had been stripped of its radio and was about to be relieved of its wheels, too! With the wheel nuts tightened back up, Carswell drove the Ruf Carrera (one of two he had ordered, incidentally, the other being #12, a narrow-bodied car in dark blue) back to his Calgary home and threw a celebratory party for a dozen friends.

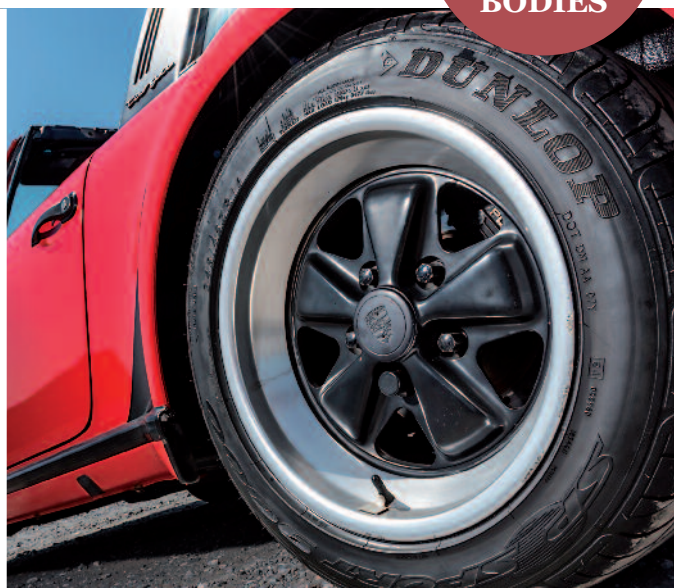
'It didn't matter about the radio – after all driving it was a blast! I did get stopped out

Above: Seume tries to look cool in his colour-matched T-shirt and shorts, but fails miserably. Fortunately, all eyes are on the car, in this instance the Ruf...

Below left: It's hard not to be taken under the spell of a well-sorted 930 Turbo. It represents the very best of 1980s engineering

Below: Colour-matched wheels somehow look dated, but we still love 'em





in the provinces but I believe the police simply wanted to see this machine close up, not because I was driving it hard (which I was not) but because it was such a stunning car. Champagne flowed freely at the party because we knew that these cars were very special and this one was a one of a kind. It was a great machine – the first Ruf in Canada.'

Eventually, the car was sold to a new owner also in Calgary, after which it found its way to British Columbia and into the hands of its third owner, George Marcial, who kept it for 18 years. During his ownership, the original Ruf front spoiler was damaged while the car was being serviced, and a new updated Ruf panel fitted in its place. Sadly the original was discarded when the car was sold to its fourth owner.

The Carrera was then tracked down and acquired by Michael Durkee in Arizona, who tells us 'It's difficult, to say the least, to import a Canadian car into the USA because they don't have titles – they only carry a registration. I managed to get it here and was very pleased and surprised by the excellent condition of the car. It had to go through a thorough inspection here in Arizona and get assigned a real certificate of title that actually says "Ruf 911" and not simply Porsche.'

Michael then advertised the car on Pelican Parts, which is where Perry Tonking stepped in. And so it now resides in Cornwall, cared for by Williams Crawford

who store it for the owner alongside his red Turbo. And this is where we caught up with this rarest of our wide-bodied trio.

Firing it up from cold, it's immediately obvious this is not a stock Carrera 3.2, for the engine note is altogether deeper and more purposeful. The gear change is slicker than average, too (Ruf clearly knew what they were doing in that department!), while the bespoke Ruf logo'd gauges are a nice touch.

On the move, the car is obviously not

“ Their loss gave us two great variations on the 911 theme... ”

going to feel as fast or anything like as torquey as a well-sorted 3.3 Turbo, and lacks the all or nothing character of the older 3.0-litre 930, but it is a great car in its own right and while trying to compare it to the range-topping factory product is an obvious thing to do, ultimately it's almost pointless. This is a Ruf Carrera, not simply a beefed up Porsche-built Carrera and the differences are clear the moment we hit the twists and turns of our favourite west country roads.

As a piece of Porsche history, this and other early Ruf cars are truly significant.

Remember, Porsche gave Ruf its blessing to build them with their own chassis number and you know damned well that accreditation doesn't come lightly.

So, at the end of a long, hot day on Dartmoor, which would I choose? I have to confess I'm not a massive fan of the impact-bumper Targas (although I am prepared to be swayed on this), and as lovely as 'our' car is, it can't match the delights of the Turbo or the Ruf.

Hmmm, so now what? The Ruf is

Above left: Even though a Targa SSE without its roof may not be the most rigid choice, it's still a fun car to throw around some favourite bends

Above: 9Jx16 rims were shared with the contemporary Turbo

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undoubtedly a fabulous car, with clear evidence of being hand-built by one of the most respected teams in Porsche history. It's rare, it looks sensational and performs wonderfully – you know there's a 'but' coming, don't you – but I still can't help falling in love with the 930 every time I get behind the wheel.

My heart bleeds for the US public being starved of the 930 for so many years, but if it's any consolation, their loss gave us two great variations on the 911 theme: the Turbo-look wide-bodies and the sensational Ruf Carrera. Let us at least be thankful for that... **PW**

Below left: Ruf sits lower and looks angry, even when driven with care around Dartmoor's sheep-lined roads

Below: Ruf's own take on five-spoke wheels (made by Speedline) has stood the test of time

