

Last year, Fred Schwab, President and CEO of Porsche Cars North America, made a promise. Never again would the company withhold its most capable road cars from the U.S. market. Blamed on emissions standards and safety regulations set to protect the populace, this absence of the best of the breed meant there was little American enthusiasts could do but be tantalized and frustrated by models left abroad.

One of the most prominent examples of Europe receiving the best of Porsche's limited lineup was the 1996 993 Carrera RS. With nomenclature linking its heritage to the factory's famed race cars, the RS was powered by a normally aspirated 300-bhp 3.8-liter boxer engine and reached a top speed nearing 175 mph. It was a back-street brawler veiled, in afterthought, in an Armani tuxedo.

"That was the car I wanted," said Steve Marchese, owner of Steve's Detailing, a preeminent automobile detailing shop in Costa Mesa, Calif. Marchese rounds his desk and drops into his high-backed chair. The office is small, uncluttered, to the point. Photographs of outdoor excursions with his wife and kids are perched on

The factory was simply unwilling to invest the time and money necessary to satisfy the battery of collision and emissions tests required to bring the model to the New World.

Undaunted, Marchese began looking into the possibility of privately importing one of the RSs. "I knew a few people at the factory and some in the European legalization business, but there was just no way to bring a car in," Marchese said with a shake of his head, still mystified as to why Porsche denied its largest market its best car.

With no other avenue, Marchese researched the idea of building his own 993 RS and quickly discovered it was feasible given Southern California's array of automotive talents already devoted to the German marque.

But, could bolt-on components make an honest racing clone out of a showroom production car, even if the starting point was a Porsche? Believing they could, Marchese contacted Don Dicker, sales director of McKenna Porsche in Downey, Calif. For the cornerstone of his American-made RS, Marchese ordered a specially equipped or, more correctly, a specially unequipped 1998 993.

Rennsport Rites

Cobbling a GT-3 together from the tuning world's best parts bin

by Mitchell Sam Rossi

PHOTOS BY LES BIDRAWN

low book shelves. There is not much else. Marchese isn't the type to lock himself in a room. He's a tight bundle of energy, leaping from his chair a half-dozen times to fish out photos and receipts to punctuate our discussion.

"It was one of those artist's illustrations showing the new car, the 993," Marchese remembered, seeing the 964's replacement in an automobile magazine. "The article said there was going to be an RS version of it. That's what I wanted," he grinned.

Unfortunately for Marchese and the score of U.S. enthusiasts willing to cash in their children's trust fund for such a car, the 993 RS was targeted for the popular Porsche Super Cup racing series, with only the Continent and a few other select markets acquiring road versions.

"What we did was order the car with as many deletions as possible," said Dicker. "No sunroof, power seat package or any of the extra-weight items. We ordered a car that was specifically designed to be lightweight. It is as close to a European RS as we could get."

It took nearly 5 months before Marchese had the cornerstone for his American-made RS. He remembers taking his family to dinner on what would be the car's last outing in factory form. "We put the kids in the back and I let my wife drive. I told her to have fun with it, because it was going to change." The next day, Marchese drove the car to his shop and began the transformation. "It all came out," Marchese said. "Motor, transmission, suspension, front and rear bumpers, rear spoiler, and the whole interior."

Six months later, after nearly \$145,000 invested, Marchese's Porsche was complete.

As expected from a guy who owns a detailing shop, the car is meticulously clean and from a distance looks like any other exceptional 993. Yet, there seems something sinister lurking beneath its innocence. The body is cleaner and more refined than the usual off-the-boat 993. This is due to the front and rear bumpers being replaced by European-inspired pieces acquired through By Design.

opened the intake valves from 49mm to 51.5mm and added another millimeter to the exhaust, bringing it to 43.5mm. Porsche's RSR racing cams were slipped in and methodically adjusted to deliver maximum torque. The hydraulic rockers were replaced with adjustable mechanical units, allowing the motor to spin at high rpm safely for sustained lengths of time.

To draw the increased amount of air needed with the elevated displacement, Harvey swapped



Under the rear deck, the engine bay is as scrupulously clean as the exterior, but then Marchese has a 50-man crew with which to disperse any dirt or grime. Changes to the powerplant were the duty of Neil Harvey, owner and lead engineer of Performance Developments.

The stock 3.6-liter engine was first stripped down to its bare bones, but with only 450 miles on the odometer, the motor was still well within Zuffenhausen's standards. To give Marchese the thrill ride he was looking for, Harvey first replaced the 3.6-liter pistons and cylinders with 3.8 pieces from the factory. Opting to keep the stock crankshaft, the engineer focused on the heads, where he suspected a significant amount of potential horsepower was being squelched.

Porting and polishing the heads, Harvey

the car's original Varioram induction system for a larger volume European RS unit. Although the two systems differ slightly in their internal valving, the primary reason for going to the RS version was a 2mm increase in the intake runner diameter.

Introduced in 1995, Varioram is a complex intake manifold which uses sliding sleeves, moving flaps and air chambers to create a ram effect in the cylinders during the intake stroke. The patented system is Porsche's answer to one of the long-running quandaries engine builders often face—either assemble a motor with low-end grunt or one with high-end power. Although many components dictate these characteristics, Varioram induction was one way Porsche tackled this dilemma between power and torque with the type M64 engine, thus getting the best of both worlds.

Six months later, after nearly \$145,000 invested, Marchese's Porsche was complete.

As expected from a guy who owns a detailing shop, the car is meticulously clean and from a distance looks like any other exceptional 993. Yet, there seems something sinister lurking beneath its innocence. The body is cleaner and more refined than the usual off-the-boat 993. This is due to the front and rear bumpers being replaced by European-inspired pieces acquired through By Design.

opened the intake valves from 49mm to 51.5mm and added another millimeter to the exhaust, bringing it to 43.5mm. Porsche's RSR racing cams were slipped in and methodically adjusted to deliver maximum torque. The hydraulic rockers were replaced with adjustable mechanical units, allowing the motor to spin at high rpm safely for sustained lengths of time.

To draw the increased amount of air needed with the elevated displacement, Harvey swapped



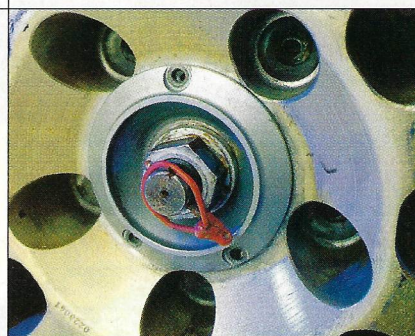
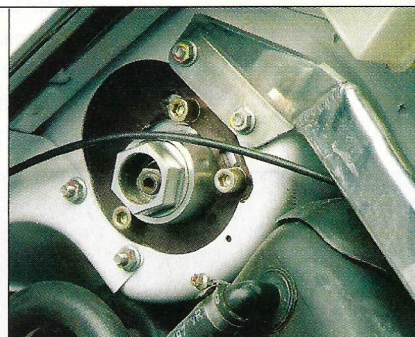
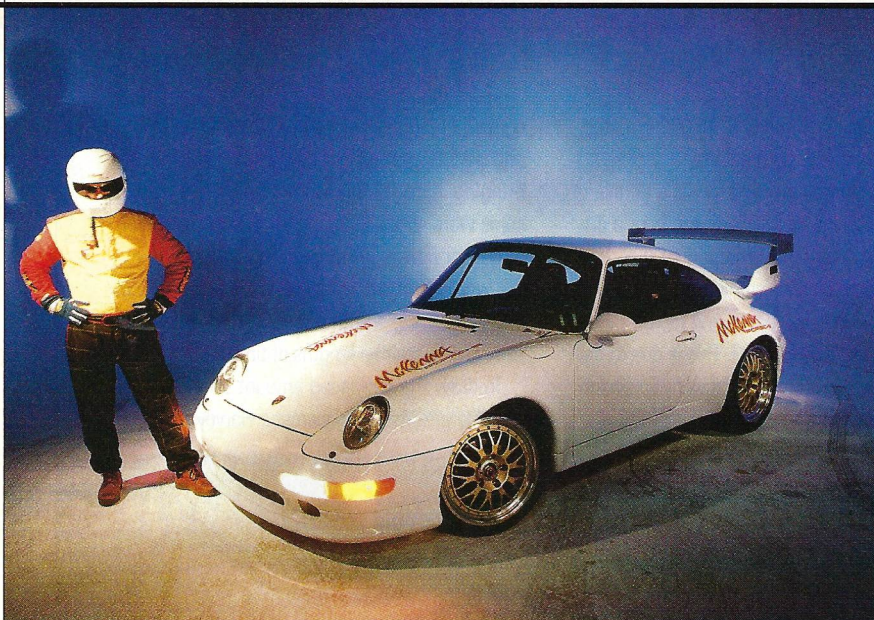
Under the rear deck, the engine bay is as scrupulously clean as the exterior, but then Marchese has a 50-man crew with which to disperse any dirt or grime. Changes to the powerplant were the duty of Neil Harvey, owner and lead engineer of Performance Developments.

The stock 3.6-liter engine was first stripped down to its bare bones, but with only 450 miles on the odometer, the motor was still well within Zuffenhausen's standards. To give Marchese the thrill ride he was looking for, Harvey first replaced the 3.6-liter pistons and cylinders with 3.8 pieces from the factory. Opting to keep the stock crankshaft, the engineer focused on the heads, where he suspected a significant amount of potential horsepower was being squelched.

Porting and polishing the heads, Harvey

the car's original Varioram induction system for a larger volume European RS unit. Although the two systems differ slightly in their internal valving, the primary reason for going to the RS version was a 2mm increase in the intake runner diameter.

Introduced in 1995, Varioram is a complex intake manifold which uses sliding sleeves, moving flaps and air chambers to create a ram effect in the cylinders during the intake stroke. The patented system is Porsche's answer to one of the long-running quandaries engine builders often face—either assemble a motor with low-end grunt or one with high-end power. Although many components dictate these characteristics, Varioram induction was one way Porsche tackled this dilemma between power and torque with the type M64 engine, thus getting the best of both worlds.



Rennsport Rites

At the opposite end of the airflow, Performance Developments mufflers give the car a volcanic rumble. "The most remarkable thing about the car is that we didn't do that much to the motor and it still makes 327 bhp," Harvey said. The engine generates not only high horsepower but also a long, flat torque band that begins with 252 lb-ft at 4300 rpm and holds it all the way to 6600 rpm. The 7200-rpm redline seems to be the only limiting factor to this motor's pulling power. But the numbers don't reveal the driver's sensation. If the Turbo snaps your head back, Marchese's 993 throws you to the mat and follows through with a bone-crushing body slam.

To enable the OBD-II to handle the radical racing cam, Protomotive Inc., in San Diego, Calif., reprogrammed the Motronic engine management system. A lightweight European RS flywheel transfers power to the wheels through the 993's six-speed transmission. Built by JP Motorsports, the transmission uses an 8:32 ring and pinion along with all-steel synchros and custom-made competition shift forks. With third through sixth

gears being shortened for quick acceleration, the car's top end is limited to just under 150 mph.

More clues to the car's potential are at its four corners. Filling the fenderwells are three-piece BBS wheels wrapped with Bridgestone's S02 Pole Position rubber. Viewed from the rear, the massive 295/35-18ZR tires are awe inspiring as they spread across the pavement on the 11-in. wheels. At the front, the car's 9-in. paws are bundled in 245/35-18ZR. But what really garners attention are the center-locking racing wheels. No plastic covers hiding lug nuts, these are the real thing.

For suspension, Marchese enlisted Dwain Dement of Vision Motorsports in Irvine, Calif. "We started with the Bilstein RSR cup car suspension," Dement said, noting that since Marchese was planning to run the car primarily on the street, his crew had a bit of customizing to do. Along with re-valving the shocks for use on public roads, Dement opted to replace the suspension's progressive coilovers with linear springs from Hypercoil. The Vision team went on to incorporate factory RSR adjustable anti-sway bars, tucked deep into the chassis to protect them from road hazards. Although the stock master cylinder is still employed, four-piston Brembo calipers put the grip

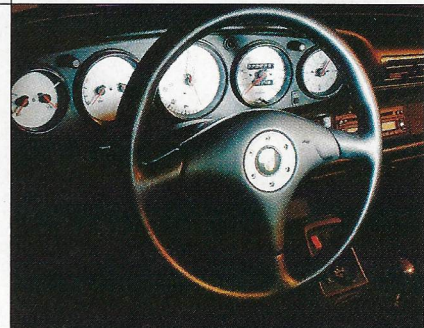
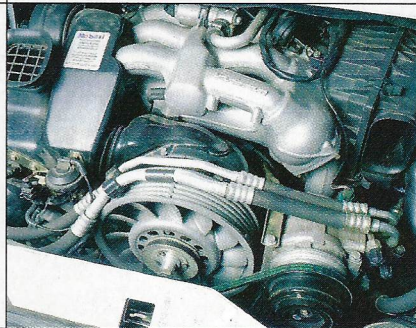
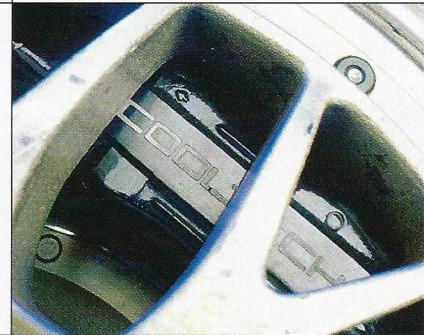
on the 14-in. front and 13-in. rear discs.

Inside the car, the appointments are anything but raw racer. The interior panels were reinstalled once the factory soundproof padding was removed. The original carpeting was replaced with lighter German low-pile wool. RS-style door panels with pull straps were chosen to expunge more excess weight.

The hoop of the simple rollbar is tucked in so tightly along the B-pillars that it is nearly invisible when viewed from the side. When the brakes are called upon, five-point Schroth safety harnesses keep the driver and his passenger secure in a pair of Evo II racing seats from Sparco. "It is basically a GT-3 car," Dement said, noting the only thing holding it back was its creature comforts.

When the 993 RS was finished, its performance far exceeded Marchese's expectations. And although his daily commute included a hundred miles through back roads of Riverside county, after nine months of pushing his Rennsport-plus to its limits, the detailer realized it was only a matter of time before his high-speed enthusiasm was going to get him in trouble.

"I'm an aggressive driver, but racing isn't my



Rennsport Rites

◀84

hobby," Marchese admitted. Realizing the car's predisposition for speed was best exercised on the track, he reluctantly decided to pass the reins to someone else.

One phone call to Dicker, and Marchese's beloved RS had itself a new parking bay. Jeff Elghanayan, a long-time client of Dicker's, not only purchased the car for casual jaunts on local byways but with the intent of campaigning it with the local Porsche Owners Club and the Porsche Club of America. However, while his new purchase was almost race ready, Elghanayan had yet to earn his competition license. Testing the car's prowess was thus handed to Dicker.

Turning the 993 from a quick, agile street racer to full-blown nightmare for its competition required only a secondary front oil cooler, a high rear wing and a set of BBS wheels shod with Hoosier rubber. At the track, under Dicker's command, the car fit easily among the high-powered, dedicated racers.

The veritable wolf in sheep's clothing, Dicker quickly began to dominate the Porsche Owners

Club slaloms and showed formidable abilities at the bigger tracks. At one particular 2-day event, where the slalom was run clockwise one day and counter-clockwise the next, Dicker managed to take the fastest time of day in both directions, something which had never been done before at a POC event.

Clearly, Marchese was right. While it would

have been a delight to see a genuine 993 RS rumbling along our highways, not having it here was not the end-all. Given the proper starting point, the right components and a little American ingenuity, even the factory's best can be emulated, if not bettered. A conclusion, perhaps, not wasted on Mr. Schwab and his employers. ❧

By Design

3074 S. Robertson Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90034
(310) 559-9670

JP Motorsports

709 E. Adele St.
Anaheim, CA 92805
(714) 772-9415

McKenna Porsche

10850 Firestone Blvd.
Norwalk, CA 90650
(562)-868-3233

Performance Developments

1643 Monrovia Ave.
Costa Mesa, CA 92627
(949) 646-7461

Protomotive Inc.

32150 Thompson Rd.
Winchester, CA 92596
(909) 926-2694

Steve's Detailing

1645 Superior Ave.
Costa Mesa, CA 92627
(949) 574-7474

Vision Motorsports

15791 Rockfield, Unit N
Irvine, CA 92618
(949) 770-2888