

**TESTED: FIVE RED-HOT PORSCHE
HONDA PRELUDE Si & TOYOTA CELICA GT-S**

ROAD & TRACK

JANUARY 1986

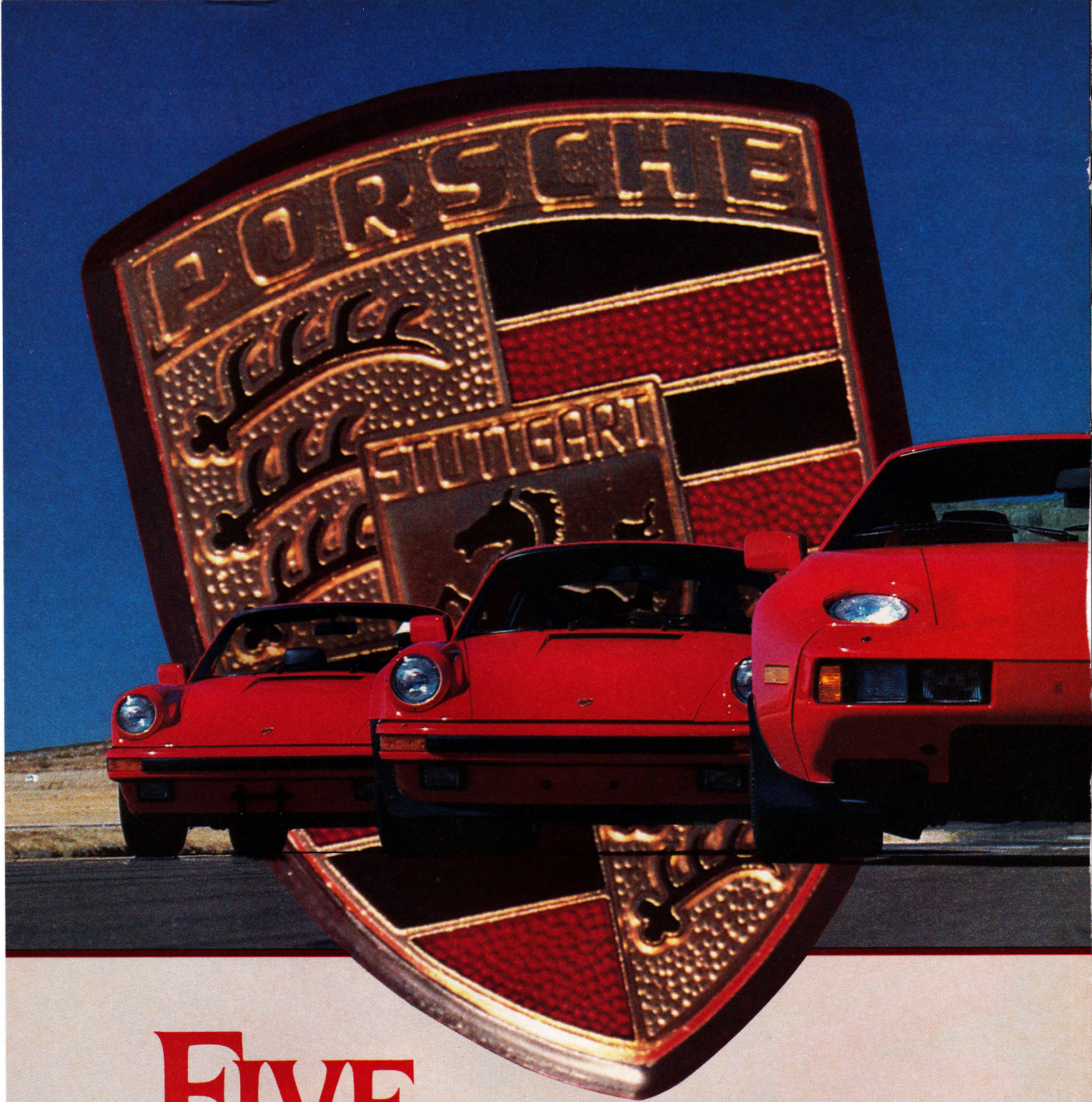
UK £1.60

\$2.50

PORSCHE SPECTACULAR:

911 Turbo 944 Turbo
911 Cabriolet
944 928S





FIVE PART HARMONY

PHOTOS BY JOHN LAMM

Porsche test: 944
944 Turbo
911 Cabriolet
911 Turbo
928S



WHEN PORSCHE'S GOLDEN eggs all came from the same air-cooled, rear-engine basket, nobody argued against reliance on a configuration used by few other factories and none of Porsche's rivals. Porsche was a different kind of car and that was that.

But when Porsche didn't put all the eggs in one basket, when there was a mid-engine Porsche and later a choice of front-engine, water-cooled Porsches, there was confusion and even dismay. It was okay for Porsche to be different.

It wasn't okay in some circles for there to be different Porsches.

There's more to this than mere social commentary or the reactions of one of motoring's more emotionally involved groups of owners. Dr Porsche the founder believed in building cars the best way he knew how. Porsche the specialist factory

and engineering works and heir to the founder's ideals follows the same principle... which in recent years has led to models that share only the name with their predecessors.

Or is there more to it? Are the V-8s and inline-4s, the front-engine water-pumpers, linked to the back-motor boxers of past and present in more ways than brand and place of origin? And if so, how?

The group

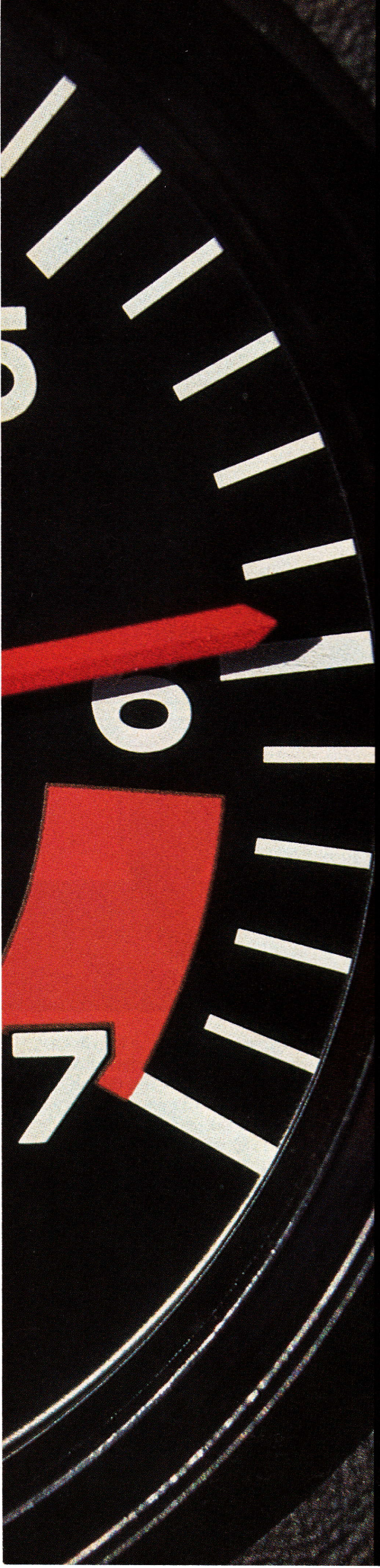
THIS IS not a straight comparison test. Porsche's 1986 model line is too different, in price and configuration and suggested intention, for that. The top of the line lists for twice as much as the bottom of the line, and the two most expensive are as different as two road-going cars can be, same brand or not.

This is a group test, a comparison *with*

rather than *against*. The purpose is to determine what five Porsches, selected as representative of the make's two distinctive lines, will do, followed by how they do it and why. All of the cars in the group were built to 1986 model specifications (though not all yet have the mandatory high-mount third taillight).

911 Cabriolet

WHEN THE 911 was announced (at the 1963 Frankfurt show), it was the first entirely new production Porsche since the 356 of 1948. And it was the first Porsche with no VW parts. But because the new engine was an opposed design, three cylinders on each side of the crankshaft, and because it was mounted behind the rear wheels and cooled by air, the 911 was accepted as a logical development and ultimately became *the* Porsche. ➡



In many ways, the 911 is still that. The engine has been enlarged, refined and modified, while the basic body has been produced as a coupe and convertible. The mix of the two, the coupe with removable center panel, the Targa, has become generic, as in other makes using the idea refer to their cars as targas and everybody knows what they mean.

The normal (so to speak) 911 in our group is a cabriolet, with full folding top that stows beneath a cover behind the rear semi-seating area, with roll-up windows and all the comforts of modern GT cars, right down to air conditioning. The 1986 version of the sohc opposed six displaces 3.2 liters, the original 2.0-liter version having grown to 2.4, 2.7, 3.0 and so forth over the years. The engine is currently called the Carrera in the brochure and on the deck lid and has a rated power of 200 bhp. It's backed by a 5-speed manual transmission, no options.

911 Turbo

PORSCHE'S TURBOCHARGING development began (naturally enough) in racing, most notably with the unparalleled flat-12 917-10 and 917-30 of Can-Am series fame. However, the factory used the opposed six, loosely based on the 911 engine, for its endurance series machines and unleashed the 911 Turbo Carrera on an eager public for 1976. Outrageous was the word most often used about that model, and bothers with noise and emissions control and perhaps some public criticism saw that version withdrawn from the U.S. line in 1979.

The Turbo is back, named plain 911 Turbo and much refined. The turbo version of the 911 six is larger, with a 2-mm wider bore and 3.3 liters of displacement.

The Turbo engine has been seriously re-tuned. Not de-, but re-tuned. The current version has more peak power, 282 bhp versus 253, but nominal compression is higher, boost is lower and the power has been shifted higher in the rev range. The result is throttle lag, as opposed to classic turbo lag, and the result of that is an engine less likely, or so the development team hopes, to catch the driver unaware.

The 911 Turbo isn't merely a turbo. The engine comes only with a 4-speed manual transmission, the final-drive gearing is lower (numerically higher) than the naturally aspirated 911's, and the Turbo's wheels are 16 in., with 7-in. rims in front, 9-in. in back. The tires are massively in proportion and the car flaunts its telltale trademark whale-tail spoiler, which also houses the intercooler.

944

THE CONFUSION as to exactly what is a Porsche began with the ill-fated 914 and continued with the 924. Like the 356 and unlike the 911, the 914 and 924 used VW parts; neither was accepted by either

the Porsche faithful or the general public.

The 944 is Porsche's correction of both problems. Although the configuration and general shape are the same as the 924, the 944 has an unquestionably Porsche engine, i.e., half of the 928's V-8. Brakes and suspension and interior were improved, the latter most markedly in 1985, and altogether the 944 represents the most thoroughly new wine, as it were, ever put into the old bottle.

944 Turbo

ADDING A turbocharger to the 944 engine is as logical as doing the same thing earlier to the 911 engine.

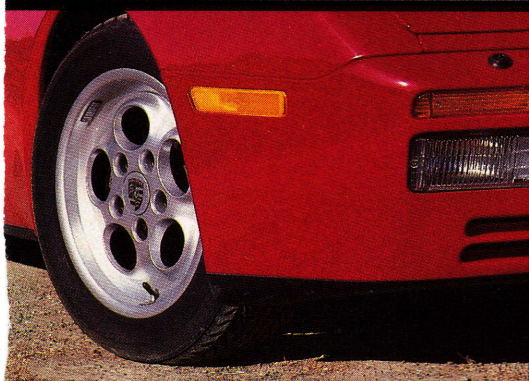
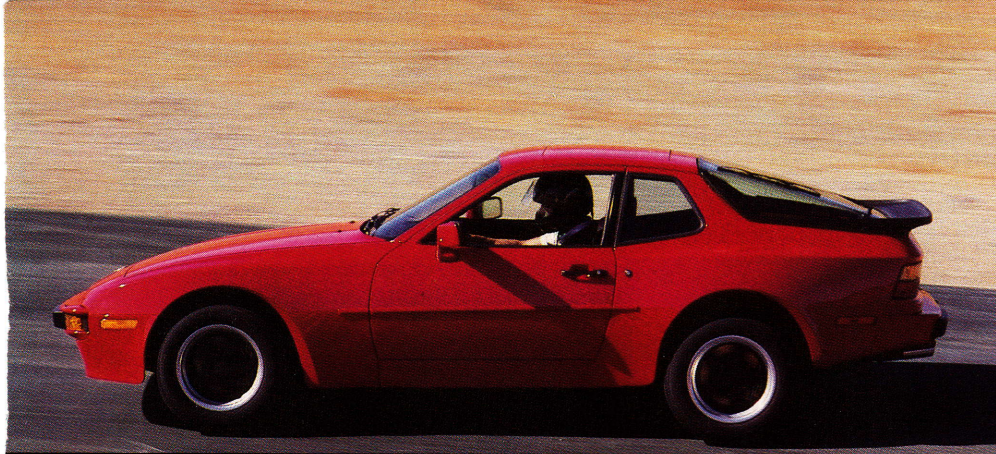
Except the 944 Turbo is a different if similar application of the idea. Because the inline-4 began as a milder, quieter engine than the 911, the turbo could be applied more in the middle of the engine's useful range. Maximum power was upped by about 40 percent, maximum torque by about 70 percent. Peak power (217 bhp) comes at the same speed, 5800 rpm, but because there's so much more of it, the Turbo gets a higher final drive to improve mpg, keep the noise down and give the car an astonishing top speed.

The 944 Turbo is also more than an added turbocharger. The 944's 5-speed transaxle is strong enough to take the extra power and torque, so it remains, although the 944's optional automatic isn't offered with the Turbo. But there are wider 16-in. wheels, 7 in. in the front and 8 in. in the rear, with tires to match. And the Turbo has a larger front anti-roll bar, a rear anti-roll bar, bigger brakes and different bodywork in front. Less obvious is paneling at the rear underside. If Bonneville streamliners use bellypans, this must be a fanny pan. The different nose and the fanny pan of the Turbo give a claimed reduction in drag coefficient, 0.33 for the Turbo, 0.35 for the plain 944. The extras, the turbocharger itself, the wastegate, intercooler, the brakes and wheels, etc., add about 100 lb to the car's curb weight, which isn't a bad trade for the 60 bhp.

928S

PORSCHE'S FLAGSHIP is very much the Other Kind of Porsche. There are sound engineering and marketing reasons for wrapping the engine in water jackets and putting it in front, driving the rear wheels; witness Mercedes, BMW, Jaguar, Corvette and the big Ferraris. When Porsche management decided to aim at the elegant, sporting GT market, the logical configuration was the one they chose.

The dohc V-8, in 4-valve-per-cylinder form, is easily the largest Porsche engine and barely the most powerful, 288 bhp to 282 for the 911 Turbo. The 928S comes with 5-speed manual or 4-speed automatic transaxle; ours was the automatic. The massive engine will pull from any speed, so the 928S is geared tall for easy cruising ➤



GENERAL DATA

	Porsche 944	Porsche 944 Turbo	Porsche 911 Cabriolet	Porsche 911 Turbo	Porsche 928S
Base price	\$22,950	\$29,500	\$36,450	\$48,000	\$50,000
Price as tested ¹	\$29,104	\$30,820	\$41,301	\$49,142	\$50,702
Body type	coupe	coupe	convertible	coupe	coupe
Layout, engine/drive	front/rear	front/rear	rear/rear	rear/rear	front/rear
Curb weight, lb	2900	3000	2750	3060	3540
Test weight	3060	3145	2965	3210	3680
Wgt dist, % f/r	49/51	50/50	42/58	39/61	50/50
Wheelbase, in.	94.5	94.5	89.5	89.5	98.4
Track, f/r	58.2/57.1	58.2/57.1	53.9/54.3	56.4/58.7	61.0/59.9
Length	168.9	168.9	168.9	168.9	175.7
Width	68.3	68.3	65.0	69.9	72.3
Height	50.2	50.2	51.6	51.6	50.5
Engine type	sohc inline-4	turbo sohc inline-4	sohc flat-6	turbo sohc flat-6	dohc V-8
Bore x stroke, mm	100.0 x 78.9	100.0 x 78.9	95.0 x 74.4	97.0 x 74.4	100.0 x 78.9
Displacement, cc	2479	2479	3164	3299	4957
Compression ratio	9.7:1	8.0:1	9.5:1	7.0:1	10.0:1
Bhp @ rpm, SAE net	147 @ 5800	217 @ 5800	200 @ 5900	282 @ 5500	288 @ 5750
Torque @ rpm, lb-ft	144 @ 3000	243 @ 3500	185 @ 4800	278 @ 4000	302 @ 2700
Fuel injection	Bosch LE-Jetronic	Bosch LE-Jetronic	Bosch LE-Jetronic	Bosch K-Jetronic	Bosch LH-Jetronic
Transmission	5-sp manual	5-sp manual	5-sp manual	4-sp manual	4-sp automatic
Gear ratios, :1	3.60/2.13/1.46	3.50/2.06/1.40	3.18/1.78/1.26	2.25/1.30/0.89	3.68/2.41/1.44
Final drive ratio, :1	1.07/0.73	1.03/0.83	1.00/0.79	0.63	1.00
Steering type	rack & pinion	rack & pinion	rack & pinion	rack & pinion	rack & pinion
Brake system, f/r	discs/11.4-in. vented discs; vacuum assist	discs/11.8-in. vented discs; vacuum assist	discs/11.4-in. vented discs; vacuum assist	discs/12.2-in. vented discs; vacuum assist	discs/11.4-in. vented discs; vacuum assist, ABS
Wheels	cast alloy, 15 x 7J	cast alloy, 16 x 7J front/ 16 x 8J rear	cast alloy, 16 x 6J front/ 16 x 7J rear	cast alloy, 16 x 7J front/ 16 x 9J rear	cast alloy, 16 x 7J
Tires	Pirelli P6, 215/60VR-15	Pirelli P7, 205/55VR-16 front/ 225/50VR-16 rear	Pirelli P7, 205/55VR-16 front/ 225/50VR-16 rear	Dunlop SP, Super Sport D4, 205/55VR-16 front/ 245/45VR-16 rear	Goodyear NCT, 225/50VR-16
Suspension, f/r	MacPherson struts, lower A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar/semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, tube shocks, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, lower A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar/semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, tube shocks, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, lower A-arms, torsion bars, tube shocks, anti-roll bar/semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, tube shocks, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, lower A-arms, torsion bars, tube shocks, anti-roll bar/semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, tube shocks, anti-roll bar	upper A-arms, lower trailing arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar/ upper transverse links, lower trailing arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar

¹Price as tested includes: For the 944, touring package (\$2715), 15-in. alloy wheels (\$744), stereo (\$625), limited slip (\$595), sport seats (\$590), sport shock absorbers and stabilizers (\$295), central locking (\$250), misc options (\$340); for the 944 Turbo, sunroof (\$695), stereo (\$625); for the 911 Cabriolet, 16-in. alloy wheels (\$1580), full leather interior (\$1202), stereo (\$625), power passenger seat (\$380), cruise control (\$320), central locking (\$250), sport shock absorbers (\$200), alarm system (\$200), misc options (\$94); for the 911 Turbo, limited slip (\$595), gas guzzler tax (\$500), misc options (\$47); for the 928S, limited slip (\$595), misc options (\$107)

and the automatic is programmed for quick downshifts.

This is a big 2+2, especially when the second half of 2s don't get adult space. Rather, the two genuine seats are positioned so any size adult will fit with room to stretch, and have room for luggage. The 928 and 944 are clearly from the same family, laid out much the same for the same reasons, but in a different scale.

Impressions

FIRST AND foremost, the public overwhelmingly approves of Porsches, any and all Porsches.

Okay, it didn't hurt that all five samples were bright, blazing, heart-stopping red. Make that RED.

They were used the way the makers intend and the buyers hope, without regard to the jokes about bistro to business park to beach club.

The five Porsches did a couple of thousand miles, through the coastal mountains of central California, up and down the coast itself, across the vast agricultural plains and oil fields.

Truck drivers waved. People in older Porsches, VWs and even competing brands gave a series of thumbs up. Ladies fluttered their eyelashes or wondered, loud enough to be overheard, what they'd do for a ride in a Porsche. Kids came up and grinned. One highway patrolman, an R&T reader and car nut, assuming the two terms don't mean the same thing, offered to pose with boot on fender.

The cars were driven hard, at the practical limit. There was a track session and days of highway and mountain use, and before and after the cars went through the normal test sequences and short trips through city and suburb. Nothing went off-song, never mind breaking, and the



five drivers got some interesting offers but no tickets.

The second clear verdict was how surprisingly and predictably different all those Porsches are.

911 Cabriolet: An old friend, meaning several things at once.

The old is natural, as the 911 appeared and went into production more than 20 years ago. By any definition, this is an old car. Not even Dr Porsche could predict the future so the basic 911 has needed lots of work and modification through fuel crises, emissions and crash standards and consumer-activist belligerence.

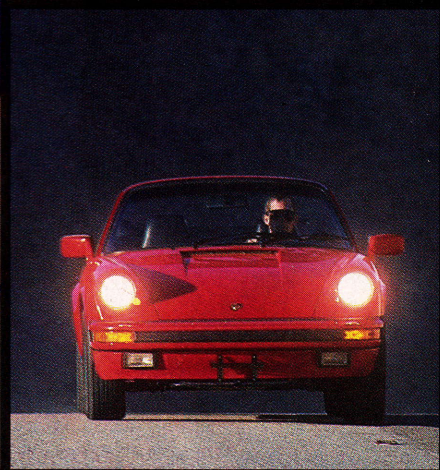
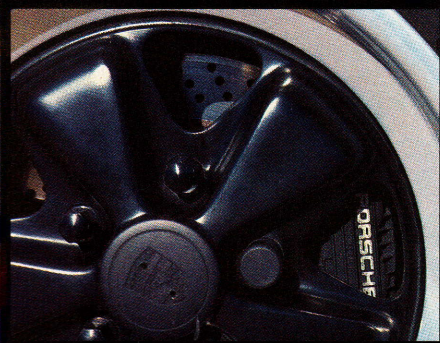
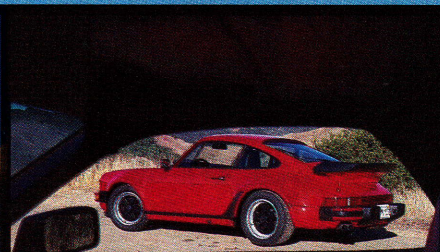
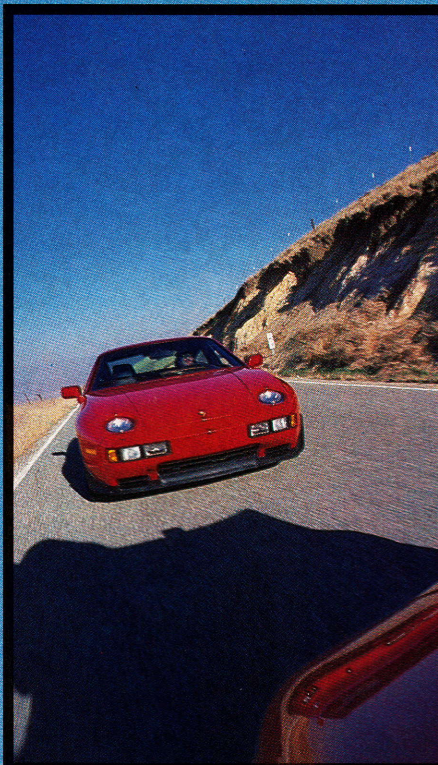
Even so it was a pleasant return to a different era, turning the key and hearing that distinctive "whump" of the air-cooled six lighting up, coping with the gear lever's distance and looseness and feeling the pedals traveling in an arc opposite to that of the human leg.

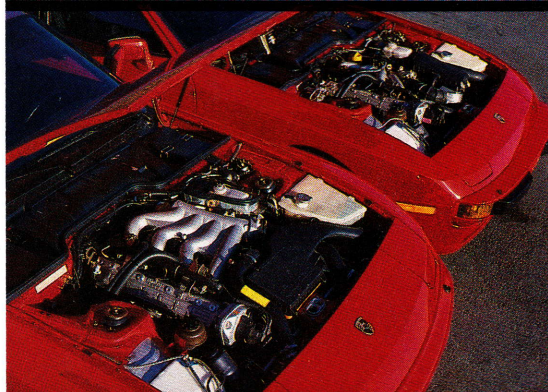
Each of these cars demands careful and complete reading of the owner's manual, but the 911s especially so because some of the controls came years after the dashboard was designed. Some of the hot/cold levers, switches and knobs are on the dash and some are on the floor. The two sets can work against each other unless all instructions are followed to the letter.

What wasn't expected from the 911 Cabriolet was the change in handling and steering feel.

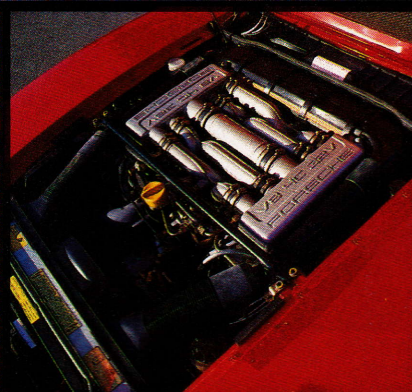
The 911 is tail-heavy and formerly was tail-happy, not such a problem with a 2.0-liter engine tuned more for power than torque. But the car is heavier now, the engine has grown and the tune reflects emissions and fuel economy ratings, with the extra factor of wide wheels and tires being the vogue.

Result: heavy steering with lots of play, well, not play in the usual sense. Make ➤➤➤





Porsche 944 Turbo and 944.



Porsche 928S.



Porsche 911.



Porsche 911 Turbo.

that give and take, with kick on bumps.

The engine is torquey and willing in town, on the highway and on the track. The gears suit the engine, albeit the shifter is vague and the gears can't always be used to best advantage.

Most of the chassis changes were done to compensate for Dreaded Oversteer. Which they have, up to a point. On the track the faster you go, the lighter the front end feels and the prudent driver eases up when the messages cease to arrive. Brakes are just fine, but the sense that there is no sensing what the car's going to do, when push comes to loop, keeps the 911's maximum from being easily known.

The convertible top, neat and tidy up, down or being put from one to the other, adds its own charm. Weather on this jaunt was perfect, so the open car gained in grin

factor and never mind the engine whistling away back there mile after mile.

911 Turbo: YeeHawww! We're havin' fun now, as they say on the radio.

The Porsche Turbo under its several names has been outrageous and notorious since its introduction. The model was off the U.S. market for six years. It's back, with some changes.

Mostly it's the engine's state of tune. The power has been moved up the rpm scale as well as up, and there's so little punch at low revs and off the boost that the initial reaction was disappointment: Porsche had played a shabby trick, removed the power and tried to con the public by leaving the whale-tail and bulging fenders.

Wrong. Keep the pedal down until boost comes on and the impression is one

of profound respect . . . for drivers who can drive this car to its limit.

Nobody who drove this car in our presence would include himself on that short list.

This car is ferocious. Our drag strip specialist needed many practice runs to get the techniques right. But once he knew how high to rev and when to drop the clutch, magic: 0-60 in 5.0 sec! The quarter mile in 13.4! The 911 Turbo isn't just a fast new road car, it's fast under any circumstances and in any era, a match for the exotics or even the fabled big-block V-8s of yesterday.

The price, like that of liberty, is eternal vigilance.

Taming a rear-engine car with hundreds of wild horses is just like taming any rear-engine car, but more so.

The 911 Turbo comes with huge tires, sized just for this model. And rare, at this writing. Construction down the street from the office garage put a terminal nail through one of the 911 Turbo's tires. We'd be remiss if we didn't give sincere thanks to the good folks at Teletire, Inc., Irvine, California, who came to our rescue scant hours before we were scheduled to take our trip up the coast.

Now. Just as 4-wheel drive enables one to get farther from the pavement before becoming hopelessly stuck, so do fat, grippy tires and stiff, tailored suspension enable one to go faster and faster before becoming hopelessly unstuck.

The 911 Turbo's suspension settings, spring rates, etc. are picked to keep the rear wheels in the rear, for as long as they can. Power will push the front end wide, up to a point. And the engine's power has been moved to the top, with so much turbo lag it must be done on purpose. Close the throttle and the back end comes out. Open the throttle long enough and the back end comes out. Keep the power on moderately and the rear stays put while the front plows.

Porsche racer Al Holbert used to say the Turbo is best driven with three feet.

Flat-out, the 911 Turbo gains speed at an incremental rate. The rear wing is pushing the rear tires down, the rear tires are trying to drive themselves right through the car, the front tires are reacting to every little bump and dip, the wheel is kicking and jumping, the engine is howling . . . we're having fun now, boy, with our eyes wide open.

944: For roughly the same reasons, it takes as long to appreciate the 944 as it does to appreciate a BMW or Harley-Davidson motorcycle. Gee, the first-timer thinks, this doesn't have surplus power and the ride is rough and nothing seems to be happening. Why do other folks rave about it?

After a week or a few thousand miles, the 944's virtues shine through. This car is all of a piece, every component matched

to everything else, all balanced to work as a unit. Because the 944 is about two generations newer than the 911s, the controls are easier to locate and to operate. (One exception: you can win a lot of root beer betting your friends they can't reset the trip odo without reading the manual.)

On the track the 944 is almost boring. There is so much adhesion and the chassis is so nicely balanced that one just sits there, steering around the corners as fast as the engine will push the car, getting on the brakes late but without drama, keeping foot on floor and waiting for the next turn. More chassis than engine is the reason, which isn't the same as a fault.

The 944 engine is tuned to deliver power fairly high on the dial, the gearing chosen to give good cruising mpg and EPA numbers. So daily driving requires some revs to keep things moving, and while the engine is quiet and unobtrusive on the open road, downshifts are sometimes needed for grades and/or passing.

By the way, the 911 Turbo, surprisingly, will get boost at low revs and high load,

so it will climb grades in top gear much better than its behavior elsewhere would predict.

Where the 944 works best is sport touring, on the open and isolated road, preferably empty, where the applicable rule is the old Nevada speed limit, Reasonable and Proper.

On a track the driver must do everything at maximum. Full brakes, full slide, full throttle. The 944 doesn't have the power for this.

Driving like that on the road is stupid, so sporting drivers don't. Instead, one goes as fast as conditions justify, with due regard for blind corners, farm driveways and the like.

At this, the 944 is terrific. Use of the gearbox can keep the engine in its powerband, while the precise steering and unflustered understeer keep the car on the chosen line; if the corner is deceptive, correction comes readily to hand, adding up to the very definitions of sports and GT.

944 Turbo: Take all the above and add 40 percent, the gift of the turbocharger.

The 944 Turbo feels not at all like the 911 Turbo. The inline-4 gets more boost, lower down and delivered more gradually, on demand. The larger tires and stiffer suspension don't hurt the ride or steering as much as might be expected, and the taller gearing reduces noise as much as the turbo makes it.

The Turbo corners faster than the non-turbo, it sticks better and obviously comes off the turns and down the straights faster.

On the road, the same, except that there's less need to be in the right gear because the turbo makes them all right. If you come into that deceptive corner faster, well, the tires and suspension will get you out of trouble just as fast. The cost for all this, reckoned at the sticker or in driveability, is reasonable for the former, negligible for the latter.

928S: The Big Porsche provides everything two discerning people could want a car to have. It's solid, it's fast, it's comfortable and it's quiet.

The 928S isn't a sports car. The power is there to move the car down the road with ➡

PERFORMANCE

	Porsche 944	Porsche 944 Turbo	Porsche 911 Cabriolet ¹	Porsche 911 Turbo	Porsche 928S ²
Acceleration:					
Time to distance, sec:					
0-100 ft	3.4	3.0	2.9	2.8	3.3
0-500 ft	9.1	8.0	7.7	7.3	8.4
0-1320 ft (1/4 mi)	16.6	14.6	14.3	13.4	14.7
Speed at end of 1/4 mi, mph	85.0	97.5	97.0	103.0	97.5
Time to speed, sec:					
0-30 mph	2.8	2.1	1.9	1.9	2.3
0-60 mph	8.9	6.0	5.7	5.0	6.3
0-80 mph	14.6	10.1	9.8	7.7	9.7
Top speed, mph	123	155	est 130	153	152
Trip fuel economy, mpg	22.1	19.4	18.6	17.0	16.3
Brakes:					
Stopping distance, ft, from:					
60 mph	145	143	146	143	140
80 mph	256	255	266	245	247
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop, lb	19	19	18	25	22
Fade, % increase in effort, 6 stops from 60 mph @ 0.5g	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
Handling					
Lateral acceleration, g	0.86	0.90	0.80	0.84	0.83
Slalom speed, mph	62.5	62.8	59.8	na	57.9
Interior noise, dBA					
Idle in neutral	59	58	62	64	57
Maximum, 1st gear	76	74	83	84	75
Constant 30 mph	65	65	68	69	64
50 mph	68	68	70	72	68
70 mph	72	72	79	78	71

¹ Handling and braking figures from February 1983 road test.

² All data except fuel economy, braking and skidpad from April 1985 road test.

CALCULATED DATA

	Porsche 944	Porsche 944 Turbo	Porsche 911 Cabriolet	Porsche 911 Turbo	Porsche 928S
Lb/bhp (test weight)	20.8	14.5	14.8	11.4	12.4
Bhp/liter	59.3	87.5	57.4	85.5	58.1
Mph/1000 rpm (top gear)	26.7	26.7	23.2	28.6	32.9
Engine revs/mi (60 mph)	2250	2250	2590	2100	1825

ease and dispatch, so the 928S feels heavy on the track and the tire/weight ratio is such that the limits are lower than for the others in the group, witness the skidpad and slalom times. The prevailing characteristic is mild understeer, under almost all conditions, though chucking the car into high-speed corners can produce an unsettling, but catchable oversteer.

On the road the 928S is swift, with indolent power, a reassuring car in which to cover ground easily. Only the need for a record requires the statement that the air conditioning works, the seats cosset, and the controls are where they should be (though perhaps the electric seat controls could be more obviously located and the Blaupunkt radio, used throughout this test group, could be less complicated). On the really twisty roads the turbos will whoosh away, but when the path is clear the 928S hauls them right back in. Almost the only performance-related complaint in the logbook is that the brakes seem to lag on application. This is a very impressive big car.

Character

SOMETHING was said earlier about how these Porsches are different:

911 Cabriolet: The 911 has had more narrow escapes than any kid Lassie ever owned. The configuration was abandoned by the other factories 10 or 20 years ago.

But don't forget, Porsche kept the faith. Not just with the 911 but with the performance car as such. During the lean years elsewhere, Porsche offered power and handling and fun.

The 911 has been scheduled for its finale many times. But the public won't hear of it. The 911 isn't the perfect Porsche, but it is the typical Porsche, the one people think of when they hear the name.

So the factory has kept on updating and revising, and kept on giving the buyers what they expected.

The 1986 911s, Turbo excepted, all come with the same engine. In Germany it's the higher tune Carrera versus the normal 911 six. To make things easier at certification time, and perhaps to help American dealers, the Carrera version is the only one certified for U.S. sale.

Speaking of that, the 911 Cabriolet turned better acceleration times, and top speed, and miles per gallon, than either the original 911 of 1965 or the fabled 911S of 1967.

The noise and awkwardness can therefore be forgiven.

911 Turbo: The Rolling Stones of the open road. If there's any trace of redeeming social content in this car, it's the willingness of the engine to run smoothly off the boost. It can be driven around town, day after day, without evoking the wrath of the big KKK's compressor blades.

Hard to imagine anybody actually doing that, though. The thing is a toy, an instrument of delight. One drives the 928S for

pleasure and the 911 Turbo for thrills.

It's an intensely emotional car, demanding care from the operator under way, and care from the owner the rest of the time. It's the kind of car that needs the ministrations of some crusty wizard in an alley non-owners can't even find. (Just checking oil level is an operation on which most of us could spend the better part of Saturday morning.)

So, who needs this hassle?

There used to be a saying that some people buy cars in which to go fast, and some people buy cars in which they *could* go fast.

The 911 Turbo works either way.

944: This is a real Porsche, okay? The essence of the make isn't where you put the engine, it's what it does where it is. Odd though it sounds, the 944 is an entry-level Porsche, for those who admire sound engineering and attention to detail and damned little compromise no matter what the marketing survey says. To paraphrase an unprintable joke, if you've got a Porsche you don't need bells and whistles.

944 Turbo: If the 944 is a good friend, loyal and fun to be with, then the 944 Turbo is an equally good friend with the added ability to get you backstage for your favorite concerts.

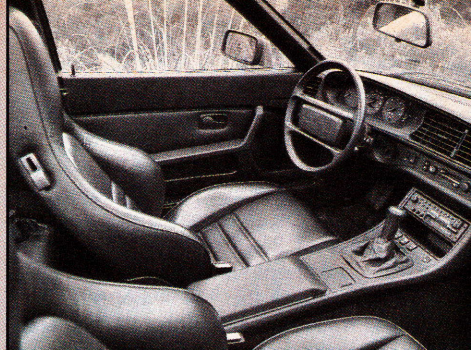
The extra mile, so to speak. The 944 Turbo is faster than anything in this group except the 911 Turbo and where that car is like a flung battle ax, the 944 Turbo is a hunting arrow, zoop! right at the target, no fuss. And it goes fast with a remarkably small thirst for its speed.

The 944 Turbo is for the man who appreciates all the 944's attributes, doesn't insist on the 911 tradition, and can come up with the extra money for the extra performance, the price of which is a bargain.

928S: The 928S's lack of runaway success in sales puzzles us, and probably Porsche as well. The car has everything the affluent buyer could wish for and works far better than the ordinary, relatively speaking here, refined GT car. The 928S looks different and fast, even aggressive, while there's no hint of ostentation.

That may be a clue. Inside and out, the 928S is cool, reserved, more like a consultant than a pal. The image of a 928S buyer would be an entrepreneur who hasn't yet sold his enterprise to the conglomerate but he has enough money to reward himself for those 100-hour weeks and the years of faith in himself.

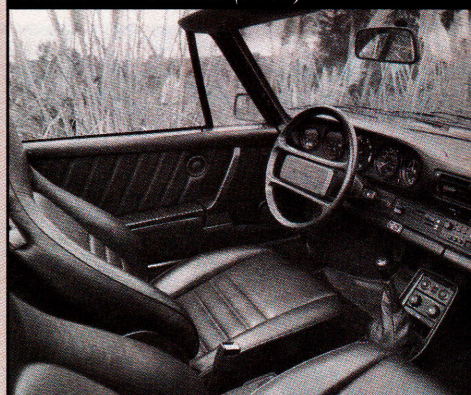
So he gets the best of its kind, which the 928S is. And he drives it hard and often, assuming correctly that it will do all it's asked to do. But he won't work on the car himself; one look under the hood will persuade against that. Nor will eccentric self-taught wizards lay a hand on the car. The dealership's best technician will follow procedure to the letter, or perhaps the leasing company's maintenance department will handle the matter.



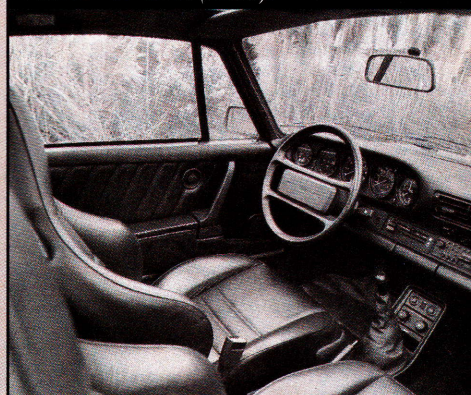
Porsche 944 (above); 944 Turbo (below).



Porsche 911 Cabriolet (below).



Porsche 911 Turbo (below).



Porsche 928S (below).



Values

BECAUSE THIS is a group rather than a comparison test, the standard vote count doesn't apply. The five cars don't compete with each other in the market place, nor can one imagine anybody staying awake nights deciding between, say, the 928S or the 911 Turbo. The subjective votes were based on each car versus the mythical, perfect 10. Some came closer than others, which isn't to say the refined 928S is objectively more attractive than the raucous 911 Turbo.

If there's a winner, it's one based on value. The 944 Turbo delivers more road performance and loses less in driveability or at monthly payment time than the others.

Back to generalities. One feature shared by all the cars was a certain fussiness of operation, in the sense that following directions as per checking the oil, removing roof panels or operating the various minor controls, was a bother.

For most drivers, all the cars have excellent seats, in terms of shape. Characterized individually, both 944s' seats have the best lateral support, but are a bit nar-


row for bigger people. The 911's are more upright with flatter bottom cushions while the 928S's are supremely comfortable. The controls vary with price and option; the 928S's driver seat has eight different power adjustments, some of the others have six power assists with manual back and forth and manual seat rake control, and the poor, deprived 944 has only four power motions, no cushion tilt and fore/aft and back angle adjustments by hand.

Collectively, the panel wished for fewer

power adjustments. It's easier, and more comfortable on the long haul, to sit down and quit fussing.

That's nearly the only foot Porsche put wrong.

These are five very different cars. They are different on purpose, because Porsche intended for them each to do different things well.

They do that. Each is an excellent car in its own way, which is another way of saying each is purely Porsche. 



CUMULATIVE RATINGS—SUBJECTIVE EVALUATIONS

	Porsche 944	Porsche 944 Turbo	Porsche 911 Cabriolet	Porsche 911 Turbo	Porsche 928S	
Performance:						
Engine	6.6	8.8	6.8	7.2	9.0	A choice of turbo power or cubic inches.
Gearbox	7.6	7.4	5.6	5.0	8.0	Automatic is tops, 911s' are still flops.
Steering	8.2	7.8	8.0	7.4	7.4	The 944 is best for feel and precision.
Brakes	7.4	7.6	9.0	9.0	8.0	Both 911s are simply excellent.
Ride	7.2	7.6	6.4	5.8	9.0	Silky smooth 928; 911 Turbo harsh and choppy.
Handling	8.6	9.0	7.0	7.0	7.6	A 944 Turbo will run rings around the rest.
Body structure	7.4	7.4	6.8	7.8	8.4	Proof that money talks (928) and age shows (911).
Average	7.6	7.9	7.1	7.0	8.2	
Comfort/Controls:						
Driving position	8.0	8.4	6.8	6.6	8.0	The newer Porsches feel right, 911s don't.
Controls	7.6	7.6	5.6	5.6	7.6	Once again, modern Porsches have it right.
Instrumentation	8.8	8.8	8.0	8.0	9.0	The 928 can be considered a benchmark.
Outward vision	7.2	7.2	7.4	7.4	6.8	The 911s are airy, the 928 can be scary.
Quietness	6.2	6.2	4.4	5.0	8.2	Easy win for 928; Cabriolet is plagued by din.
Heat/vent/air cond.	7.4	7.4	4.6	4.6	8.0	The difference between building-in and adding-on.
Ingress/egress	6.6	6.6	5.6	5.6	7.6	Extra-large 928 doors are a big advantage.
Front seat	8.4	8.4	7.6	7.8	7.6	The 944s' are easier to adjust for any body.
Luggage & loading	5.8	5.8	4.4	4.4	5.8	They're all awkward, but 911s are even more so.
Average	5.2	5.3	4.3	4.4	5.4	
Design/Styling:						
Exterior styling	7.2	7.6	8.0	8.1	8.0	Who can resist a whale-tail or a convertible?
Exterior finish	7.4	7.8	8.2	8.4	8.4	When you spend a lot, you get a lot from Porsche.
Interior styling	7.2	7.2	6.4	6.4	8.0	The inside of the 928 is simply beautiful.
Interior finish	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.2	8.0	A flagship is meant to be top of the line.
Average	7.3	7.5	7.5	7.6	8.1	
Overall Average	7.4	7.6	6.7	6.7	7.9	
Staff Preferences¹:						
Price-independent	13	23	12	9	18	
Price-dependent	18	22	14	8	13	

¹Five staff members: 1st choice, 5 points; through 5th, 1 point.