

Those wonderful people who
brought you the
911 & 912 V-8s
are at it again

914/8

PORSCHE



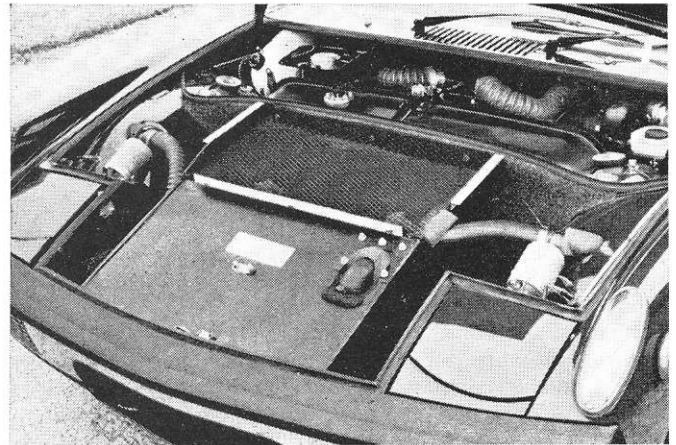
ROD SIMPSON is at it again. Two years ago we tried his Porsche 912 with a destroyed Chevrolet 327 V-8. Like most engine swap jobs, it abounded in minor faults while giving its driver the sadistic pleasure of leaving people in hot cars dumbfounded in the stoplight Grand Prix. Well, since then Simpson has by his own count built a dozen of the 911-912 series with Chevys plus some 20 conversion kits for do-it-themselves owners. And he reports they like them.

Now he's tackling the 914. In the meantime, with all that experience he's able to do a more professional job of the conversions, and he has given up the idea of producing kits. Instead, he buys brand-new 914s (the 4-cyl model only), converts them and sells them. The one we drove had a tag of \$7600 including an AM/FM radio, Porsche's "appearance group," a set of American Racing mag wheels and some Goodyear racing tires. That's considerably more than a 914/6 with similar equipment, so you've got to want the Chev engine badly to go the Porschev route.

The destroking is a thing of the past. Obviously, having a special crankshaft made is hideously expensive. As we suggested to Rod when we tried the 912, a simple throttle stop is a far cheaper way of achieving the same thing—that is, to save the Porsche transaxle from destructive gobs of torque—though it leaves the owner with a clear temptation to remove the stop. Anyway, that's what Simpson does now, starting with a 283-cu-in. short block assembly and attaching to it the high-performance hydraulic-lifter heads as used on the 350-bhp 327 or 350 engine along with a 4V carburetor. The high-output items give the engine the desired rev range—6500 rpm is readily available even with the hydraulic valve lifters whereas only 5200 would be on tap with heads from a low-output Chev—while the throttle stop limits torque and power to something (hopefully) reasonable for the car.

Logically, because it fits, Simpson uses a 911 clutch; a 914 flywheel and an adapter plate of 7075 aluminum sheet complete the mating of engine to gearbox, and stock 914 cable linkage actuates the clutch. As the rear of the engine is supported via transaxle mounts, these remain stock 914; at the front Simpson interposes welded-on pedestals between the original rubber-mounted support crossmember and the Chevrolet rubber mounts, thus giving double isolation of engine from car structure. Amazingly, the engine snuggles into the available space with no changes to front or rear bulkheads or to the engine itself except for dispensing with the engine-driven fan—but there's only a quarter-inch to spare at the front of the valve covers! Standard 914 cable throttle linkage completes the engine hookup; a recalibrated VDO tach plus VDO temperature and oil-pressure gauges communicate its doings to the driver.

But there must be cooling. A Corvette aluminum radiator



GORDON CHITTENDEN PHOTOS

does away with the front luggage compartment and spare tire and a pair of Jaguar electric cooling fans in the cooling box come on when the coolant reaches 192°F. Intake for radiator air is provided by a screened opening in the front bumper and lower sheet metal that actually improves the 914's otherwise stark frontal appearance. Radiator air is exhausted through an opening in the hood, nicely done by American Sunroof of Los Angeles. Coolant tubes from engine to radiator and back are stainless steel aircraft material for most of the distance and this greatly enhances the appearance in the engine compartment.

The 914 shift linkage works with the Chev engine, but unfortunately it works no better in the Porschev than in the stock 914. Linkage for the 914/6 has one less kink in it—apparently that's the reason it works better—and will fit, but Simpson is hoping that the shifting problems of the 914 will be solved for 1971 so that he won't have to spend the \$120-odd necessary to convert to the 6-cyl linkage in his "production" cars next year.

Heating and ventilation are an unsolved problem. For heating a pair of exhaust-manifold "stoves" from current production Chevrolets (which normally supply heat to the air cleaner for emission control) are connected to the Porsche heater system so that the source is exhaust heat just as in the Porsche. So far, so good; but the front radiator



PORSCHEV 914/8

renders the ventilation system useless because of the hot air coming out of the hood outlet ahead of the cowl intake. Simpson may return to the wheel-well outlets he used on the original 912-Chev.

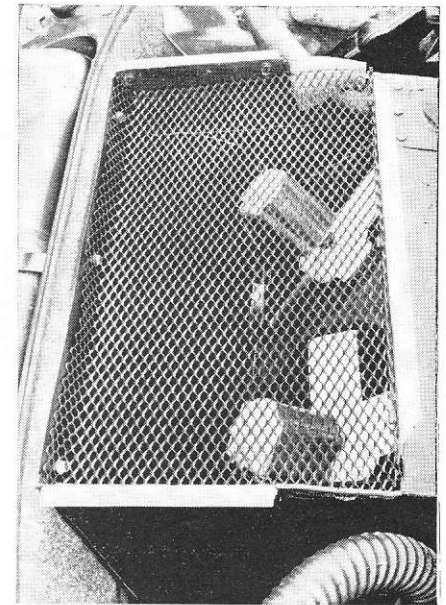
The big engine and its cooling system bring curb weight up to 2370 lb, 175 lb over the 914/6. This means some compensation in the suspension department. To this end Simpson had a set of coil springs built by A-1 Springs, Los Angeles, matching the original number of coils and compressed length but was able to leave the front torsion bars unchanged. The shocks are stock for now; Koni has a unit for the 914 coming up which Simpson hopes will be applicable to his car.

So that's how the Porschev 914/8 is put together; actually pretty simple as engine swaps go. How does it go? Well, to start with, there's a smoothness, quietness and tractability—even with the relatively hot Chev cam—far surpassing that of the mildest Porsche. You just can't beat the abundance of torque of a big V-8 and even with the engine immediately behind you it is impressively quiet; a locally made pair of 3-pass mufflers helps keep noise level down while allowing a satisfying V-8 wuffle at the twin tailpipes (themselves the only giveaway other than the front air inlet and outlet). First gear seems short (all standard 914 ratios are retained) in view of the torque and it's just as easy to start off in 2nd—but for clutch life it's not as wise. Actually, the only distracting thing about the eight's performance on the road is that awful shift linkage—and that's not Simpson's fault.

In the performance runs, however, we discovered that with the big (5.00/9.20-15) tires the usual spin-the-tires startup technique wouldn't work; only the clutch would spin, which gives rise to worry about how long same will last. In view of the fact that the front tires scrape metalwork when turned full lock and the rears require body flaring, there's triple reason for sticking to something like the 914/6's 185-14 radial tires. There's also something odd about the performance curve: an uncommonly low terminal speed in the quarter-mile for the elapsed time. This may be due to the throttle stop's modification of engine output characteristics. The figures:

0-30 mph, sec	2.3
0-60	6.3
0-100	16.8
0-1320 ft (¼ mi)	14.0
Speed at end of ¼ mi, mph	90.5

These figures could be slashed easily by screwing down the throttle stop, but we were worried enough about returning a broken car to Simpson without trying this. An engine



Dual thermostatically switched electric fans from a Jaguar E-Type draw air through the front-mounted radiator . . .

speed of 6500 rpm gives 33 mph in 1st, 55 in 2nd, 81 in 3rd, 113 in 4th and 148 in 5th—the latter not actually tested but probably easily attainable. Fuel economy? Only 12.6 mpg while we had it, but we flogged it constantly. Should do 18 mpg when driven “normally”—if that's possible.

The 914/8, at least this first one, is not capable of taking big bumps or dips at speed; the rear suspension bottoms out readily and with a big crash. Simpson thinks the larger coils are bottoming and hopes to solve this in later cars.

There's no denying the entertainment value of a hybrid machine like the 914/8. It's great fun to rap your V-8 exhaust, hoping that the Porsche driver alongside will notice the difference (though most don't), great fun to accelerate away from the Pontiac GTO and leave him wondering why, great fun to have the service station attendant check your oil and drop his eyeballs on the intake manifold, great fun to amble along enjoying the effortless torque of the V-8 and imagining yourself the proud new owner of that long-awaited under-\$10,000 mid-engine sports car with an American V-8 (haven't seen a Pantera yet). You have to weigh against all this the unrefined suspension, the lack of ventilation, the nagging worry that the driveline won't last and the missing luggage space and spare tire. With that summary of the ledger page, we leave the reader with the decision of whether or not to buy a Porschev 914/8 and the address of the builder: Rod Simpson Hybrids, P.O. Box 25779, West Los Angeles, Calif. 90025.

. . . and the Chev V-8 just fits into the engine compartment, clearing the front bulkhead by a bare quarter inch.

