

NEW 991.2 GT3 DRIVEN: Behind the wheel of Porsche's latest GT car



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# Second Chance

When Nick Fitch turned to RPM Technik to build him a 964 'restomod', neither party can possibly have expected the result to be quite this spectacular...

Story: Simon Jackson   Photography: Gus Gregory

To a degree Nick Fitch can laugh about it now, and that is more than admirable. Not only would crashing any 964 be tragically unfunny, but when that car is a fully rebuilt custom Porsche, it's utterly heartbreaking. That the accident also happens to occur before even a couple of hundred miles have passed beneath that car's wheels? Well, that's simply devastating, surely?

"I hadn't been involved in a car accident for 20 years," Nick recalled, "I was in slow-moving traffic, I remember looking over to a church of all things – I don't know why but I focused at it for about one second too long, when I looked up the traffic had stopped..."

Nick bled off what speed he could before the impact, but contact with the Audi Q5 up ahead was inevitable. And so it was that he connected the front of his freshly restored and beautifully modified Ivory 911 with the back end of a mid-size SUV, somewhat rearranging the hard graft of Porsche specialist, RPM Technik, in the process.

"I now say it's the best thing that could've happened, but at the time it was horrific," Nick said. "I'd taken the car for a long weekend, it was the shakedown phase of the build and we were trying to bed everything in, there was a small list of stuff that still needed to be done – that's when I crashed it..."

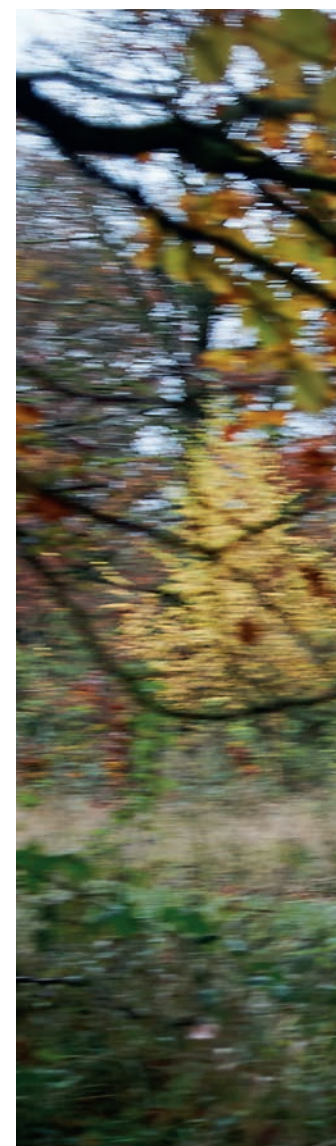
You might be wondering how crashing your 911 could ever be described in such a positive fashion, but trust us, Nick has his reasons.

His story with the car you see here begins with three or four less than desirable 964s, all bought in slightly dilapidated states for less than market value. The idea was to revive them all, turning them around for a profit. It was through these cars that Nick was introduced to the talented chaps at RPM Technik, Porsche specialists based near Tring.

"It's quite funny how it all started," Nick recalled, "I explained to Ollie Preston at RPM Technik that I had this really doggie 964 I'd bought. It was structurally sound and drivable, I think I paid £18,000 for it."

Nick got to know Ollie and rest of the boys at RPM Technik well in those early days, and in the process this predominant fan of water-cooled Porsches began to learn a little about air-cooled 911s – mainly 964s. Finding himself in a financial position to tackle a restoration project, Nick, now emphatically sold on the abilities of RPM Technik, posed the question: could it tackle a full-blown restoration on his behalf? It all started from there, slowly, with that initial conversation, building a momentum all of its own as, between them, Nick and Ollie collaboratively began painting a mental picture of what the car might become.

"I design jewellery for a living so I love design," Nick told us. "I knew how I wanted it to look, for all the other stuff I told Ollie that I'd like him to bring RPM Technik's expertise to the table, and it very much did that. I have to give Ollie credit, he advised me to stick with the narrow body – I was automatically



*"I'd taken the car for a long weekend,  
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that's when I crashed it..."*

thinking of a wide body car because I like the look of the Turbo body. When Ollie first suggested it to me I was quite resistant, but he was completely right."

Nick drives a modern 911 everyday, a second-generation 991 Carrera S, so what he wanted from this rather retro 1991 911 project was something entirely more visceral. A car that didn't cosset, one that was exciting to drive – a Porsche 911 with a sense of occasion about it, that was the order of the day. Nick describes his 991 as a wholly capable car, a Porsche that's easy to drive and one that does pretty much everything expertly well. But for him there's no denying that a contemporary 911 lacks a certain level of driver involvement and zest in comparison with an older counterpart. It was this feeling that Nick wished to accentuate in his 964 project, and his wishes were RPM Technik's command.

The mechanics of the project are one aspect, but there's more to this car, a feel which comes across both when you speak with Nick and Ollie, and when you drive it. The shell was stripped and dipped, seam welded and strengthened. The original 964 sunroof was deleted, a signature RPM Technik carbon

roof panel fitted in its place. The front floor area was modified for the early long hood look, a genuine 2.7 RS bonnet was fitted, so too genuine (yet modified) front wings. RPM Technik calls the carbon fibre front and rear bumpers 'one-offs', they've both been altered in their appearance, but it's chiefly the depth of the front item's mid-section which was changed more than the rest, it has been tweaked to ensure the car looks visually balanced, both from the front three-quarter aspect and in dead-on profile.

"We bought off the shelf front and rear bumpers but they were just too high," Nick recalled. "It didn't look right, so we tapered the rear bumper to get the balance – I was pleased with that."

A handmade bespoke grille was an equally custom element of the car's exterior, so too custom made sills which mimic the 964's original plastic items, designed to cover the oil lines revealed were they to be removed entirely. Underneath, this car takes from the 911 parts bin a number of highly regarded parts, repurposing them for a new function. There are all sorts under here; 993 RS uprights, GT2 Evo tie rods, 964 RS brakes, RS ARBs,

935-style spring plates. And that's not to mention things like the deletion of the power steering system, the re-bushed arms and a set of Ohlins suspension cryptically labeled by Ollie as 'custom'. And then there's the engine. Nick admits that, despite his love for cars, his knowledge of the mechanical side of things is limited, and so for the power unit's specifics he was happy to let RPM Technik take the lead. The 3600cc air-cooled mill was fitted with (are you ready for this?); 3.8-litre barrels and pistons, a GT3 crank (with gas flowed crank case), custom RPM Technik rods, bespoke RPM Technik rods, flowed and ported big valve heads, an RSR individual throttle body inlet system, and its bottom end was lightened and balanced. We're not done yet. There's are RSR-style exhaust headers reworked to fit 964 ports, a custom rear exhaust box with a centre exit, a carbon engine shroud with matching associated trims, and an RPM Technik coil pack conversion. Of the other mechanical modifications the RPM Technik fly-by-wire throttle conversion is a particularly interesting and effective one, so too this car's multiple stage switchable map. It allows the driver to turn a rotary dial located under the





dash selecting one of ten different driving modes. The most sedate is with full traction control and around 250hp, rising to a 395hp (295 lb ft of torque) mode described as 'flame spitting monster' by RPM Technik. For his own reference Nick has devised, typed-up and laminated a piece of paper in his glovebox with definitions he arrived at for each of the modes available. His descriptions, which include a note on the level of ferocity from the exhaust, are priceless. They range from '1) low power/dry traction/no pops', to '12) full power/no traction/full pops'. For the most part he stays locked into '8) Full power/dry traction/medium pops' with the occasional stray into number definitions ending with the words 'major pops'.

Aside from a full rebuild, the gearbox boasts a custom differential set up, plus RS clutch and flywheel, but there are numerous other touches we must bring to your attention with this car, before we get on with the important part – driving it. While RPM Technik's plentiful bespoke touches, from a custom fuel tank filler under the bonnet to ensure clean lines up top, the fitment of early chrome washer jets and genuine Fuchs wheels, to the use of twin oil

coolers with additional electric coolers and fresh custom lines throughout, and a clever hybrid electric heater system removing the need for a bulky traditional heater system, are more than enough to drink-in. There's more still inside.

"A friend of mine, Simon Harcourt, is a leather guru," Nick explained, "His company perform commercial installations, like leather clad handrails, walls and floors. I asked if he fancied tackling a car, he'd never done one before. I quizzed him about the parts that might go wrong, he said we'd just keep going until we got it right – we shook hands on that. He's done a brilliant job."

The details inside are to die for and unique with it, the door cards for example are Simon's own creation. Inspired by RS cards, yes, but they're a more practical solution than we've seen in many a car of this ilk – Simon sketched them out by hand in 2D before making them a 3D reality. The use of beautiful leather, not intended for use in a car and therefore boasting something of a more luxurious and soft feel, is more akin to the inners of a high-end private jet than a 911. But don't assume all the solutions in here to be extortionately

expensive: the base seats used were one of the cheapest parts of the build, now wrapped in hide (with a perforated detail inspired by driving gloves) they simply look stunning. The door pull solution Simon has devised is one of the simplest yet most practical I have seen, or used, in a classic 911.

"There were no rules to any of the interior; it has the 356 inspired dials because I like them, the seats are there because I like them, the original heater controls employed because I like them," Nick smiled.

I know the interior isn't the most important part of a car like this, but the inners of Nick's car hit a sweet spot. From the brown suede detail on the top of dash, to the ox weave carpet and custom shade of seat belt, it feels unique, bespoke, comfortable, practical and somewhat factory-esque, all at the same time. In short it's a lovely place to be, and a vantage point all the better for seeing that stunning Chartreuse Green bodywork – a colour Nick only chose after he crashed the car...

"I could make every other decision on this car so easily, but the colour was such a nightmare," Nick recalled. "It could've been any colour, but in the end I decided to play it



*"If you do it wrong it'll piss you off forever – I played it safe and it did piss me off!"*



safe, because if you do it wrong it'll piss you off forever. I played it safe and it did piss me off!"

There's nothing wrong with an Ivory coloured 911, but it's clear that Nick felt by playing it safe with his decision on colour, and a few other aspects of this car, that he'd somewhat missed his own mark. He says if he were to grade himself out of 10 that the car, in its Ivory incarnation, might've made a seven – but now, in its green guise, it's a 10 out of 10. So what changed? Nick clearly struggled with his colour choice on the car, which is understandable, but how many of us would a) have the balls to admit we'd make a mistake, and b) be lucky enough to get to do it all over again straight away?

"The Q5 was the best car I could've hit," Nick said, "Its height meant it connected with the 964 half way up the bonnet, so it just needed new headlights, a bonnet and wings."

Ollie takes up the story: "The car needed

completely stripping, to ensure the interior stayed as good as new it all had to come out, so Nick asked how much extra it would be to change the colour. We stripped it to a bare shell once again and dipped it!"

What that also allowed Nick and Ollie to do was not only to change the colour of the car, but also to revisit the entire build and make changes they now deemed possible. Any minor holes in the chassis that Nick had thought he might have needed, but was now confident he didn't, could now be filled in, and there were other areas that could be improved too.

"It gave us the chance to just clean the car up," Nick said. "It also gave me time to think about the colour! I went to Classics At The Castle and there was a Chartreuse Green 911 Targa there... That was it – decision made!"

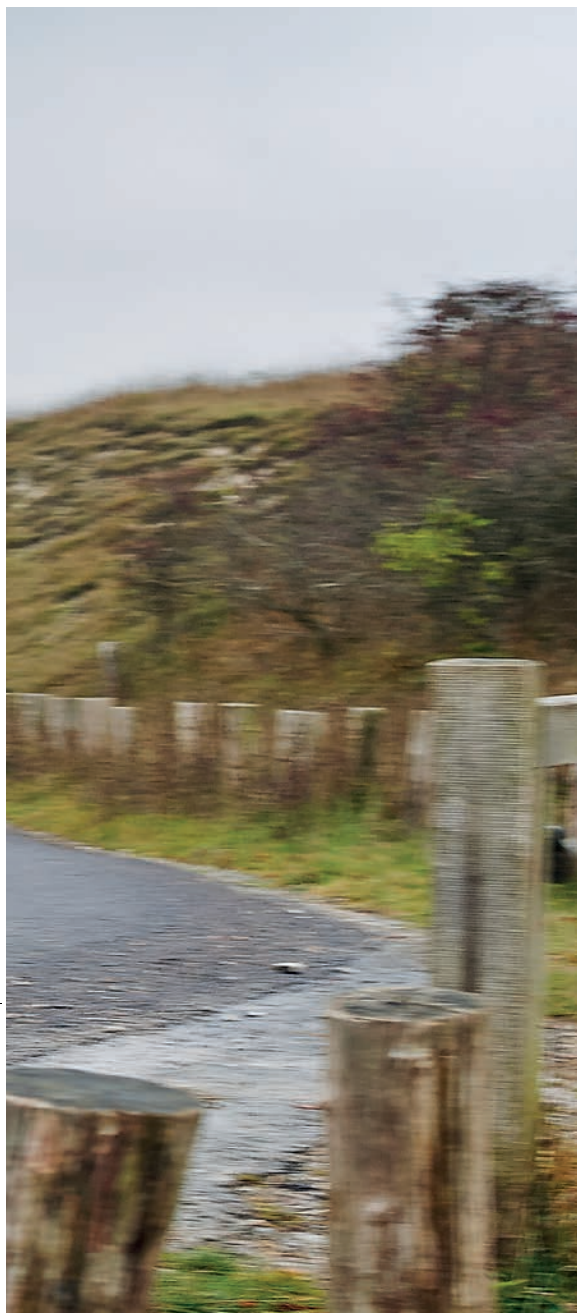
The bright green hue simply jumped out at Nick, and he knew it would work with the unique tan interior he and Simon had already

worked so hard to craft. In that moment this project came together. All that was left to do was action Nick's decision, and with lessons learnt, this time he was in no rush.

"The first iteration was an 18 month process, then I rearranged the front end..." Nick said. "After I knew the colour, and I knew the modifications that Ollie wanted to make, I said 'over to you.'"

Nick had given himself a year for this second iteration to be complete, and that's pretty much how long it took. He admits that he was obsessively involved with every small detail of the build the first time around, travelling to RPM Technik all the time, seeing all the issues and living through them on a daily basis. This second time Nick gave the car to Ollie and the team with the intention of not seeing it again for 12 months. Naturally that wasn't quite the case, but you can understand his sentiment and revised ethos.





"It's exactly the same as when I make jewellery for people," Nick explained. "When you hand the ring over the customer is amazed, they love it, but I see what it might have been... That's how I felt about this car the first time around, but going to pick it up the second time as a finished car? It was perfect – it was lovely."

Without doubt this car has been a labour of love between Nick and Ollie. But the great part is that it's been built for Nick, he has no intention of selling it, and he's not afraid to use it. That's handy as, from behind the wheel comes an addictive quality to this car, one that is hard to resist, not driving it isn't really an option – as I found out.

As we blast through the Buckinghamshire countryside I instantly appreciate why Nick is so happy with the finished car. Without the accident Nick would've felt the project didn't hit the mark – now it does. Not only is this





*Without the accident Nick would've felt the project didn't hit the mark. Now it does.*



[www.rpmtechnik.co.uk](http://www.rpmtechnik.co.uk)



911 quick, it feels beautifully balanced, light to the touch and well engineered. The steering is near perfect in both feel and feedback, the ride communicative, the gearbox a sheer delight. The noise it makes, those "major pops" – they are just fantastic. Here, in the driving experience, is where using a 964 as a base for a reimagined 911 project wins through, for example there are no difficult gear changes to contend with as might be the case with some projects based upon older 911s running 915 gearboxes. And in short there's nothing to distract from the driving experience, and it's one that delivers everything Nick wanted; it's visceral, rewarding and it puts a big grin on your face. It's a absolute credit to RPM Technik. It reaches peak power at 7600rpm, the limiter is set at 7800rpm.

"When you're on the road you tend to drive it up to 5 or 6000rpm, and that feels like enough," Nick said. "You forget that all the mayhem is at the top end – you don't get much of an opportunity to use it all."

Nick's original remit to Ollie was to make this car as good as possible, and the level of detail it boasts as a result is first class. The subtle touches are plentiful here, and amount to something very special. Yes he's been through the mill in some regards with the project through various setbacks and challenges. But Nick has ended up with his ultimate 911, and a new friend in Ollie, those are both things to smile about ○