

964S WITH ATTITUDE

What is it about the 964 that lends itself so well to modifying? We find out with this modded fivesome on a slippery December day

Words: Adam Towler Photography: Antony Fraser

Here's a feature to brighten up the end of the year. As the rain falls with a persistence that seemingly knows no limits, and the low, leaden cloud base merges almost as one with the drab grey-brown-green of Longcross test track, thank heavens for our kaleidoscope of 964-shaped goodness. My first thought is quite simply that a 964, set for action at the correct ride height and on Cup or cross spoke wheels, is a really beautiful thing.

It won't surprise you to learn that none

of these Carreras are standard. Those with longer memories, who can still recall a time when these cars were really out of favour, can probably picture a standard, tired old 964, on 16in wheels and with that ludicrously high ride height. This bunch are far from that, each one sharpened to a very fine point of ability that has far more in common with a Carrera RS. In fact, most, if not all, are probably quicker, offering more power, more torque, and with suspension that benefits from 25 years of automotive development. The Carrera RS is still in many ways a chief inspiration, a car that remains out of reach

due to its current elevated market worth, but it does donate body panels and other mechanical components to the cause of these very personal projects. When a 964 Carrera RS could be had for £20,000 upwards then they would have often been the starting point, but alas those days are long gone now.

So, consider this not so much a comparison, either of an individual's work or that of the specialists involved, but rather more of a cross section of modified 964 Carreras out there. What can be achieved? What are people doing to these cars, despite their worth increasing almost





James' Maritime Blue 964 was bought from a friend and registered as a Cat D. James had it totally stripped, straightened and re-jigged by Waff Zuff and turned into the machine that it is now

Below: Braces stiffen up the front end. Engine is original and unopened at 111,000-miles. Tweaks extend to a de-cat pipe and remap. Performance is strong, with substantial weight loss from stripped bodyshell

while you look at them?

James' Maritime Blue car is possibly the most aggressive car here in terms of how it drives, while also being probably the least powerful, but the result is a shockingly good fast road/track car.

James takes up the story: "I'd never had a weekend car before this, or a Porsche, but I broke my leg in 2012 and it was the moment that changed how I think about life. I decided to get something, and a friend owned this Carrera 2 that he'd bought to turn into a racing machine. It had been registered as a Cat D in 2001 and had lain around as an unfinished project for some time. When I bought it the car was well presented, but it was a lash up, so I set about correcting those faults (which, incidentally, a pre-purchase inspection hadn't picked up). 9Excellence did a lot of the work for me, and the car was then decent and I proceeded to enjoy it for the next few years."

Nevertheless, James wasn't completely

happy, not least because even the naked eye could tell that the car wasn't completely straight. Enter Raikku at Porsche specialist Waff Zuff, who stripped the car right back to the 'shell.

As Raikku says, "It takes a lot longer to strip a 964 down than an early long bonnet

The result is an uncompromising car because James not only likes to drive hard on track, but also enjoys 'spirited' road drives with friends who own all sorts of different high performance machinery, new and old. So the sunroof has been deleted; there's Bilstein PSS10 suspension with

“ The result is a shockingly good fast road/track car ”

car because there's so much stuff in them. Probably three times as long."

The car was then meticulously jigged, straightened completely, strengthened and then re-painted. "James' car is as extreme as you can go as a road car and still not lose your fillings – we built it for his specific wishes", notes Raikku.

H&R roll bars and fully adjustable suspension items such as the top mounts and the rear spring plates; an RS clutch and flywheel, RSS GT3 engine mounts – the list runs on and on and is far too long to include in its entirety here. In other words, this C2 is pared back to the essentials and prepared for driving above all else,

something which is about to become abundantly clear when I edge out onto our test track for today.

Perhaps the only element of the package that hasn't seen much attention is the engine, for it remains original at 111,000-miles and is still going strong, using very little oil. It's had a chip, de-cat and a Cup pipe, but that's about it. It certainly makes its presence felt through the engine mounts, but given the spartan nature of the car there is absolutely nothing wrong with that.

The 964 engine, as Nick Fulljames from Redtek will tell me later on, is both a very strong engine in standard form and an ideal basis for tuning. Despite the minor modifications to the unit in James' car the substantial reduction in overall

weight and the torquey, linear delivery of the flat 'six' mean it takes off down the road with infectious energy. Its vibrating heartbeat fizzles through the 'shell and the seat, but it's not so intrusive to be unpleasant, and while the ride is firm, as Raikku had predicted, neither is it something I would find intolerable. James has dialled in a slightly softer setup from the initial settings, but this is still a car that goes to Spa and all round the Alps in anger, and often.

From a pure driving perspective it's utterly brilliant. The car turns in with a precision that's genuinely breath taking, requiring only the slightest pressure on the wheel to adjust the line thereafter. It's so adjustable mid-corner, so poised, agile, communicative. After a few minutes

it feels utterly on your side, even though you know that it's still not a car to be toyed with aimlessly: 964s can always bite. The driving position is superb: sat on the floor with the thin, business-like Momo GT3 Cup wheel right into the chest, even if, with an electric power steering conversion from a Mercedes A-Class, the rack doesn't require pumped arm muscles even when applying urgent counter-steering.

I have to force myself to stop driving James' car, but there are four more to sample so needs must. When they look as good as Stan's red 964, that's no hardship. Regular readers may remember another of Stan's Porsches from a few issues ago when we borrowed his GT3-kitted 996 for a

Our man Towler earning his keep! Like most of the 964s on test, this one is riding on Bilstein PSS10 suspension





Stan's 964 started life as a C4, but it's not anymore. With a 993 six-speed gearbox fitted, it now only drives the rear wheels. It also has a lightweight flywheel and LSD, plus numerous suspension tweaks

modified 996 Carrera vs GT3 cover story. That car had the air of a machine with a real attention to detail about it, so expectations are high for this 964...

"I bought a 944 Turbo when I was 21", reflects Stan, "That was when they were cheap. I had it for a couple of years, then had a gap from Porsches, then bought a nice 2.5-litre Boxster, pre-kids. I bought this 964, originally a Carrera 4, in 2010, just before prices started going up."

I won't tell you what Stan paid for it, but if you feel priced out of the current air-cooled market the number would make you weep. The car already benefited from an engine rebuild, and also featured a desirable spec with Cup 1 wheels, air con and sports seats. Stan wanted a Carrera

2 like most of us tend to do, but it was clearly a good car so he bought it. And it was a red one, which tapped into a nice memory: as a boy, sat in the back of his dad's 911SC Targa, a brand new Guards Red 964 had passed them on the motorway back in 1989, and the young Stan – as is so often the way – had said there and then he'd have one like that one day.

Unfortunately, the engine suffered a snapped head stud and required an unplanned engine rebuild. Stan got Steve Winter at Jaz Porsche to do the work, incorporating ARP head studs and rod bolts, Redtek 'Sport' camshafts, and a Specialist Components Standalone ecu with uprated fuel injectors and MAP

sensor. The engine breathes through a de-catted Dansk sport exhaust, with 305bhp the quoted power output.

However, there's a lot more to Stan's car than just the rebuilt engine; this car has turned into a labour of love, a never-ending project in which Stan often takes to the tools to work on the car himself. For starters, it's no longer a four-wheel drive car, having been converted by Jaz with a six-speed 993 'box, lightweight flywheel and sloppy diff. The suspension mixes Bilstein HD shocks with Eibach lowering springs, H&R anti-roll bars and semi-solid WEVO engine mounts, although this winter Stan is moving to a PSS10 kit as part of the next phase of the project. Braking is via 964 RS drilled



Interior is RS in style and execution. Engine features Specialist Components custom ECU, uprated injectors and airflow meter delete, which liberates 305bhp

discs, with 'Big Red' calipers on the front axle, while there are Recaro Pole Position seats inside, a Matter half cage and RS Touring door cards.

In fact, Stan has calculated that the car weighs an incredible 240kg less than when

car has been developed to incorporate more comfort into its repertoire than James', given a broader range of driving that it gets used for, so while the spec sheet is full of hardcore items it's the smoothness of drive that strikes me initially. It steers with

certainly feels it. It also has a really energetic top end, pulling keenly and with a very sweet induction note past 4500rpm which is addictive once you've revved it through that zone for the first time.

Stan's car runs on 18in rims, which on a day when the Longcross track offers very limited grip means their advantage of wider rubber is lost versus the delicacy of the narrow, 17in option as fitted to James' car. We are talking only very minor differences here, however, but there's a little more feedback and a broader window of warning about the impending loss of grip with the narrower tyres. Nevertheless, this is a fantastic package of looks, performance and usability. I dare say Stan will never quite finish making adjustments, incorporating new developments and replacing worn out components, but that's true 911 ownership for you and I doubt he'll ever be parted from it.

it left Stuttgart, but it retains its heated front and rear screens, a sunroof, and air-conditioning.

As will become increasingly clear as the day progresses, while all these cars might be similar takes on the same theme, they all drive subtly but notably different. Stan's

fantastic precision, but the effort is a bit lighter and the car isn't quite so hard-wired to the human at the wheel, and is therefore less demanding of your complete immersion into the experience. The engine doesn't vibrate through its mounts, so whether in reality it's smoother or not, it

“ Stan has calculated that the car weighs 240kg less than standard ”

Guy's 964 is easily the most subtle car present, with its Oak Green paint, retro interior style and gold Fuchs wheels



Believe it or not, this 964 was once a sad looking Cat D red C4. Owner, Guy, with the help of RPM, rebuilt it into a C2, with an RS Touring theme. Yellow tinted front headlamps are RPM's new Lume Technik conversion

The last of our '3.6s' is the stunning Oak Green Metallic car belonging to Guy. It's the work of RPM Technik, and 964s are the big passion of RPM's Ollie Preston from his earliest days in the business. RPM have been working on a number of 964-based projects lately, so this won't be the last time you see one of their cars in this magazine.

As Guys says, "My car is a long story", and he's not fibbing: this 964 has come a long way from the condition it was once in, via much time, effort, money and thought, to the superb machine you see on these pages here. I know much of that for a fact, for I happened to see the 'shell in the yard at RPM a couple of years ago, and even toyed with the idea of buying it. Back then it was a red 1992 Carrera 4 that had been Cat D registered and hit on the rear wing.

It was also minus its engine and 'box, and a very forlorn looking car it was, too.

RPM rebuilt the car as a Carrera 2, with a rebuilt G50 gearbox – as Guy notes, "It allowed me to have the same braking system as the RS (shared with the C4), not the vacuum assist of the C2."

From there, Guy's car is a very thorough take on a bespoke RS Touring build. It features 993 RS uprights, discs and calipers; a set of KW's Variant 3 coilovers; a genuine RS strut brace and Rennline top mounts. The engine has been rebuilt and is largely to standard specification, but features a bespoke conversion to the MAF and an AIS Infinity ECU. On the dyno it made 298hp at the flywheel, but although it was originally built with a lightweight flywheel, Guy found living with the car in the city not so nice so

has switched to a dual mass item.

After all the work was completed Guy decided that red really wasn't to his taste, so had RPM strip the car back down again and a full repaint in the colour you see before you now. Inside it's a pared back ambience, with no air con or radio, gorgeous Recaro Pole Positions and their custom retro upholstery, six point harnesses and a Heigo bolt in rear cage. Above my head is a carbon-fibre roof panel, while small details such as the yellow rev counter with the red line positioned at the top of the dial really impress. Those yellow headlamp lenses cover RPM's new Lume Technik headlamp conversion, giving these cars the kind of lighting performance only dreamed of when they were new.

To drive, Guy's car has an obvious

Alan's white 964 C2 was found on a local car lot. It may have had 150,000-miles on the clock, but it drove well and had great history

polish to it that says a lot for RPM's experience and the standard of their work. It's light, and it has near on 300bhp, so it's no surprise that it feels every bit as fast as the other 3.6-litre cars here, with a broad, linear power delivery that's a brilliant match for a chassis that's been set up mainly for road use. Guy has driven it on a circuit when his regular track car developed a fault, and it acquitted itself well, but it was created first and foremost to be an enjoyable road car. He's quite philosophical about what that actually means: as a man who owns some very powerful other road cars he's not been searching for ultimate performance, rather something that thrills at saner speeds on the public road, and I think that's the beauty of the car he's created, and to be honest, of all the other cars in this feature. There's more feedback, and for want of a better word,

'character', with all of these cars in the first five yards of driving one than there is in a new Porsche after an entire day at the wheel. Either something's drastically wrong there, and needs putting right, smartish, or Porsche simply isn't building cars to cater for people like Guy, or me, and I suspect, many of you, too.

It's time to move up in cubic capacity: time to drive Alan's purposeful-looking white 964. This is the first of our two 3.8-litre cars, both with engines built by Redtek.

Alan bought his first Porsche back in 2000 – a 996 Carrera – and owned it for five years. Although owning many other interesting cars, he then had a break before purchasing a midnight blue 964 three years ago and commencing a very in depth restoration, largely working on the car himself (he shows me the pictures of the nearly finished car and it

looks spectacular).

However, meanwhile he found this white car purely by chance, driving past a small car trader and seeing it sat in the showroom. It had a Linen interior which didn't appeal, but it was a manual Carrera 2 coupe, and that was the important bit; despite over 150,000 miles on the clock, it had great history and drove really well.

Alan then set about modifying the car, ending up with something quite a long way removed from that meek, well-used Carrera. "I've always been modifying cars", says our owner, "But the feel-good factor with these cars is amazing – I'll not be changing brands now. We're trying to improve upon something that came out 25 years ago, for this is a true classic car now."

Much of the spec of Alan's car closely resembles that of the cars we've already covered, there being the Dansk de-cat





No surprise that Alan's car sits on Bilstein PSS10 suspension, with H&R anti roll bars

Details abound inside. Pole Position Recaro for the driver and a standard Porsche 'Sport' seat option for the passenger. Engine is a 3.8-litre unit built by Redtek, putting out a meaty 319bhp

exhaust with Cup pipe, the Bilstein PSS10 suspension kit, H&R anti-roll bars and the combination of 964 RS front brake discs with 993 Carrera rears. But there are subtle differences, too, such as 'Big Black' front calipers from a 928, and genuine Porsche suspension mounts.

The key difference though is with the engine, for this is one of Redtek's 3.8-litre builds. Using Alan's original engine as a basis, Nick Fulljames builds the lump up with '3.8-litre' Mahle barrels and pistons in a boat tailed crankcase, all carefully balanced. There are ARP big end bolts, heavy-duty valve springs and high flow injectors and Cup cams, all controlled by a DTA ecu. Deploying the 319bhp and 287lb ft is an RS flywheel and clutch, plus a Quaife LSD.

Alan wanted his car to double up as a GT as well as offering a hardcore driving experience, but that doesn't mean this car is soft – there is still a Heigo roll cage and

RS door cards, for example – but also lovely details such as the gear lever gaiter trimmed in nappa leather along with the centre console and the parcel shelf.

This is a beautifully well-balanced car that has all the attributes found in the very best Porsches. In doing so, it's hard to see how it could be improved as an all-round

are no gaps in the powerband, just a lovely sweep of power and torque that make this lightened car a seriously potent machine. It stops well, and handles with the same sort of precision (this is another Raikku set up on this car) that marks out all the cars here, and the ride quality must be fine I imagine even for long trips. "The setup and package

“ The Redtek motor pulls from just 2500rpm with conviction ”

proposition, and also shows just what a brilliant basis the 964 is for such work, and why it has come to be so revered. The Redtek motor pulls from just 2500rpm with conviction, but then surges onwards enthusiastically towards the redline. There

is really good", says Alan with a big smile. I can easily see why.

That brings us to our final car, a very rare, late-build Carrera 2 in Speed Yellow. This car has quite a few of the usual modifications, including Bilstein PSS9



Nick's 964 is a very rare, late-build Carrera 2 in Speed Yellow

suspension, Quaife LSD and 'Big Red' brakes, but the centrepiece of the conversion is the Redtek 3.8-litre engine, built with real power in mind.

"It's effectively a copy of the 964 RSR engine", says Nick, before reeling off a spec sheet that's similar to Alan's white car. However, attaining the headline power figures means the ability to rev high and for long periods of time, so this engine also features a lighter crankshaft, Pauter steel rods and ported cylinder heads with RSR cams. The valves are RSR items, with shot-peened rockers for additional strength, and there's a Redtek exhaust featuring race headers and fabricated heat exchange boxes. The key

point of interest surrounds Nick's usage of a mk1 996 GT3 induction plenum, which replicates the factory 964 RSR plenum but at a fraction of the cost. After considerable development Nick teamed this manifold with individual 'low' throttle bodies, which gave the engine the manners below 3000rpm to match the top end fireworks.

The result is 352bhp, and the tantalising prospect of an 8000rpm redline. You're also looking at a substantial increase in cost, but it's easy to develop amnesia to such things when you hear the angry tone of the engine as it fires up. Just listening to it at idle speaks volumes about its character: not because it's lumpy, which it is not, but it just has this voice that only a

race spec 911 engine has.

With 264lb ft to the white car's 287lb ft, and a good deal less torque below 4000rpm, this is an engine that needs to be kept singing to give its best. Thankfully, it is impeccably well behaved below that magic figure, so driving in traffic would not be a curse.

Even so, around Longcross's tighter sections it's not realistic to drive the car out of a corner in, say, third gear, requiring instead a swift downchange to second to really blast onto the next straight. However, work the engine over 4000rpm – and you've a wide rev band in which to do so given it feels very keen to rev right up to 8000rpm – and it's a proper force of nature



CONTACT
nineexcellence.com
waffzuff.co.uk
rpmtechnik.co.uk
redtek.co.uk
jazweb.co.uk

Thanks to all for braving a cold day at the test track

Engine in Nick's car is the most radical on test. Built by Redtek, it's a 3.8-litre unit with steel rods, RSR cams, ported heads and, most obviously, a modified 996 GT3 induction manifold. Power is rated at 352bhp

the raw acceleration matched by that granite hard wail from the engine that's so familiar from modern-era GT3s. This is a 964 with that character – it apparently outpaces the owner's GT3 through the gears – that same

their 964, but if you can't afford it don't whatever you do try it – because you will want it very badly having driven it!
By the end of the day I think I have brightly coloured 964s imprinted onto the

few other cars. What a shame then that with the current prices of 964s it's highly unlikely that many more will be created. Sure, the wealthy few will, and already are, creating interesting project cars with the help of specialist Porsche garages, but the sort of long term projects begun by enthusiasts on a more 'normal' budget like the rest of us are in the minority these days. Why? Because the cars are worth so much to start with, there are far fewer donor cars around, and the cost of parts has risen as they become scarcer, and some suppliers inflate their cost in line with the typical clientele now restoring the cars. All we can hope is that there will still be those people prepared to go their own way to create a car they feel a lot of passion for: I know what I'd buy as an air-cooled project following this particular feature... **PW**

“ With current prices of 964s it's unlikely that many more will be created ”

unburstable appetite for revs, yet it doesn't feel like it overwhelms the rest of the car, which is nicely judged, too. This car could be used everyday, and without any hardship. For me it's best summed up by the thought that no one really needs this sort of power in

underside of my eyelids. It's quite easy to find everything one admires and enjoys about 911s, and Porsches in general, in these 964s. They look and sound great, and they thrill the driver, encapsulating him or her in a driving experience that rewards like

