

GO WILD IN THE COUNTRY

The track-focused, rear-drive GT3 is the most sublime evolution of the basic 996, created using the narrow-body Carrera 4 chassis and the unburstable 'Mezger' 3.6-litre water-cooled flat-six. We put a Clubsport-spec second-gen model to the test...

Words Johnny Tipler Photography Dan Sherwood





Almost from the word go, every era of Porsche production has included a rarefied top-line model, often with competition aspirations or descended from a race car. The 356 Carrera, the Carrera RS 2.7 and the 993 GT2 are three far from basic examples. The 996, launched in 1997, lacked a headline-grabbing flagship during its first couple of years on assembly lines, but this glaring absence was remedied in 1999 with the introduction of the 996 GT3, named after the FIA race category the model was designed to be eligible for.

The GT3 made use of a high-performance 3.6-litre flat-six, which can trace its roots to the 911 GT1 Le Mans race car. Mounted in a more rudimentary Carrera 4 narrow-body shell, the water-cooled boxer works with sports-tuned suspension to deliver a track-focused demeanour. The so-called 'Mezger' engine is, by common consent, unbreakable, lacking the well-documented problems associated with the 996 Carrera's M96 flat-six. Hans Mezger, incidentally, was the 'godfather' of the indomitable air-cooled flat-six and sundry multi-cylinder competition engines.

The 996 GT3 was available in first- and second-generation formats, the newer version appearing in 2002, with significant differences in detail and specification. The early 996 GT3 was, in terms of performance over the standard model, virtually an RS, though before

long (2003, to be precise), the GT3 was also offered as a hardcore RS in its own right. As much as any other model, the 996 GT3 epitomises Porsche's design and manufacturing philosophy: a blend of road-going sports car and track-oriented elaborations. The company always sought to embed hard-learned lessons from the race circuit into its road-going models. Thus, the 996 GT3 was announced at the Geneva Salon in April 1999, looking very much the part, with its deep front spoiler, embryo splitter, aerodynamically optimised sills and fixed double-decker 'swan-neck' wing mounted on the engine lid (instead of the electrically retractable wing of the standard 996). There's a certain purity to the specification — being

normally aspirated, there's no artificial boost and no extraneous ducting about the bodywork, just pure aerodynamic functionality.

MATTERS OF THE HERTS

Our subject is a second-generation 996 GT3 Clubsport and is currently on offer at Hertfordshire-based independent marque specialist, RPM Technik. The firm's Sales Director, Greig Daly, divulges the Guards Red road rocket's history. "We first sold this 996 in 2013," he says. "It underwent our full sales preparation and the buyer asked us to continue taking care of maintenance during his ownership. Later, the car was owned by a chap who split his time between the UK and Australia.

Above RPM Technik has been looking after this particular 996 GT3 Clubsport for many years

