



Club Sport *Racer*

This is Porsche specialist RPM Technik's 911 CSR, a bespoke performance package for the 997 Carrera S. Jethro Bovingdon drives it. Photography: Andrew Morgan

What would we do without the internet? Yes, in some ways it would be great. We'd almost certainly talk more to our partners, maybe get out into the great British countryside regularly, perhaps even catch-up with old friends on the phone... all noble pastimes, admittedly. However, nothing is more diverting and satisfying than browsing car ads and formulating plans to create something unique and tailor-made just for you, is it? Obviously you shouldn't admit that to your partner or friends but it's okay, you're amongst like-minded people here. We've all spent many hours trawling the classifieds looking for that perfect project donor car, preferably one with an engine in the boot, and thanks to that other great internet tradition – namely scaremongering – the Porsche 997 is creeping deliciously into reach of those of us who couldn't have dreamt of buying one when they were new (which is still, just, less than a decade ago). And with a whole raft of suspension, braking, engine and body styling options already available they are endlessly adaptable.

However, the idea of modifying a beautifully developed 911 is a little scary. Where do you start? What if you muck it up? To whom should you listen? Well, perhaps that's where specialist RPM Technik's new 997 CSR comes in. RPM is a long time admirer of the 997 and this CSR is the culmination of a thoughtful programme to improve the Gen 1 Carrera S but not make it a

stripped-out and impractical GT3-alike. Instead it claims it is 'Clubsport-inspired' and with the standard rear seats still in place and some carefully considered modifications, that it's still a realistic day-to-day proposition. In fact, although my take on the CSR is that it's an end-game that you might gradually build up to one piece at a time, RPM thinks of it as the perfect car for the customer who wants a GT3 but needs rear seats and perhaps something a shade more subtle, too. So you can go to RPM and order a complete CSR (it'll even find you the donor car) or take your 997 along and shop from the menu of upgrades...

Let's pretend you are that lucky blighter that can afford, say, a late model 996 GT3 but needs it to perform more roles than its strict two-seater configuration allows. What constitutes a full house 997 CSR and how much does it cost? Well, the list of modifications is extensive. Firstly RPM rebuild the engine as a precaution, relining the cylinders with a simple but robust steel liner to protect against the well-documented bore scoring issues that affect the M97 engine family. RPM looked at all the possible solutions out there including Nikasil-lined cylinders but felt that the simplest route was also the best. RPM also lighten the crank and fully balance the engine so that it's essentially blue-printed. It also benefits from a new intake system and a custom cat-back exhaust system built to RPM's design. More power upgrades are on the way but as the Carrera S already has 355hp at 6600rpm and 296lb ft of

RPM has designed the CSR to offer a more involving and rewarding drive without compromising practicality. Naked carbon ducktail is very special

Understanding the diff is the key to exploiting the outer reaches of the CSR's capabilities



3.8 flat-six (middle) has been blueprinted and produces circa 380hp. Ohlins dampers are adjustable



torque at 4600rpm it was the chassis that was the real priority. Even so, the blueprinted and freer-breathing engine has dyno'd at 332hp and 312lb ft at the hubs – so perhaps close to 380hp at the flywheel. In combination with a lightened flywheel assembly it should really zing.

The CSR is suspended at each corner by adjustable Ohlins dampers (bump and rebound) and benefits from Powerflex bushes and solid engine mounts to ensure the most stable platform possible. At the rear there's a Wavetrac torque-biasing limited-slip differential, chosen because it's considerably quieter and in theory longer lasting than a traditional plated diff. Lightweight 18-inch OZ Racing Alleggerita alloy wheels reduce unsprung weight at each corner and although the CSR uses the Carrera S's standard brake setup, RPM upgrade the pads to Pagid RS29s and use Castrol SRF brake fluid. Nothing radical then, but taken as a whole it's a compelling package. And when it's topped off by a gorgeous lacquered carbon-fibre ducktail

spoiler and with a 997 Turbo front bumper and running lights and some tasty graphics, the end result looks fabulous. I particularly like the 18-inch wheel and ride height combination, which gives the car a real hot rod look. Does it look like it's worth the £39,995 asking price? Absolutely. Does it drive well enough to steer keen customers away from a depreciation-proof GT3? Time to find out...

The sense of polish and attention-to-detail of the CSR continues when you drop down into the driver's seat. All the brightwork on the dash, the three-spoke steering wheel and the hard-backed section of the seats have been painstakingly toned down to a matt black finish. It looks OEM standard and brings a bit of restrained aggression to the interior, which is then brightened by gold door releases that match the external graphics and wheels and a bright red central rev counter with a CSR graphic etched neatly in its centre; just enough to make this car feel a bit special. When the exhaust starts with a howling boom it

feels even more so. RPM's Darren Anderson grins. "We didn't want to build a system that was compromised by track day noise limits," he explains. "We thought we'd get the sound we really wanted and then worry about the volume. We're looking at extra silencing solutions for track work now." I think Darren likes the idea of a set of extra cans that fit to the rear tailpipes, like something you might see on an old RSR trying to adhere to modern sensibilities. So do I.

If the deep, bassy noise says this car is a little bit more track-focused than RPM would like us to believe, the relatively supple ride rescues the dual-purpose intent. The CSR is so low and runs such extreme rear camber that I'd thought it'd be scraping its nose everywhere, weaving into ruts and bouncing occupants around like a GT3 running track geometry. However, on the first good road that we find, which is fast and relatively smooth for a British B-road, the CSR rides with a reassuring sense of calm control. In fact the chassis is so stable that I wonder if some

of the 997's steering feel has been dulled in the transformation. If it has most would think it a price worth paying for the obvious body control and the grip on offer, thanks in part to Yokohama AD08 tyres which use a soft track day-type compound but have significantly deeper tread depth than a Cup tyre.

What is obvious within the first few miles is just how much potential a 997 Carrera S really has. The basics – the size, the drivetrain, the brakes – are just so right. The engine in particular is a revelation. There's so much instant torque and the lighter flywheel really helps it to rev, too. In fact such is the engine's sharpness at the top end it's all too easy to hit the limiter. Of course the Mezger engine rightfully takes all the plaudits, but the M97 motor – known issues aside just for a moment – is a fantastic unit to have pushing you along a decent stretch of road. RPM might be on to something here...

The chassis gets better the harder you push it, the steering in particular really coming to life as

you start to lean on the front tyres. They can take plenty of load too, as the setup is obviously targeted at eliminating understeer. I can understand that entirely as I often hear owners struggling with understeer in their 911s. Personally I like a bit of initial push as it enables you to unlock so much more from the chassis by playing with the throttle and steering. The CSR is different, firstly because it's so neutral on turn-in and secondly because the Wavetrac diff isn't as aggressive in deceleration as a plated diff, so a lifted throttle won't provoke such an immediate reaction. In fact, understanding the diff is really the key to exploiting the outer reaches of the CSR's capabilities.

Imagine you're in a GT3 and you start to feel a hint of understeer, now lift the throttle to snap the nose back onto line and feel the rear tyres simultaneously loosen just a little. This leaves you in that terrifying/exhilarating (delete as appropriate) zone where the car is waiting for your next instruction and always seems to be

hoping it is 'please commence oversteer now'. The CSR takes a different approach. It has more stability mid-corner and a lifted throttle doesn't create as significant a shift in balance. That means initially it can feel less alive than a GT3. So you have to adjust your technique, turning the car in hard and then driving all the way through the corner to lock-up the diff as it opens out – which is when you'll feel the neutral balance change to proper power oversteer. The CSR takes commitment to really appreciate then, but that's really how a 911 should be.

With practice and confidence the CSR really is quite a machine to hustle along and later on the very bumpy B660 I appreciate why RPM hasn't just wound the Ohlins suspension down to maximum stiffness. The ride remains controlled but a few clicks stiffer and you sense that its composure could evaporate. It's a good compromise for the road and I suspect you could just drive it onto a circuit and continue to have a ball, safe in the knowledge that with a bit more



How to build your own 997 CSR

If you want a full-on CSR complete with a numbered plaque and some interesting provenance then you need to swallow the whole cost up front. However, if you already have a 997 and fancy a carbon ducktail, or some lightweight wheels, or that Wavetrac differential... RPM Technik will sell any CSR item individually, too. Here are the supply only prices:

- Rebuilt 3.8 engine - £6700 + VAT
- Ohlins suspension - £2340 + VAT (PASM delete kit is £265 + VAT)
- Wavetrac LSD - £1020 + VAT
- Custom lightweight clutch - £250 + VAT
- Flywheel assembly - £350 + VAT
- Polyurethane engine mounts - £395 + VAT
- 997 Turbo front bumper and running lights (modified) - £2250 + VAT
- Custom carbon ducktail spoiler - £1400 + VAT
- Custom sports exhaust - £1450 + VAT
- Additional centre radiator conversion - POA
- OZ Alleggerita alloy wheels - £1350 + VAT (exc. tyres and powdercoating)
- H&R anti-roll bars - £355 + VAT
- CSR graphics package - £250 + VAT (vinyl)
- Full geometry and corner weight setup - £550 + VAT
- Castrol SRF brake fluid - POA
- BMC hi-flow air filter - POA
- Short shifter - £190 + VAT
- CSR gauges - £390 + VAT



RPM has amassed a set of components to mix with its considerable experience to create a 911 that provides a unique and thrilling experience

adjustment even more speed could be released from the car. It's a thoroughly good advert for the 997 and a nice reminder that you don't need a GT3 to find real thrills in a modern 911.

So, that price, does it stack up? Purely as a driving experience I think it probably does. The noise it makes is gloriously hard-edged, the chassis has superb balance and the diff adds an interesting new dimension to the experience and is much more well-mannered at low speeds than a plated unit. And of course there's nothing wrong with the sheer performance thanks to what has been put into the engine. Likewise the little touches, particularly the corny but lovely carbon-fibre ducktail, really make the CSR feel

like something distinct from a standard Carrera S. The only sticking point is the GT3. A 996 GT3 might be a compromise too far for some but it is unquestionably even more special. Furthermore a good GT3 will always be easier to sell than a well-sorted but non-factory machine like the CSR and it's likely that GT3 values will start to go up rather than stay stagnant very soon. It's still where the smart money would go. However, as GT3s start to climb out of reach the CSR's time might yet come. I think RPM will find a few customers for this car and many, many more who'll want to recreate a CSR piece by piece as and when their budget allows. Looked at like that, it's a seriously attractive car ○

