

It was a remarkably generous soul – a member of an earlier group of motoring hacks to sample Porsche's latest guided missile – who verified the new 911 GT2's 196mph top speed, and thereby spared the rest of us the trouble. (As if! – Ed)

In fact, the Italian police clocked him at 'only' 300km/h – 186mph – but apparently that was on the way back down from a flat-out session. And the driver in question is an honest sort, so we've no reason to doubt his claim to have taken the GT2 to its very limit. And if ever you've wondered if God is a Porsche enthusiast, then let me tell you that the gent in question is still a free, albeit chastened, man.

It's all too easy to get completely car-

ried away in the GT2; to find yourself travelling deep into three-figure speeds when that wasn't really your intention – although there isn't a traffic cop anywhere in the world who's likely to take that as much of a defence. This is, after all, the quickest and most powerful road-going Porsche 911 to date, complete with 462bhp and a truly massive 457lb/ft of torque.

And even a moderate flexing of your right foot can summon forth an overwhelming tidal wave of tightly coiled energy. It will pick up the car and relentlessly propel it forward at an ever-increasing speed, until you run out of either road or bravery – or even both.

Indeed, without really trying – we simply left the thing in top gear, basically – we wound the GT2 around to an indicated 174mph before thickening traffic dictated

we drop back down to a more politically correct speed.

At first, because the twin turbochargers provide an almost linear rate of acceleration, the experience doesn't feel particularly spectacular. But at 4000rpm the blowers come fully on song, and you become aware of just how dramatic the pace has suddenly become.

There you are, on the other side of 150mph, and the GT2 is pulling with the sort of strength and gutsy determination that many other sports cars would have trouble matching at 130mph. You get a real sense that this car just wants to keep going – and going. The engine is gloriously willing, and the chassis wonderfully composed and stable.

The new GT2's badging is going to cause



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some confusion among those of you familiar with the old 993-model GT2. That earlier car was pure racer – loud, stiffly sprung, rattly, basic, savagely rapid – and barely tame enough for use on the public highway. The new GT2 is a different beast because, well, it's less of a beast.

Porsche has ensured that all its figures are the best yet for a 911, but at the same time the company's engineers have given the car a civility

and a level of refinement that makes it possible to use it every day. If you lived in mainland Europe you could arguably use this car instead of a scheduled flight.

This will no doubt offend hardened GT2 devotees, and I have some sympathy with their grumblings. Having established the original GT2 as a pseudo-racer, why not retain that badge for extra-special stature, and market this new car as, say, the 911 Turbo S?

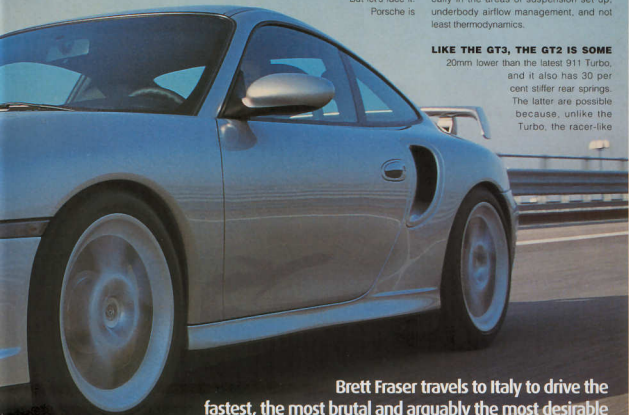
But let's face it: Porsche is

in business to make money, and if it can capitalise on the cachet of the old GT2 while at the same time flogging the new one, then that's life. Besides, the GT3 and now the GT3R are more specifically set up for track use – if that's how you like to get your 911 kicks – even if they aren't quite as quick as the GT2.

Just to confuse matters a little further, lessons learned during the development of the GT3 were applied to the GT2, specifically in the areas of suspension set up, underbody airflow management, and not least thermodynamics.

LIKE THE GT3, THE GT2 IS SOME

20mm lower than the latest 911 Turbo, and it also has 30 per cent stiffer rear springs. The latter are possible because, unlike the Turbo, the racer-like



Brett Fraser travels to Italy to drive the fastest, the most brutal and arguably the most desirable road-going 911 yet, and comes away not only mightily impressed, but with his driver's licence intact, too.

Photographs by the author

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GT2 doesn't have to worry about hauling much luggage, or rear seat passengers (or even rear seats, for that matter). As we'll find out later, though, this suspension is still biased more for the road than the track.

High-speed stability was – not surprisingly – the main priority in setting up the aerodynamics package, and again the existing GT3 formed the basis for development work. The GT2 allows a claimed 65–70 per cent less air beneath it than does the Turbo, and, what's more, it generates slight downforce at all speeds.

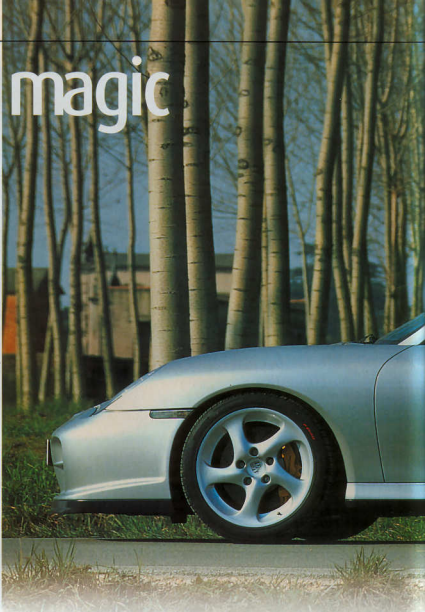
Critical to keeping the air flowing over rather than under the car at high speed is the shape of the front 'bib' spoiler, the positioning of the grilles and the intakes cut into it, and not least how the air is subsequently channelled.

You'll notice, for instance, that the GT2's front air intakes have fewer horizontal slats than the Turbo's, and also that it has a small vent between the bumper and the leading edge of the bonnet.

The air required for brake cooling is funnelled to the ceramic front discs (more on this system in the December 2000 issue) and then out through the wheels (which are themselves shaped to encourage this process) and the back of each wheelarch.

Air passing through the front-mounted central radiator exits through the aforementioned small grille between the bumper and bonnet. In both instances this is air which would normally be thrown under the car, with the obvious potential for creating lift.

Because of the consequent downforce being applied to the front end of the GT2, it



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was necessary to push down the rear end, too. Hence the large and not particularly subtle fixed wing, rather than the Turbo's moving variety.

The obvious challenge in designing this rear wing was to make it tall enough, and position it far enough back, to do its job, while at the same time keeping it within the overall boundaries of the body shape. Integrated into its two uprights are a pair of air intakes to feed the engine's increased demand for cooling.

GT3-style competition bucket seats dominate the cabin, and despite their massive side bolsters they're fairly easy to drop into. Once ensconced you get the feeling that

GT2 might be outwardly similar to 911 Turbo, but even that is humbled by its massive performance. Twin-turbo 3.6-litre motor (far left) delivers 462bhp, 457lb./ft. Rear wing (left) not the subtlest of devices

GT2

Specification

ENGINE

Rear-mounted, all-alloy horizontally-opposed six; twin double overhead camshafts per cylinder bank, four valves per cylinder; twin turbochargers
Capacity: 3600cc
Bore & stroke: 100mm x 76.4mm
Compression ratio: 9.4:1
Maximum power: 462bhp at 5700rpm
Maximum torque: 457lb/ft at 3500-4500rpm

TRANSMISSION

Six-speed manual gearbox driving the rear wheels. No Tiptronic option (and no traction control, either...)

SUSPENSION & BRAKES

Front: Adjustable Porsche-optimised MacPherson struts with coil springs and gas-pressure dampers

Rear: Adjustable multi-link design with coil springs and gas-pressure dampers
Twin-circuit braking system with Porsche Ceramic Composite Brakes (PCCB), six-piston monobloc callipers at the front and four-piston items at the rear. ABS fitted as standard

WHEELS & TYRES

Front: 8.5J x 18 inches with 235/40R18 tyres

Rear: 12.0J x 18 inches with 315/30R18 tyres

PERFORMANCE

0-62mph: 4.1secs

0-100mph: 8.5secs

Maximum speed: 196mph

Price: Approximately £114,000
On sale in the UK: May 2001

whatever lateral loads are thrown your way you're not going anywhere. The wafer-thin padding and a fixed (and fairly upright) backrest are actually much more comfortable than they sound, even after a lengthy stint behind the wheel.

As part of an optional Clubsport package you get flame-resistant upholstery instead of the standard leather, and you can also specify a six-point harness. The Clubsport pack also offers a half roll-cage and a fire-extinguisher system. Behind the seats are two carpeted wells instead of rear seats, and these form a remarkably spacious luggage area, albeit not accessible from the rear of the vehicle, of course.

For a car blessed with such cataclysmic performance the GT2 is a cinch to drive slowly. The clutch is firm but not tiring, as is the steering, the engine is a paragon of flexibility, and the ride a revelation for a 200mph supercar. The old GT2 was a real spine-grinder (just like some earlier 911RS

models), but the new car shows that Porsche has learned how to mix comfort with handling prowess.

Not that our test-route, leading into the densely populated hills behind Venice, allowed much chance to stretch the GT2's road-holding and handling.

What we can tell you, though, is that care is needed, because although the lateral limits are high, a thoughtless right foot at the apex of a low-speed corner can unleash so much torque that the tyres don't stand a ghost of a chance. So be prepared to grab armfuls of opposite lock, even when exiting a junction sharply, because this is a 462bhp, rear-drive Porsche without any form of traction control or driver aid.

Your brain and your right foot control how the GT2 behaves in corners, basically – and often even in a straight line. And you'd better make sure that said brain and boot are as sharp as razors if the roads are wet.

Mash the throttle in first or second gear



Front apron is more space than plastic, with massive central intake, and just one horizontal slit in each nostril. Note additional vent between bumper and bonnet

Animal magic

on dry roads and anyone behind will be engulfed in a fug of tyre smoke. Which looks spectacular but eats tyres and gets you nowhere. Think hard about what you're doing, though, and you'll be rewarded with acceleration akin to being strapped to a Sidewinder missile.

The GT2's wickedly and brutally quick when the occasion demands and when the driver's on the ball. But it has to be treated with respect, driven with intelligence rather than plain enthusiasm. That's difficult, though, when it makes such a fabulous metallic wail, and teases you with such

utterly addictive acceleration.

Fortunately Porsche has seen fit to supply the GT2 with its new PCCB (Porsche Composite Ceramic Brakes) system, which is pretty much immune to fade no matter how hard and how often you hit the anchors. More on this extraordinary system in the December 2000 issue (*Hard-disc drive*, pages 50-53).

Braking is a major consideration with this car, of course, because it piles on the pace with such contemptuous ease that even when you are carefully watching the dial (or more likely the digital read-out) the thrill of it all can render you temporarily numerically blind.

Did you know?

- The new GT2 will accelerate from standstill to 300km/h (186mph) and back to zero again in less time than it takes the 911 Turbo to reach 300km/h
- Around the Nürburgring circuit the rear-wheel-drive GT2 is approximately 10 seconds a lap quicker than the four-wheel drive 911 Turbo
- The GT2 will be the first stripped-out 911 to be sold in the US since the Carrera



Leather seats standard (above). Clubsport offers flame-resistant material, plus half roll-cage, fire extinguisher

IN SOME WAYS THE NEW GT2 IS A confusing 911. On the one hand it's comfortable, practical (by supercar standards), and eminently capable of consuming continents in the role of a Grand Tourer.

Conversely, it's faster than any other road-going 911 ever built, enticingly able to bring you within a whisker of the magic 200mph, and with a sting in the tail that only the most skilled of drivers could avoid being hurt by. It has the credentials of a race car, and the manners of a road car - if you have your wits about you.

But maybe you shouldn't think too hard about it. Perhaps you should simply go out and enjoy the GT2, should you be lucky enough to be given the opportunity. Owners of the first-generation GT2 may bemoan the fact that the new one is a betrayal of the spirit of the old, but the rest of us will find our spirits stirred mightily. ■

2.7RS back in the 1970s

- Despite the GT2's 196mph top speed, stability rather than a big maximum velocity was (so we're told, anyway) a primary development goal
- Simply reducing the ride height by 20mm reduced the airflow under the GT2 by 15 per cent compared to the Turbo
- Blocking off some of the apertures in the bib-type front spoiler offered a further 35 per cent reduction in airflow beneath the car
- The GT2's yellow brake callipers signify that it's fitted with Porsche's Composite Ceramic Brakes (PCCB)
- Air-conditioning and a CD player/tuner are no-cost options in the GT2; twin airbags are fitted as standard
- The GT2's drag co-efficient is Cd 0.34