



First CHOICE

Young, free and single, and looking for your first Porsche? Or a little older, perhaps, and seeking a classic sports car at a bargain price? Either way you need look no further than the underrated 944S2, suggests Philip Raby. Photos by Michael Whitestone

It's great to be young at the start of the 21st century. Not only do you have stacks of dedicated TV stations, magazines and nightclubs to keep you entertained, you can also afford to buy a Porsche. And we don't mean some down-at-heel old 924. For as little as £5000 - less than the price of a half-decent hatchback - you can own a very respectable 944S2. Which, as we shall see, is also a great car for Porsche enthusiasts of all ages.

The S2 was the last and arguably the very best of the front-engined 944 line, which had begun in 1982, alongside the similar 924.

The 944 was powered initially by an eight-valve, 2.5-litre engine developing 163bhp, but by the time it had developed into the S2 in 1989 it had gained a 3.0-litre, 16-valve powerplant offering a healthy 211bhp and a muscular 207lb/ft of torque. The combined result of

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which is acceleration and maximum speed not far short of a contemporary 911 Carrera's, and stunning mid-range performance.

The S2 also received a smoothed-out front end, courtesy of the 944 Turbo, and this looked much more modern than the previous and rather messy arrangement with its separate bumper section. It looks good even now.

The 944S2 remained in production until 1992, when it was replaced by the 968, essentially an update of the 944 with new front and rear ends and various mechanical changes.

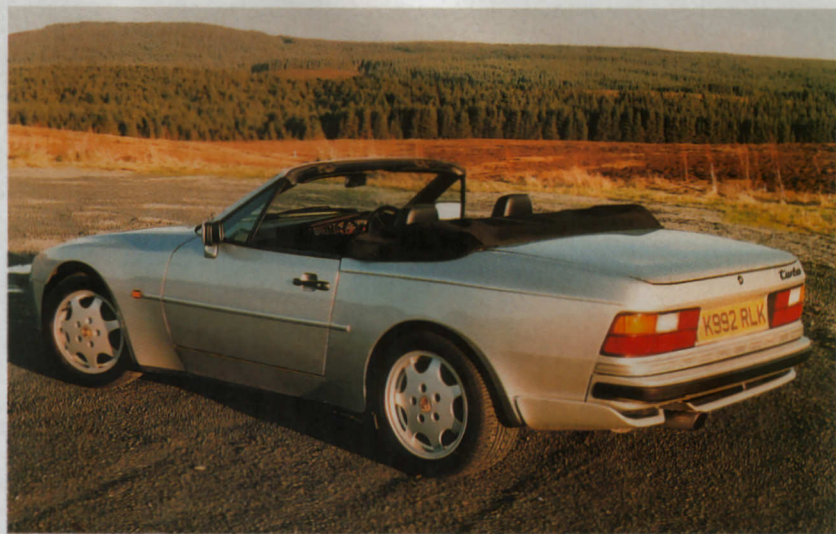
Today the 968, which was in production for



Going topless

Both the 944S2 and 944 Turbo (as below) were available in Cabriolet form, among the rare cases of soft-tops with better styling than the coupés upon which they were based. If you're considering a Cabriolet make sure that both the hood and its plastic

rear window are in good condition, and that the hood raises and lowers quietly and smoothly when you operate the switch. Check the cabin particularly carefully for water ingress. The Cabriolet also tends to suffer from scuttle shake, a problem that can lead to poor handling, and various squeaks and rattles from the bodywork. ■



just three years, is still highly sought after, so prices of right-hand-drive cars are holding up at £12,000 and beyond.

The 944S2, on the other hand, has fallen quite dramatically in value over the last few years, and decent examples can be found for as little as £5000. It's a simple case of supply and demand. Many more S2s than 968s were built, so there are more on the second-hand market. And there's no denying that the 968 looks more modern and is (marginally) the better machine to drive.

But it's more a case that the 968 was an improvement on what was already a great car. The 944S2 is good; the 968 is slightly better. Which is excellent news for those in the know. By choosing an S2 you'll have most of the benefits of a 968, but at possibly half the price. And that has to be a good deal.

So if, like the owner of the car featured here (see panel on page 83), you're young and want the prestige of owning your first Porsche, then an S2 is an ideal choice, and arguably better than a 911 Carrera if you happen to be working to a tight budget.

But even if you're not in the first flush of youth, don't dismiss the model. Not only is a good S2 a great bargain, it's also a superbly engineered machine that's a joy to own, either on its own or as daily transport alongside another, perhaps more exotic, Porsche.

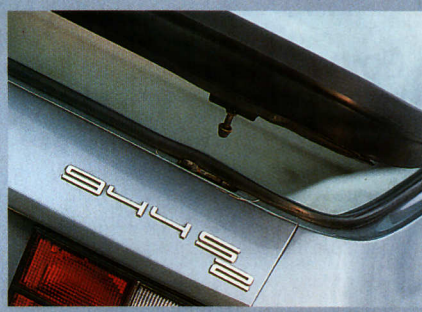
Whatever your situation, there's no disputing the 944S2's many merits. And not the least of those is the fact that it's a Porsche through and through.

Over the next eight pages we'll tell you more about the 944S2, and show you how to buy a top-quality example of this superb and undervalued future classic. Read on! ■

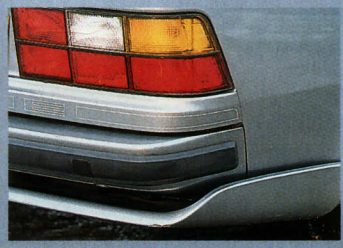
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By choosing a 944S2
 you'll have most of the benefits of
 the later 968, but at possibly half the price.
That has to be a good deal

Glass tailgate is held closed by two catches (see detail, right). If these are poorly adjusted the lid may not open and close easily, and rainwater and exhaust fumes may leak in. Check, too, that the rubber seal is in good condition (it becomes squashed along the top), and that the hydraulic struts hold the lid up. Right-hand strut features a switch for the luggage-compartment courtesy light: make sure light goes off when hatch is closed



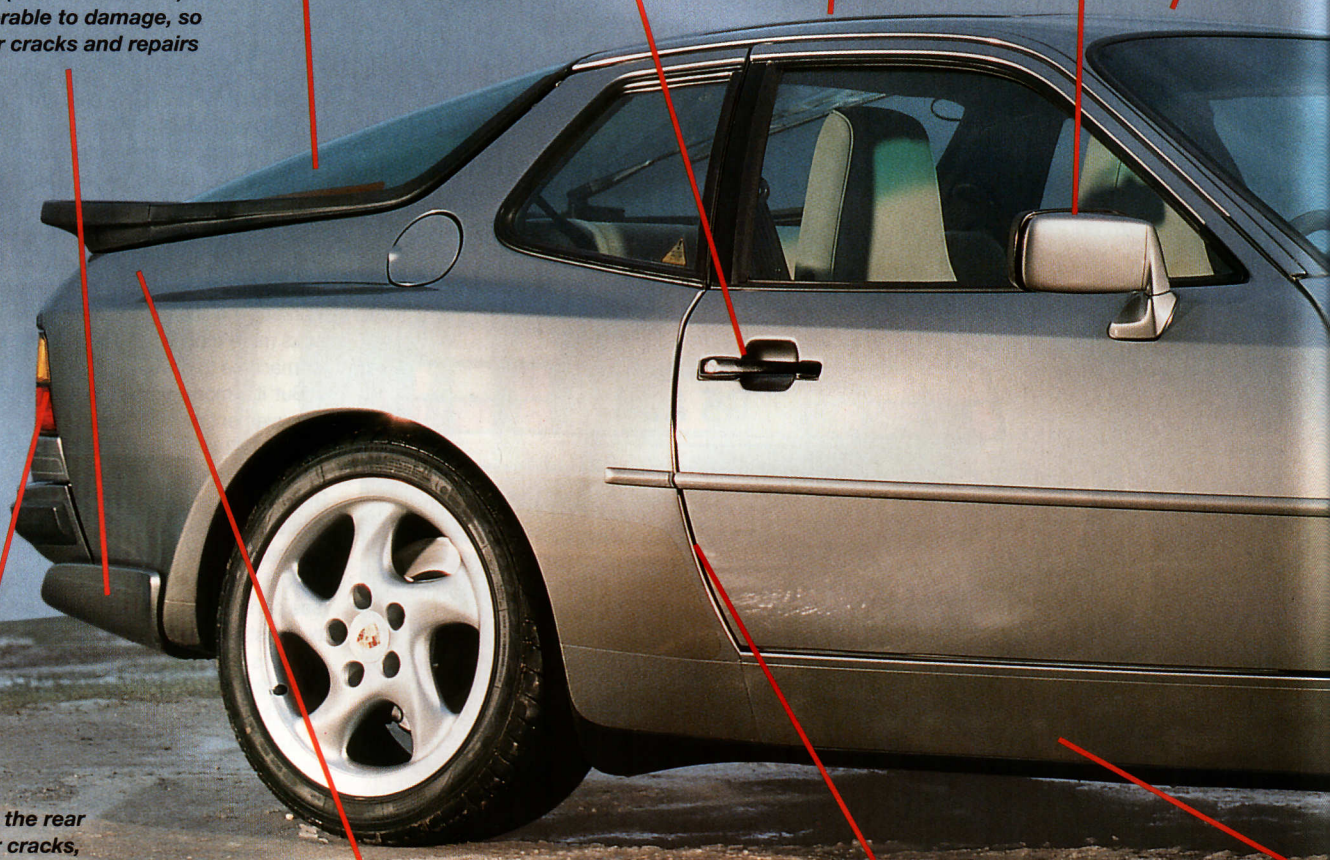
Sunroof can leak. Check that the (plastic) panel sits flush with the surrounding metalwork, and that the rubber seals are in good condition. Problem may simply be the result of the latch mechanism failing to pull the panel down properly. Check the interior of the car for signs of water ingress: it tends to collect on the rear-seat cushions or in the rear footwells. Sunroof can also be lifted out and stowed in the boot. There should be a soft bag to keep the panel in, but often this item is missing



Rear under-spoiler (see detail, above) is a distinctive feature of the S2 (and later Turbos). It's vulnerable to damage, so check for cracks and repairs

Door handles can become stiff, but they're easy enough to dismantle and squirt with penetrating oil. Open the doors and check the steel check-straps aren't loose. They should be welded to the 'A' pillar but often become detached, and it's not a simple job to repair them

Door mirrors are susceptible to scrapes and stone-chips. Check that electric adjustment works in two planes (up and down; in and out) on both sides. Later teardrop mirrors from the 968 can be fitted to update the appearance of the car



Examine the rear lights for cracks, water ingress and mould. It's not uncommon to see unsightly sealant smeared between the plastic housings and the body shell in an attempt to stop leaks

Look for a self-adhesive paper sticker inside the rear of the luggage compartment. This would have been attached at the factory, and if it's missing it suggests that the rear of the car has been shunted and repaired. At the same time check that seams between rear panel and rest of body are intact

Panel fit was never particularly close on 944s, but it should at least be consistent. If it isn't, suspect accident damage

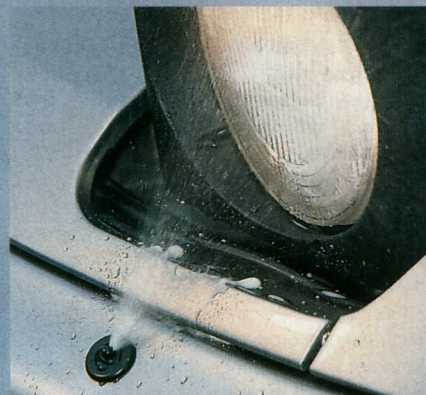
What to look for

Bodywork

Body shell is fully galvanised, and so shouldn't rust. Don't be complacent, though: 944s do occasionally corrode, but usually only if the bodywork has been damaged in an accident and then poorly repaired

Examine the windscreen for delamination around the edges – a common problem which gives an unsightly, milky appearance. Check, too, for stone-chips which could lead to an MoT-test failure in the UK. Note that the windscreen is bonded into the body, and it's a specialist job to replace it

Make sure the headlamps rise and fall smoothly and quietly, and both light up on dipped and full beam. The electrical cables can fracture over time because of the movement of the mechanism, but it's a relatively easy job to solder in new lengths. Don't worry about cracked or damaged lenses: the lamps are the same as in a Mark 1 or 2 VW Golf. If headlamp washers are fitted make sure they both work and squirt a high-pressure jet of water at the lamps (see detail, right)



Check light-alloy wheels for scuffing and corrosion. Originally S2s were fitted with flat-faced Design 90 rims, but many have been updated with either after-market rims or later-style Porsche items (as here). This is fine, but do check that non-standard wheels are of a suitable size and offset, and don't foul the bodywork. If locking wheel nuts are fitted make sure there's still a key, and that it works. The locking nuts can corrode and prove difficult to remove

Many 944S2s were finished in red or white, which were popular colours at the time. Today, though, these shades are largely out of fashion, and you can expect to pay a little less for a car in either. Metallics, on the other hand, are highly sought after and, as you can see from this Titanium Silver example, do look more modern

Front end is susceptible to stone-chips. It's likely that it will have been resprayed at some stage. Check that it's been well done

Look for a tiny, diamond-shaped indentation in each sill panel which indicates the position of the jacking point beneath. If this mark is missing it could be that a cheap replacement sill has been fitted, or that filler has been added

Tyres should have plenty of tread, and also be of the same brand and type all round. Budget tyres suggest that the car might not have been particularly well cared for

Polyurethane front bumper is designed to withstand low-speed knocks without damage. Any cracks, therefore, suggest the car has been involved in a reasonably hard smash, so investigate further. Longitudinal chassis rails, inside the front of the engine compartment, are a good guide, as is the area round each front-strut top mounting

What to look for Interior

The 944S2 has the late-type so-called oval dashboard that looks infinitely better than the original 944 fascia which, thankfully, was replaced in 1985.

On the whole the S2's interior is very well assembled, and should have stood the test of time. In other words, very scruffy interiors are the exception, not the rule. There are, though, a few items you need to look out for.

First examine the seats and the carpets (including the luggage compartment) for evidence of water damage. Moisture can get in to the car from the sunroof, past the big rear hatch and through the heater intakes.

Trim is hard-wearing, but it's common to see worn seat squabs (particularly at the sides) and gear-lever gaiters. The latter can be replaced quite cheaply – after-market kits are available – but if the work is done badly the result can look just as bad as before.

Many cars (including the one in our photos) have Linen (Porsche's name for a cream colour, not a reference to the type of material) leather seats and matching carpets which must have looked great in the showroom, but which can quickly become very grubby-looking.

Check that all the interior electrics work. These include the window lifters (they tend to become very slow with time), exterior mirrors, sunroof, seat adjustment (where fitted), central-locking, and remote tailgate release. The latter is positioned in the driver's footwell (unlike the bonnet release, which is always over on the left-hand side). Pressing the button once should release the catches

and, if the tailgate struts are working properly, allow the glass to pop open. More often than not, though, it doesn't work – possibly because the motor has seized, the catches are incorrectly adjusted, the switch is faulty, or an electrical connection is loose.

It's not unusual to find that an updated stereo head unit and possibly speakers have been fitted. This is fine provided the installation has been done properly, with no loose wires hanging down under the dashboard, and no bodged electrical connections. Check, too, that trim hasn't been cut to accommodate non-standard loudspeakers. Also look for evidence of an old-fashioned car phone that may have left holes in the dashboard or even the outer roof panel.

Run through all the settings for the electronically controlled heating system and make sure it works as it should. Check that warm air is directed correctly and, when you press the demist button, that the fan goes to full power, and that all of the hot air is directed at the full width of the windscreen.

If air-conditioning is fitted (it's not that common) check that this works, too. See also *Coming up for air* on pages 93–97 of the August 2003 issue for more on air-conditioning ailments and cures.

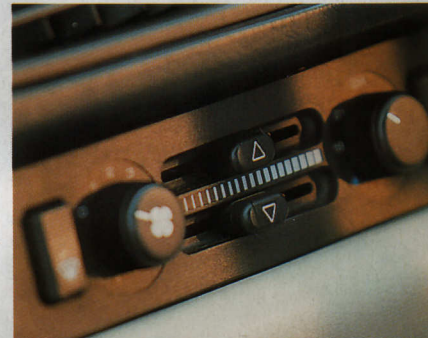
While you're at it, don't forget to try all the other controls, including those for the lights, the wipers (front and rear) and washers, indicators, cigarette lighter and so on. And check that the tiny digital clock on the fascia is working. Many don't, but it's often a surprisingly good guide to the general health of the rest of the vehicle. ■



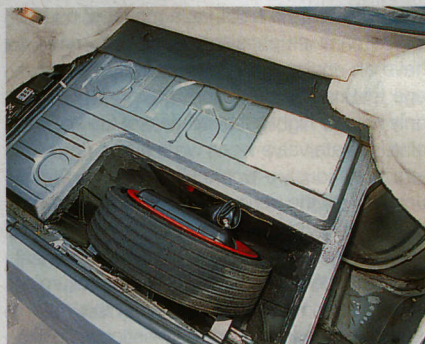
Gear-lever gaiter tends to wear with use (although the one in this car is surprisingly good). If a replacement has been fitted make sure that the work has been done neatly. Annoying buzzing noise from gear lever at high speed can often be cured simply by removing the covering trim and replacing it again



Central armrest has a lifting lid with a rather crude plastic hinge that eventually breaks. Inside would originally have been plastic cassette-tape holders – which often break, too. In these days of CDs it makes sense to remove these troublesome items and use the space for useful oddments storage, as above



Make sure that the heater controls do their job correctly by running through all the various settings and positions. It's unusual to find a UK car with the optional air-conditioning. If your prospective purchase is thus equipped, though, make sure that the system works efficiently and blows out cold air



In the rear compartment lift the carpet (check that it's dry) and make sure that the space-saver spare wheel and compressor are present. Original toolkit is not only a nice feature, but also contains a special spanner for the deep-set spark plugs. Make sure both the jack and its handle are present – and work!



Check that the deep wells on each side of the luggage compartment (the battery is in the left-hand one in the S2) are nice and dry. Drain tubes from the sunroof are routed through them, and if these become detached and/or blocked rainwater can end up in the wells, especially if the drain holes are blocked



Check that the luggage-compartment blind is intact and pulls neatly across without sagging, and rolls back under its own steam when required. This item often deteriorates after long exposure to sunlight. But replacement blinds are available, and relatively simple to fit

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What to look for Hardware

The 944S2 has a relatively complex all-aluminium, 3.0-litre, four-cylinder engine with twin overhead camshafts and 16 valves – four per cylinder. But it's none the less a tough unit that's capable of many thousands of miles – provided it's well maintained and properly serviced.

The Achilles' heels of the engine are its two toothed rubber drive-belts and the internal roller chain between the two camshafts. You also need to check their tensioners and idlers. Because these are so crucial to the engine's health we'll deal with each in turn.

The valvegear is driven from the crankshaft by means of a toothed rubber belt. Unusually, though, the belt drives only the exhaust camshaft, on the right-hand side of the engine. This belt and its tensioner must be replaced every 48,000 miles or five years, whichever comes first. If it's not there's a chance the belt will break, causing the valves to collide with the tops of the pistons, resulting in bent valves and damaged valve guides or, worse, broken valves which can cause irreparable damage to the cylinder head and pistons. In fact, most affected engines will then be scrap.

Note that we say that only the exhaust camshaft is driven by the rubber belt. So what of the inlet shaft, next to it? This is driven from the exhaust shaft by a short roller-type chain which runs on sprockets located halfway along each of the two camshafts.

Now you might think that a chain would be

longer-lasting than a rubber belt, and thus nothing to worry about. It seems that Porsche thought so, too, because nowhere in the 944S2's maintenance schedule will you find anything about this item. In practice, however, the chain can be quite troublesome, and it's essential that you keep an eye on it.

The problem is that the chain runs over a hydraulically actuated, plastic-headed tensioner, and this can crack and even break up. When this happens the chain can come off its sprockets, and once again you'll end up with bent or broken valves and a very large bill. We recommend, therefore, that the chain and its tensioner should be replaced at the same intervals as the primary camshaft belt. Note, too, that regardless of any acute tensioner problems the chain can also wear out, and if you're unlucky this will in turn wear out the sprockets. And if that happens you'll need to budget for a pair of new camshafts at over £700.

Finally, there's also a toothed rubber belt running up from the crankshaft to the two balance shafts – one on the left-hand side of the engine, beneath the inlet manifold, the other down on the right-hand side, under the exhaust manifold. These counteract the inherent imbalance of such a large-capacity four-cylinder engine, and make it feel almost as smooth as a V8. It's not in itself a disaster if the balance-shaft belt breaks, since the engine can still run without it, but since any failure will tend to take out the camshaft belt at the same time the message is clear: renew both.

With all the above in mind, then, it's essential that you quiz the seller about the car's recent history. When were the belts last changed? Were the camshaft chain and tensioner renewed at the same time? Insist on seeing paperwork to prove that the jobs have been done, and if it's not forthcoming haggle on the assumption that you'll have to have the work done very soon. And even if nothing has broken that's not cheap. Budget for around £300 including parts and VAT for an independent specialist to renew belts and chain.

Other than that, the engine is fairly straightforward. Check for oil leaks (camshaft, balance shafts, crankshaft, oil-cooler, oil-pressure sender), which tend to be annoying rather than catastrophic, although lubricant leaking onto the aforementioned rubber belts will drastically reduce their life expectancy.

More serious are oil leaks into the engine coolant. Look at the inside of the header-tank filler cap for signs of the white sludge which indicates that oil and water have cross-contaminated each other. Oil can enter the coolant through the oil-cooler (which, unusually, is water- rather than air-cooled) or because of a failed cylinder-head gasket. According to some the latter has a natural life of about 10 years, so check the service history to see if it's been replaced. Further indications of a failed head gasket are a low coolant level in the header tank, poor running, and overheating.

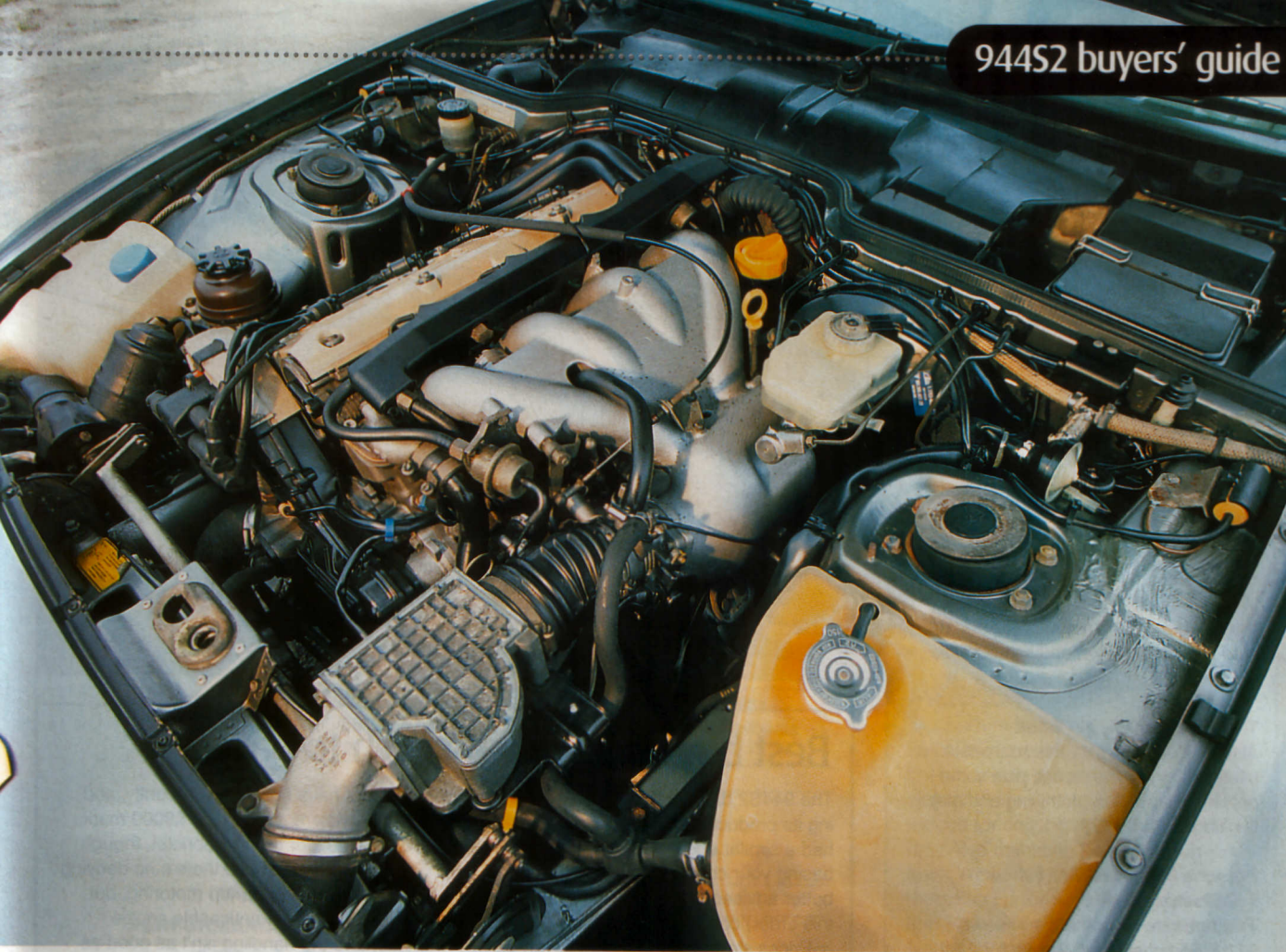
Another common leak is that of power-steering fluid. This can be caused by loose pipe clips, or by a fractured pipe. You might find that the rack itself is leaking internally (into the rubber gaiter at each end), in which case a good second-hand unit is the best bet. A specialist Porsche breaker such as Porsch-Apart (01706 824053) can supply one for around £180 (exchange) including carriage and VAT. Steering pumps can leak, too, but a genuine Porsche rebuild kit costs only around £12 including VAT, and is surprisingly straightforward to fit. For more on this see *Pump action* on pages 104–105 of the July 2002 issue.

Water pumps can fail, leading to coolant leaks and noisy operation. Changing the pump means removing the timing case and belts, so many owners have the pump renewed at the same time as the belts, as a matter of course.

We can't emphasise enough the need to have an engine-compression or cylinder-leakage test carried out before buying an S2. Not only will this highlight head-gasket failure, it will also indicate valve wear, worn piston rings and – most seriously – worn cylinder bores. Almost uniquely for the period the pistons run direct in the relatively soft aluminium cylinder block, which in order to provide the required resistance to wear is given a special metallurgical treatment known as Nikasil. What this means is that, unlike in a more conventional engine, cylinder wear cannot realistically be overcome by reboring the block and fitting oversize pistons (expect to see more on this subject in a future issue of *911 & Porsche World*.) If, on the other hand, the bores are sound, new piston rings can be fitted, although the engine has to come out of the car to do so.

While you're in the engine compartment, consider the condition of the right-hand engine





mount. In order to reduce the transmission of noise and vibration Porsche fitted special hydraulic mounts that work well, but the one on the right-hand side suffers from its proximity to the hot exhaust manifold. Eventually its hydraulic fluid will seep out and the engine will list to starboard, causing excessive vibration to travel through the body. In right-hand-drive cars the problem is exacerbated by the exhaust manifold touching the steering shaft. There should be a heat shield to help prevent this problem – make sure it's in place.

One quick way to check for correct engine alignment, by the way, is to look at the large-diameter rubber hose between the water pump and the bottom of the radiator. If it's close to, or even touching, the right-hand chassis member then it's a fair bet that the engine mount has collapsed and needs to be replaced.

Transmissions (five-speed manual only; the S2 offered no automatic Tiptronic option) are generally tough, but listen for an annoying whine from the rear end of the car (which is where both the gearbox and the final drive are located). You'll often hear any noise more clearly by opening the sunroof. This is an indication of wear in either the differential bearings or the main pinion bearing. Either way it's a gearbox-out job to put right. Oil leaks from the transmission are by no means unknown. Usually it's from the two output-shaft seals, which are easy enough to replace with the gearbox in situ, but equally this may simply be a sign that the output-shaft bearings are worn, in which case you're looking at a fairly expensive transmission stripdown.

Check that the clutch doesn't slip under load (indicating a worn friction plate) or judder

(which indicates that the friction plate's shock-absorbing rubber centre has broken up), and that the gear shift is smooth and reasonably precise. The clutch action will also tend to become heavier as the friction plate wears. Some stiffness in the shift may be caused by a poorly lubricated or adjusted linkage. Replacing the clutch is a labour-intensive job that involves removing the gearbox.

The aluminium-alloy brake calipers are similar to those in the 964-model 911 Carrera, and each has a pair of stainless-steel plates to protect the soft aluminium from the steel backing plate on each friction pad. The aluminium corrodes over time, forcing these plates to lift, causing the brakes to bind, and making it impossible to fit new pads. The correct solution is to dismantle the caliper, clean out the corrosion and fit new plates and screws. All too often, though, owners circumvent the problem by grinding the pads to fit (see *Plate tectonics* on pages 96–99 of the March 2003 issue).

Suspension is generally trouble-free, but it's worth checking the service record to see what work has been done. The rear anti-roll-bar bushes should be changed at 100,000 miles to give a marked improvement in handling. The front suspension's lower 'A'-arms are made from aluminium and can crack, causing the ball-joints via which they're linked to the stub axles to pop out. This is especially likely if the suspension has been lowered and/or the car has been fitted with larger wheels. The ball-joints wear, too, and this again means either fitting new arms (£136 a side plus VAT) or contacting one of the several UK specialists who offer a reconditioning service. For more on this topic see *Strong-arm tactics* on pages 54–60

of the November 2001 edition.

When you test-drive the car keep an eye on the oil pressure. Assuming that the gauge is accurate (which it may well not be) you should expect to see a pressure of 2.5 bar at idle when the engine is hot, rising to 5.0 bar at higher revs. Low oil pressure can be caused by a number of factors. It could be something as simple as a faulty oil-pressure relief valve, or could mean that the big-end bearings are on their way out. And that isn't good news.

Listen for the characteristic speed-related growl of worn-out wheel bearings. These should have a long service life, front or rear, but wider-than-standard wheels will inevitably reduce this quite considerably.

With all of the above in mind you'll appreciate why it's essential to see some service history before buying a 944S2. Even the youngest S2 is 12 years old now, though, so don't get too hung up about a full service history – work that was done 10 years ago is of little consequence today. What you need to know is what has been done in the last few years. Which means seeing plenty of receipts for parts and labour. These will allow you to build up a picture of how well the car has been maintained, and what work may be required in the near future.

It's rare to find an S2 that has recently been maintained by an Official Porsche Centre, but it needs to have been looked after by a reputable independent Porsche specialist, not some backstreet garage. Not only will a specialist know about 944s, it also shows that a previous owner has taken the trouble to have the car properly cared for. ■



Further reading

The *911 & Porsche World* bookshop has some useful books covering the 944S2.

Original Porsche 924/944/968

Written by our own Peter Morgan, this full-colour, 130-page, hardback work covers the full 944 range as well as its predecessor, the 924, and its successor, the 968: £24.99

The Porsche 924/944 Book

Also by Peter Morgan, this contains a useful history of the model, plus some detailed information on buying and maintaining a 944: £17.99

Porsche 924/944/968: A Collector's Guide

This one's from another well-known *911 & Porsche World* contributor, Michael Cotton. A well-researched book with plenty of black-and-white photographs and some interesting information on the model's competition history: £9.99

Porsche 924, 928, 944, 968

This book by David Vivian covers the full range of front-engined Porsches, so the 944S2 doesn't get a lot of space. But there are some interesting reprints of contemporary road-tests – and look closely and you'll spot a very young Philip Raby driving a then new Cabriolet: £18.99

Porsche 944

One of the few books to feature the 944 only, this 192-page title by Brian Long is a full and detailed history of the marque, with numerous colour and black-and-white photographs: £29.99

Porsche 944 Ultimate Portfolio

A vast collection of reprints of magazine road-tests containing no fewer than 212 pages and over 400 illustrations: £17.95

Also useful is SportsCar Guides'

Porsche 944 buyers' guide. This costs £5, and can be downloaded as a PDF file from www.sportscarguides.com.

The company also offers Europe-wide pre-purchase inspections using a network of Porsche specialists; full details on the above website.

Finally, there's plenty of other information on the Internet. Our favourite site is www.rennlist.com, which has an active 944 messageboard. ■

Best buys – and how much to pay

The 944S2 didn't change a great deal during its production life, and most UK cars had a similar specification, so rather than basing your choice on age alone you're better advised to concentrate on (and in this order) condition, history and colour.

Prices start at about £4000 for an early, high-mileage example. From here up to about £5500 you can find a good car if you look carefully. But there are some scruffy examples with dubious service histories which you need to avoid.

Most cars fall into the £5500–7500 bracket. For this you should be able to buy a very nice example with average mileage (around 80,000) and a good service history. Any S2 for more money than this would have to be very special, indeed.

Cabriolets inevitably carry a premium,

but prices have fallen back recently, and most are now at around the £9000 mark. We'd steer clear of the Cabriolet, though. They're pretty cars, and there's no denying the pleasures of open-top motoring, but they do suffer from noticeable scuttle shake, and the handling isn't as good as that of the more rigid (and, it has to be said, almost perfectly balanced) coupé.

Our choice, then, would be for a coupé in a modern-looking metallic silver or blue, ideally with a black-leather interior (although this is rare), a sunroof, and air-conditioning (again, a rare option). We'd also be tempted by a car that, like the one featured here, has been fitted with more modern wheels. And, of course, low mileage and an impeccable service history would be essential. ■



Facts & figures

944S2

Body	Fully galvanised 2+2 coupé or cabriolet
Engine	Front-mounted, in-line, water-cooled four-cylinder; all-aluminium construction. Double overhead camshafts (see text) operating four valves per cylinder. Bosch Motronic engine management system
Capacity	2990cc
Bore/stroke	104.00/88.00mm
Compression ratio	10.9:1
Maximum power	211bhp at 5800rpm
Maximum torque	207lb/ft at 4100rpm
Transmission	Rear-mounted, five-speed manual transmission driving rear wheels. Automatic transmission not offered
Suspension & steering	<i>Front:</i> MacPherson struts and single lower wishbones; anti-roll bar. Power-assisted rack-and-pinion steering <i>Rear:</i> Semi-trailing arms with transverse torsion-bar springs; telescopic dampers and anti-roll bar
Brakes	Servo-assisted, dual-circuit hydraulic system with ventilated discs front and rear. ABS standard from 1991
Wheels & tyres	<i>Front:</i> 7.0J x 16-inch Design 90 cast-alloy wheels with 205/55VR16 tyres. <i>Rear:</i> 8.0J x 16-inch Design 90 wheels with 225/50VR16 tyres
DIMENSIONS	
Length	4230mm
Width	1735mm
Height	1275mm
Weight	1340kg (Cabriolet 1390kg)
PERFORMANCE	
0-62mph	7.1 seconds
Maximum speed	149mph

Key dates

January 1989: 944S2 introduced

September 1989: Catalytic converter standard in UK cars

1990: 944S2 Cabriolet introduced

1991: Special-edition 944SE introduced to UK market with updated suspension and 225bhp engine

September 1991: RDS radio with provision for CD autochanger standardised

May 1992: 944 range (S2 coupé and Cabriolet, Turbo coupé and Cabriolet) replaced by 968

Acknowledgments

Our sincere thanks to owner Andrew Mais (see also below) for allowing us to photograph his gorgeous 944S2, and for having the patience to hang around for so long on a freezing-cold day! Also thanks to 944S2 enthusiasts Mark Wibberley of Sportscar Guides (see also *Further reading*, opposite) and Peter Sherratt for their invaluable help. And not least thanks to the members of the Rennlist 944 forum (www.renlist.com) for their input and enthusiasm. ■

Owner's view

Andrew Mais owns the stunning 1990 944S2 featured in our photographs. Twenty-five-year-old Mais (right) bought the car in February 2003 because time was running out for him. 'I'd promised myself a Porsche by the time I was 25, and a 944 was within my budget,' he explains.

The IT consultant from High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, had also recently acquired a company car, so he was in the enviable position of not needing to use his own vehicle every day. 'I looked at various 944s, and decided that the earlier cars simply looked too old-fashioned. I fancied a Turbo, but was put off by reports of high maintenance costs, although I've since discovered that concern was probably unfounded.'

In the end Andrew decided that an S2 would be the best option. It has the looks of a Turbo but without the complexities of a turbocharged engine. It was then just a case of finding the right car.

'I looked at several S2s, and some were decidedly scruffy and poorly maintained,' he recalls. 'Then I saw this one, and I knew immediately it was the car for me. The Titanium Silver paintwork looks modern, and is perfectly complemented by the half-leather Linen interior.'



But Mais wasn't seduced by the car's looks alone. It was also in excellent condition, and had a full service history. A deal was done, and the S2 was his for £5500.

Since buying the car Andrew has been delighted with his first Porsche. 'I'm six foot five,' he explains, 'and this is by far the most comfortable car I've ever driven. The driving position is perfect. And the power's wonderful – so progressive, and with plenty of torque from low revs. What's more, all the gadgets, such as the electric windows, the boot release and the sunroof, still work perfectly. I think that's pretty good going for a 14-year-old car.'

Mais also admits that he enjoys driving a car with a Porsche badge. 'Being so young and owning a Porsche is great,' he grins.

Over the year that Mais has owned it the

944S2 has been cheap to run, and almost trouble-free. 'It had a 6000-mile service last November, and apart from the usual service items all that was needed was a new rubber cover for one of the drive-shaft joints. The bill for all the work and an MoT was only £195.'

The only other problem Mais has experienced was a noisy power-steering pump. An exchange replacement cost him £150, plus another £50 to have it fitted.

Andrew has updated his car with later-style 911 Turbo 17-inch wheels and a Sony MP3 CD head unit with new front speakers. He's also had fitted a sports induction box and rear silencer from Essential Styling (www.essentialstyling.com). 'I didn't like the noise from the standard exhaust,' he explains, 'but now it sounds wonderful.'

Future plans include replacing the black-rubber rear spoiler with a later-type 'bridge' spoiler, and fitting a front strut brace to firm up the handling.

And how long does our hero plan to keep his S2? Andrew looks wistfully at the car and shrugs. 'I'd love to keep it for ever,' he confesses. 'But I'd really like a 964 one day, and I'd have to sell the S2 to finance that.' Meanwhile, though, he's clearly determined to get maximum enjoyment from his very first Porsche. ■