

RACING

Words: Chris Knapman Photography: David Smith

The arrival of the new 911 GT3 RS might be imminent but that doesn't mean an end to development work on the previous model, as Parr Motorsport's track-focused 996 GT3 RS demonstrates.

My brain is as scrambled as the roadside scenery is blurred. A bombardment of serotonin and panic, euphoria and trepidation. Do I keep the throttle pinned and drown in the raw acceleration and race-inspired bark of the engine, or is the fear of a mobile speed camera just up the road enough to see my right foot jump on to the brakes?

Oh God, I can't decide. Brake, brake, brake,

control yourself, you're on the public road, it's not your car, just be sensible... is what I should be thinking but to be honest when you've got 3.6 litres of flat-six screaming away at 8000rpm behind your head all logic tends to go out the window. I snap one more gear on the short-shift-equipped six-speed 'box before common sense prevails and the anchors are called into duty. On a smooth stretch of dual carriageway Parr's GT3 RS has proved itself capable of

delivering a Grade A adrenalin hit. However, as with any RS, what this car can do on the public highway is only half the story.

Cast your mind back to mid-2003 when Porsche announced it was to bring back the Renn Sport tag for another outing. The details of this new incarnation of 996 were tantalising: the GT3's race-derived flat-six, a weight-optimised shell, a smattering of carbon fibre parts and even a rear window made from acrylic. This was



INTENTIONS

to be the ultimate 996, the perfect lightweight track car, a formula that would surely be impossible to improve upon. Back in the here and now Parr Motorsport would beg to differ and it's the result of the Crawley company's tuning programme for the RS that has me taking liberties with the national speed limit.

The visual clues that this machine is removed from the standard RS are immediate: the way it sits millimetres from the ground, wheel arches filled with nine-spoke carbon (yes, carbon) wheels, a centre exit exhaust poking from its Carrera white bumper.

Inside it's a similar story; stripped of carpets

and with carbon trim and a deeply dished Momo wheel this car looks every bit the racer. So much so in fact that it makes the standard RS look quite luxurious, and when on the move, quite refined too (although with that engine there's a strong argument for the less sound deadening the better).

Given this RS's no-nonsense appearance both inside and out it won't come as a surprise to hear that Parr has tuned it with track work firmly in mind.

Key to this is the fitment of JRZ single-way adjustable dampers, built to Parr's specification following a three-year development on major

European circuits. The setup we are experiencing today is among the most extreme the company will offer, but is by no means the only option, as Parr's Lawrence Stockwell explains: "The aim is to deliver a car set up that meets individuals' requirements, so we can cater for anything from mild geometry changes to improved tyre wear and cornering grip all the way to four-way adjustable dampers with infinite adjustment for the serious track day enthusiast or racer. Generally speaking we encourage a progressive approach with customers learning the car's capabilities and making chassis adjustments to suit experience and use. The setup can then be





revised, if required, when the customer wants to develop the performance.”

To this extent Parr’s setups are tuned on dedicated wheel alignment equipment, along with a flat patch and corner weight scales, which in the case of this development car utilised those incredible carbon wheels, manufactured by Dymag.

Ah yes, the wheels. Weighing just 6kg each, which believe it or not is less than half the mass of a standard GT3 alloy, these not only cut around 30kg from the total unsprung weight of the car, but also reduce the rolling resistance, thus improving acceleration, braking and steering response. From behind the wheel the difference is obvious, the combination of carbon rims with magnesium centres bringing a discernable sharpness to turn-in and the whole car feeling lighter on its toes than a regular RS.

This car is unashamedly set up with track

work in mind so it’s no surprise to discover that the pay-off on anything less than a smooth road is a machine that demands the driver’s full attention. On the typically bumpy tarmac that makes up much of Britain’s road network the nose of the RS is pulled into even the smallest ruts and cambers requiring a firm grip on the tactile three-spoke wheel to keep things on course, while the ride is undeniably crashy. Things do tend to level out the faster you go and the engine is faultless in its smoothness and tractability, but the message from the car is clear: it wants to go on track.

Which might all make you wonder why we are testing it on the road. Well, firstly, because when all is said and done, this is still a road legal car. And secondly, because we’ve got to get to the track somehow...

Our destination is the Brands Hatch Indy circuit where we are due to meet up with ex-

British Touring car racer and seasoned Porsche campaigner Kelvin Burt. Having him at the wheel and me in the passenger seat should afford the ideal opportunity to assess what this car is capable of on the limit.

With straps strapped and checks checked Burt fires the RS into life, eases out the uprated and slightly snappy sports clutch, and in a blare of revs we’re off. Emerging from the pit lane on the dive into the right-hander of Paddock Hill the RS feels absolutely planted and Burt totally committed, his pace through the following dip enough to turn the stomach for the first couple of laps. Into Druids hairpin the smooth surface leaves the RS’s nose free to do what it does best and deliver immediate turn-in, rather than be tempted to push a little wide.

A short burst of acceleration and noise brings us to the left-hander at Graham Hill bend where

Custom-developed exhaust can help liberate additional 20bhp when combined with Parr engine remap. JR2 dampers boast on-board adjustment, accessible in spartan luggage compartment





Carbon wheels manufactured by Dymag and are available from Parr. Brembo floating discs excellent for track work



Racer Kelvin Burt has been instrumental in the development of Parr's GT3 RS. The results on track are awesome, as we discovered for ourselves at Kent's Brands Hatch circuit

the RS is mighty, both in the way it sheds speed on entry, and picks it up again on the exit. The highlight of the lap though is the left-right transition from Surtees through to McLaren, Burt able to fling the RS from one apex to the other, the change of tack as instant as the grip is strong. We hammer over the kerbs and, with the car settled, power through Clark Curve and on to the start-finish straight, the flat-six engine pulling solidly through third and fourth gears before Burt stamps on the brakes once again and turns into Paddock Hill. The more laps we complete the more the RS feels like a well-set-up race car as opposed to a track-orientated road car.

When we pull into the pits for a breather Burt agrees: "If you put slicks on this car it would be as quick as a Britcar, it's really that well sorted. On the Pilot Sport Cups you can still feel it moving around slightly but slicks would sort this out and the carbon wheels do make it feel very light to drive. The brakes are also very impressive."

He's not wrong, the Brembo floating disc setup Parr favours for the GT3 offers more stopping power and stamina than Porsche's steel brakes and costs less than half the price of PCCB. And

because the discs aren't fixed to the hubs they have room to expand as they get hot, increasing their longevity to the extent that customers are finding they can complete anywhere between ten and 15 track days before the discs or even pads require replacing. The only pay-off being that the floating discs can clatter when cold.

It says something about the thoroughness of the chassis modifications that I'm yet to even really mention the engine. Yet of course, this package wouldn't be complete without a bit of tweekery to extract more power from the six-cylinder mill, and to this extent the main change comes courtesy of a new exhaust.

"It was important to make an exhaust that would offer both a weight advantage with potential power gains and something that would look and sound right, so we worked through eight prototypes before settling on this final design," explains Lawrence.

The final system comprises of headers, intermediate pipes and a rear silencer, although to have it fitted also requires a change of bumper to one that will accommodate a centre exit exhaust, for which Parr offers either a conventional rear PU or a carbon fibre item sticking to the weight

reduction theme (as fitted to this car). Incredibly, the system reduces weight by 25-30kg over the back axle, which plays an important part in making the RS feel so alert and adjustable at the limit. Combined with an engine remap the exhaust also liberates a further 20bhp on the RS's stable of 381, as well as gains in mid-range torque that add a subtle layer of extra muscle to the power delivery.

As with any GT3 though, the power delivery makes up just one element of the appeal of this RS. Rather it's the overall feel of the car, the inherent lightness and natural athleticism that runs through its every control that is where the appeal lies.

On the road there's no doubt that a setup as extreme as this compromises the RS's limited road manners further still. But that's not the point, for on the track Parr's ultimate RS is nothing short of astonishing, its talents enough to leave you amazed that this could be a road car at all ○

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