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911R

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R Rated

EB Motorsport recently revealed an exceptional celebration of the 911R in time for the model's fiftieth anniversary. We headed for the snowy Yorkshire Moors to investigate.

Story & Photography: John Glynn

Once upon a time, lightweight 911s meant cars made on the cheap, with flimsy bodywork and meagre interiors. Not any more. Built to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Porsche 911R's endurance speed record at Monza in October 1967, EB Motorsport's 911R celebration is a beautiful thing.

Though this car looks all steel, only the roof is in metal. All other body panels are handmade in fibreglass at EB's Yorkshire HQ. Fully oiled and quarter fuelled, with big wheels and tyres, chunky replica seats and a proper roll cage in the back with optional bolt-in door bars, the 911R weighs less than 830 kilograms. Substitute the 'touring' items for Monza-spec skinny wheels and tyres with a single lightweight seat, and the car tips the scales at just 804 kilograms.

"Bear in mind that this 911 is fully seam welded and has more than five kilograms of underseal on it," says EB's Mark Bates. "It's been lightly stone-chipped underneath for protection and it's got a proper paint job, inside and out. You look at the factory photos

and all the roofs of the original Rs were just blown in lightly to keep the weight down. This car has as much paint on the inside as it does on the outside.

"There is no silver bullet for weight reduction on the R: the lightweight gains come from optimising every area. Bought from mid-west America in 2013, this SWB 911 was in a terrible state when we started and it needed a lot of repair, all of which was done here at EB. Every time you go near an old car with a welder you're adding weight, so if we started with a really nice rust-free SWB chassis, we could probably get the weight down further.

"The goal was to hit the factory specs for the 911R, with 220 horsepower and 800 kilos. The reality is, when you actually read the specs on the Rs, the average R left the factory at 820 kilos. So we're under that. There are loads of areas you could get involved in and I've no doubt now that if we went all-out on a build just to save weight, we'd get well under 800. But this was built with the intention to drape it in trick bits and show what we're capable of. It's an R but it's not."

One good example of R but not R tricks can be seen in the brakes: 911S callipers. An R never ran with S callipers, as they don't fit under the wheels. Unless you are EB Motorsport and have a pair of Haas CNC machines, a CAD package and an expert machinist at your disposal. Then you design and machine new calliper mounts, make new titanium bolts and shave the callipers to fit inside the wheels.

EB has added a long list of details to this car and seems incapable of stopping. Every week, Mark's instagram feed (@eb33racing) shares a new part, freshly machined from titanium. "These things make us feel warm and fuzzy but most of them will never be seen. They are R but not R and are part of the DNA of this car," says Mark.

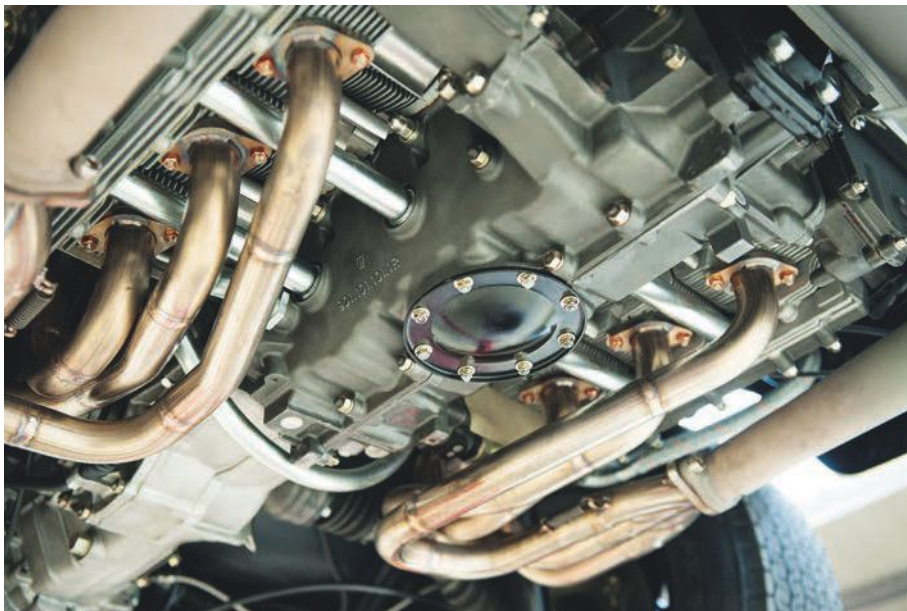
The whole build is knee-deep in detail. Where some builders would say that the cost to reward ratio is too high for the unseen stuff, and that cost of adding these details makes any subsequent sales price too high, EB rewards its own sense of Porscheness first, and then looks for a new owner who appreciates the quality. Mark and brother James clearly enjoy controlling all aspects of their high-end builds using an excellent and impressive array of in-house facilities.

"We have our own fabrication shop with Celette jigs, our own paint shop and in-house painter and a spotless trim and assembly booth. We make all the composite parts here – practically every serious RS, RSR, ST or hot rod with composite bodywork in the world runs our panels – and also create reproduction race parts or brand new upgraded parts to the nth level of detail. We have built a small team to work on our builds and they all understand why we set our standards so high.

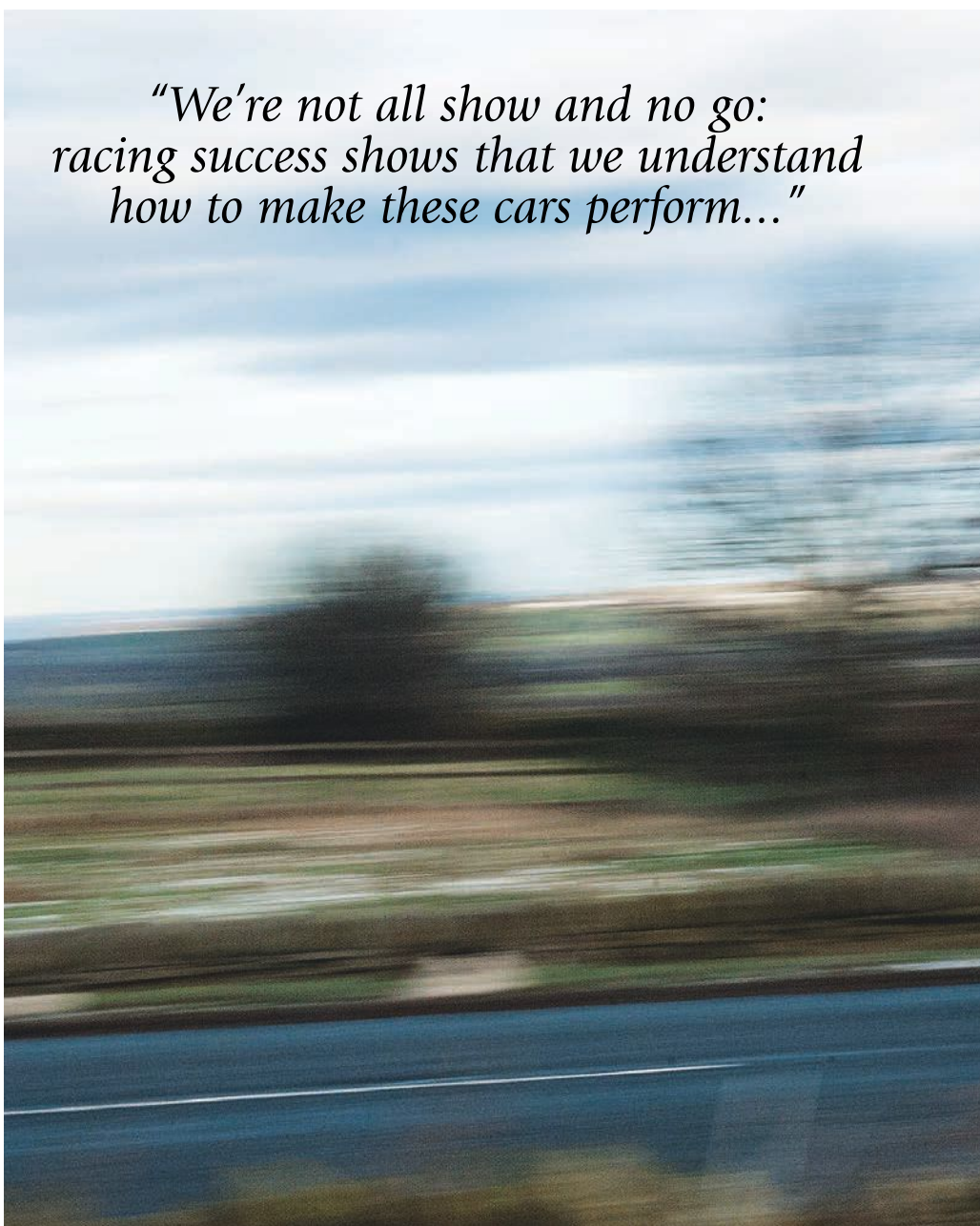
"Combining compromise-free car builds with the family business of commercial design, engineering and production means we can only put a handful of projects through our workshop every year, but those cars are as close to perfection as we can get them. And we're not all show and no go: racing success shows that we understand how to make these cars perform."

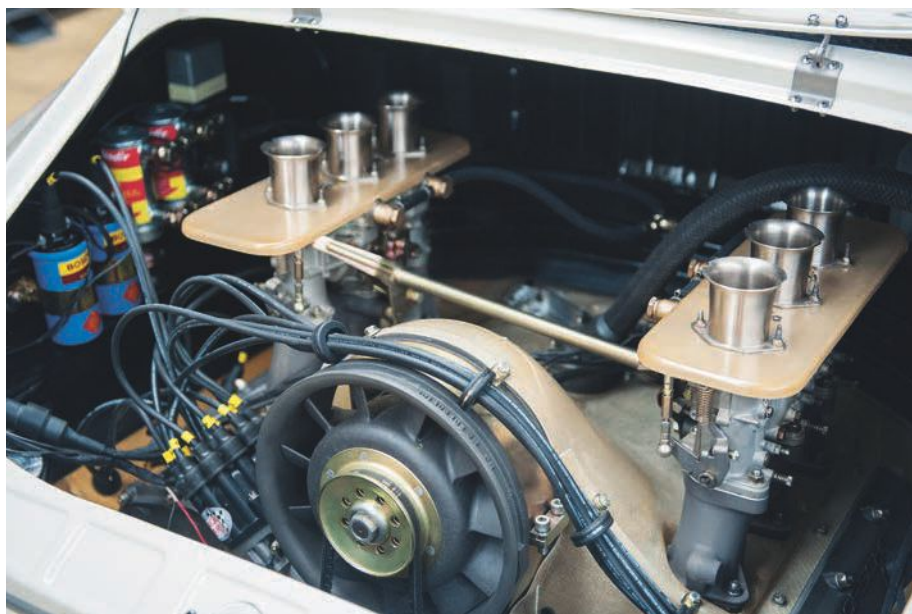
The racing influence is obvious inside the R, rubber floor mats and seats are the only concessions to comfort. With these removed, the car is all metal and fibreglass, with just a little bit of saddle leather for door check straps and window lifters. The fibreglass doors hang from EB's aluminium hinges with bronze bushes (widely copied since release) and the doors even have the chassis numbers CNC'd into them. This is as per the original factory Rs: a lesson learned from working on original R prototypes for high-end collectors.

"These doors are actually longer than steel doors," says Mark. "The rear edges of R front wings are scalloped, with the doors fitting up to them. You save a lot of weight with the door change: steel doors are heavy, with chunky window regulators, thick glass and brass window frames. R doors are mostly composite,



"We're not all show and no go: racing success shows that we understand how to make these cars perform..."







with plastic windows. This car has composite rear quarter panels, but there is not a huge difference to steel panels: the odd kilo here and there. The doors are a really big win.

"The wiring loom is a modern competition loom, but, as so much of this car is different, most of it was modified and then test fitted into the car before the dash and interior were altered, to allow the loom to be mounted tidily and completely out of view. I don't like seeing wiring looms cable-tied to rough brackets with loose ends throughout, so we spent two full days just making custom aluminium brackets to fit all the wiring into the open dash in such a way that it is unseen

from the driver's seat," we're told.

There isn't much switchgear in a factory R, but what is there is rather unique. The fuel level warning light in the middle of the dashboard is pure unobtanium, so when Mark eventually found one with a white lens, he snapped it up and machined a new lens in red. The dash-mounted horn push is another unique piece – \$300 alone – and original Speedster light switches are also not cheap.

"We agonised for hours over the cost of some of these pieces, but, at the end of the day, detail is detail. I've seen recreations with thousands of hours of work being dismissed by so-called experts within seconds because

they had the wrong washer jets. Not that we obsess about armchair opinion, but, as so much research is required to get these things right, we don't shy away from it."

Research is part of the fun, and EB has amassed a huge amount of 911R information since deciding to embark on this project. The research dossier includes downloaded photos, book scans, race photos, engine bay shots from original, unrestored cars and photos of R parts being restored. The firm has been involved in many rare racecar restorations: quite handy when you want to build something authentic.

One detail often missed in R recreations is the steering wheel stitching. A proper R has



a flat three-spoke 'Monza' wheel with the stitching join offset to the left of the bottom spoke. Research revealed many restored Rs with incorrect steering wheels or, in some cases, the right ones mounted backwards. This one is perfect. Also perfect are the dials: built specifically for this R with a 10k tachometer and 250 km/h speedometer. For our first photo session with the R, this read one mile: the distance to the local MoT station and back again.

The Porsche Letter of Origin required for first UK registration rubber-stamped the SWB 911 as a 1967 911L: chassis number 007.

It took a while for the paperwork to come through from the DVLA to register the car, but

eventually the logbook was issued and the car could be insured for road use.

Mark lost no time in trying it out and making a few early tweaks. The speedometer still reads just a few miles when the time eventually comes for us to take it out on the road and shoot the car in motion. As we head out into the Peak District, the UK has had its heaviest snowfall for five years and Yorkshire is covered in white. While I'd prefer sunshine and dry roads for driving, the snow on the moors serves as a great photo backdrop.

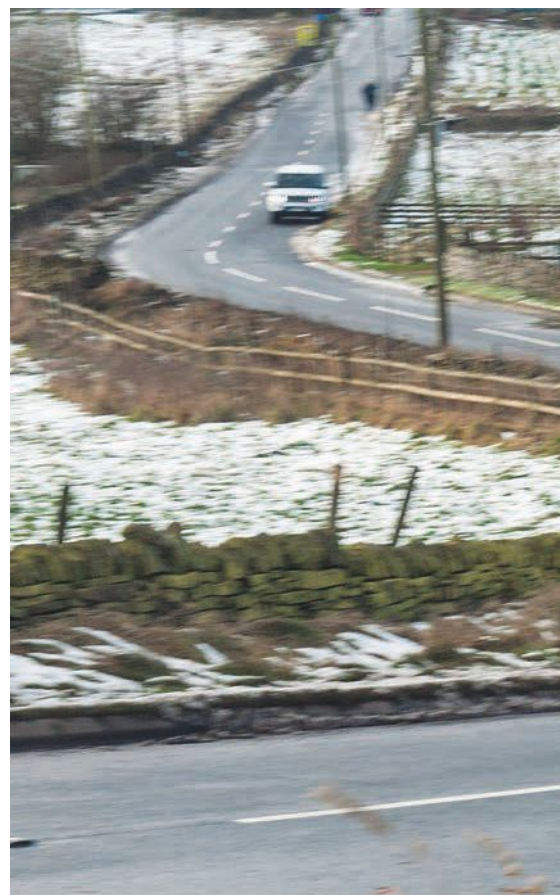
The first drive of any classic 911 restoration project is exciting. Years of hard work and countless decisions reveal their delights in

the turn of a key and the snick of a shifter, before the clutch pedal is lifted and the wheels begin to turn. Within moments, the new build releases its first burst of energy into the world and sends an emotional message. Mark was first to drive this car, but his emotions are never easy to read. I will have to see what the R wants to share.

My main fascination with this car since the guys started building it has been the weight: what will 800 kilograms feel like? Having driven classic Caterhams and Lotus Elans, their low weight always makes me feel vulnerable and acutely aware of being encased in a plastic-covered pram frame. My own car – a



*These icy roads
are deadly, but there
seems enough grip to press on*



'76 Carrera 3.0-litre tops the scales at 1020 kilograms with its original alloy bumpers and a soupçon of fuel, but running it at maximum lightness gives a slightly detached feeling up front, especially when the weather is cold. It prefers at least half a tank of fuel on board to help work the front tyres.

I drive the R at the end of our day, when we've been for a coffee and had a look at some pictures and are heading ten miles back to base. The R is still being run-in and these icy Yorkshire roads are deadly in places, but there seems enough grip to press on. Not the best passenger, Mark is palpably clenching as we exit the car park and head towards Barnsley. The R is more accepting of my presence: I set off with a reasonable thrust on the throttle and the R responds eagerly.

Two-litre 911s are a bit like Jack Russell Terriers: unperturbed by their comparative size versus bigger opponents and convinced they have three if not four litres to play with. This terrier gives a feisty bark as we streak up a long, winding hill and scamper over the crest through another frosty hamlet. For anyone worried that the sound of a little 2.0-litre might not be enough after a few thousand miles, I believe that is somewhat unlikely. The soundtrack of this one begs for more road.

I've driven several lightweight two-litres, but this is the lightest one yet. That said, Mark and I are not lightweights and we add at least twenty per cent to the package. The R started today with 60 kilos of fuel on board, so it is at least 1,000 kilos and that's what it feels like:

just like my own 911, albeit a bit stiffer. Quite a lot stiffer, in fact.

"We took the setup lessons learned from racing our SWB '65 911 all over Europe and added them to the R chassis," says Mark. "The only thing we have toned down since the car's first drive is rear camber: it was a little too choppy for road tests. But everything else is as per the race car, including 23mm front torsion bars with 18mm hollow front anti-roll bar, 28mm hollow rear t-bars and no anti-roll in the rear. It helps give the car the go-kart feel we were after."

The dampers are custom two-way adjustable units developed by EB. The big tyres over EB's own reproduction forged Fuchs – Dunlop CR65 racing tyres in 5.50 M-15 on 'Deep 6' front wheels and 6.00 M-15 on 7R rears – help the suspension and add some later 911 feel to the stiff SWB. It was no easy job to shoehorn the rear tyres under those flared EB rear quarter panels, but they add a spicy spoonful of attitude.

Even with no heating in the 911R, the ten miles from our coffee stop back to EB HQ pass all too quickly. My frozen feet breathe a sign of relief when they meet toasty Cayenne carpets for the drive home to Northamptonshire, but the rest of me wouldn't mind staying for another few days. Ten miles on icy asphalt is not enough time to explore the hidden depths of this early 911. It deserves warmer weather and a route over B roads to the Spa Six Hours: one of the races in fact that will host Peter Auto's new 2.0-litre Cup for SWB cars prepared

to FIA standards.

Forty two-litre 911s are expected to feature in the four-race series during 2018 on some of Europe's most iconic circuits and EB Motorsport will be there with its Ivory '65. In current spec, the R is not eligible, but you sense that anyone leaving this Porsche in a car park while its siblings scream around Spa will come away with a hole in their soul. Two-litre 911s are at their finest when singing down the Kimmell or Mulsanne straights, and this car is ready to tackle either.

The next EB project in-waiting is the Light Yellow RSR that won back-to-back Masters Historic titles in 2011 and 2012 and has enjoyed a successful racing career ever since. EB's bodyshop has just completed a full restoration of the shell, including fitting the firm's latest steel RSR arches all round. Once the RSR has been finished, focus will switch to the Guards Red RS, also receiving a makeover for 2018, with a brand new 1974 RSR bodykit in development, which will take at least 20 kilos off the weight.

When the R-not-R has been sold and the racecars completed, EB's first 1974 RSR Turbo will be put into paint and the rolling shell brought for exhibition in Germany. Built to the same precise standard as the R celebration you see here and as authentic recreations of the ultimate 911 unicorn, these pieces of functioning Porsche art should sell themselves if collector sentiment to date is correct – even with a seven-figure price tag. Don't worry, the first test drive is already in the diary ○



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