

Singing a New Song

Reimagined Exotica

Words by: Brad Olson
Photos by: Jennifer Jensen

R E I M A G I N E D



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We arrived at Singer's unassuming facility north of Los Angeles in a Corvette Stingray. The Stingray is a very accomplished performance car at a very reasonable price. It is fun, practical and, for the most part, reliable. There are companies, like Lingenfelter (Auto Exotica Volume 2015, Number 4) that will tune and tweak your Corvette to make it more powerful and personal. The Corvette has history and people typically like it, and the crew at Singer was no exception. Several of their mechanical artists came walking out of the shop to take a good look at the Stingray right after we pulled up. We were welcomed warmly and greeted enthusiastically, as we discussed the many merits of the 'Vette. One thing that I hoped to be true, but was worried wouldn't be,

became immediately clear...the people working at Singer are all die-hard gear heads.

Singer's facility is nothing fancy, but never judge a book by its cover. What goes on inside those walls is nothing short of magical. There have been enough stories on the company and their re-imagined Porsche 911s that I am sure everyone reading this magazine will know who Singer Vehicle Design is. But, in case you do not, here is a brief background.

Rob Dickinson, a singer-songwriter and previous vocalist/guitarist for the '90s alternative band Catherine Wheel, founded the company in 2009. One might think that the entire Singer Vehicle Design adventure is

just one of a musician with some money and too much time on his hands. You would be completely wrong in the case of Dickinson. He actually studied automotive design at Coventry University in the U.K. and worked with Peter Stevens (of McLaren F1 fame) and Julian Thompson at Lotus. In spite of such an incredible work environment, music and a career on stage was a siren song for Dickinson and he had to give it a try. But after fifteen years touring and playing, the car world began singing to him once again.

Back in the factory, there is an assembly line, of sorts, with cars in all states of completion. Every single car has a name, typically presented based on the end location of where its new owner is eagerly awaiting the delivery

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of their masterpiece. Wherever the car is in its assembly process, there is a massive checklist on the wall of the build station detailing every task remaining to be done before the car can move on to its next spot in the assembly line.

There are no robots to check off these items as they are completed. Only human hands, lovingly crafting a better-than-original Porsche that is custom tailored to the owner's meticulously designed desires.

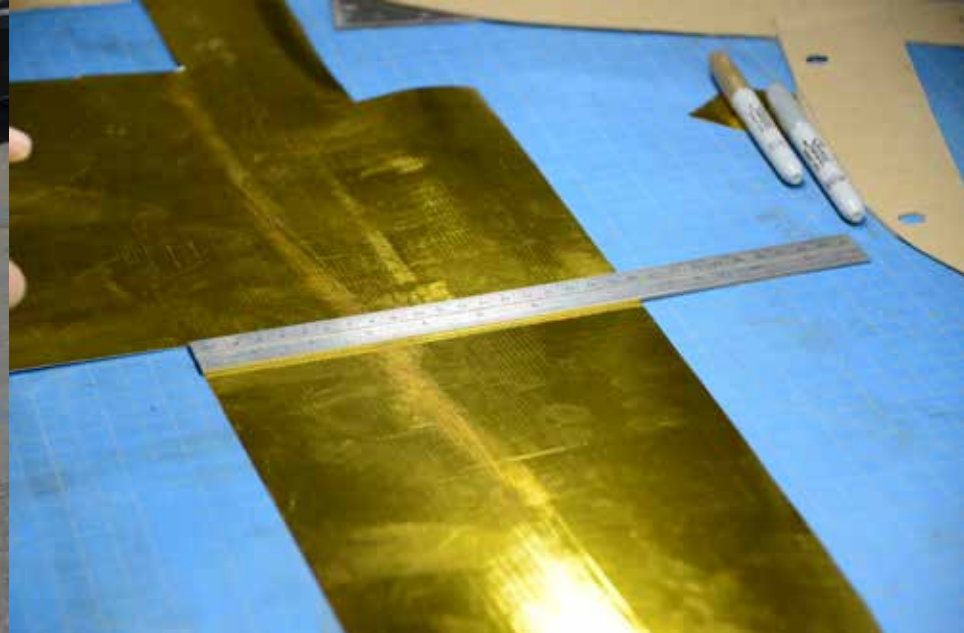
What Singer does to a 911, and how it thinks of a 911, is akin to Plato's "Perfect" form. Starting with a real-world 911, an air-cooled coupe or targa from 1989 to 1994 (known as the "964"), a car many consider to be the most pure iteration of the 911, and then imagining what it could be if it were manufactured today. Specifically how it might be with more power, more refinement and a little less weight. But, a 911 reimaged by Singer is so much more than just the sum of its parts.

The result is hard to explain. This writer certainly appreciates air-cooled



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911's, and even the current (991.2) 911. But, what Singer creates expands beyond exquisite detailed craftsmanship and tuning to create something that is a challenge to capture with words, or even dozens of detailed images, and videos. The normal car review just does not quite capture the magic of what is really just a car, at least in fact.

Seeing it being built and talking to the people doing the work confirms that every item has been refined and improved. Not just essentially every item, but every item. Screws, engine compartment blankets, wiring connectors, headliners, intake runners, the modified/updated Becker radio, and on and on. This complete do-over explains at least a little of the mystical attraction.

The basic "body in white"/monocoque is the core of the car, with several improvements. Much of the exterior "sheet metal" is replaced with carbon fiber parts, such as fenders, bumpers, hood, deck/engine lid, and (usually) roof.

Three engines are available - 3.8L to 4.0L, 300 to 390 HP. The higher

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HP versions are developed and built at Ed Pink Racing Engines (a famous name, from a different automotive playground).

Some of the evidence that Singer is not just making toys is seen in the electrical system as all of it is replaced with mil-spec materials. Also, the upgrade to Hella Bi-Xenon headlights, surrounded by a lot of custom, beautiful bits, helps in practical and aesthetic ways. It is the well thought out details like this that really set these cars apart.

Similarly, the suspension and brakes are much improved and massaged, with standard coil overs, and many suspension material and geometry updates, and some variation in choices for customers, such as a choice of steel or carbon brakes.

The wheels – all are based on the five spoke Fuchs design – 9"x17" front, 11"x17" rear with 225/45 fronts and 265/40 rears. R spec tires can be optioned at no cost. Additional wheel/tire sets can be ordered.

The interior is very much in the spirit of the original cars, but there are so many details and options, all incredibly well crafted, that it's almost overwhelming. It also has a much upgraded and usable A/C system, so you can spend more time in the driver's seat (even the passenger seat is better than driving most other performance cars). How do I know that? Because we were offered a shake down ride in not one, but two, of Singer's latest creations.

Oh...my...Gaaaaawwwwwd!





The art and magic that we saw being carried out in the shop not only carries over into the driving experience, but it makes the car something that I've never, in fifty years of driving, said about a car. The Singer is transcendent. If you do not know the definition of transcendence, please look it up... there might even be a photo of one of Singer's reimagined 911s next to the definition.

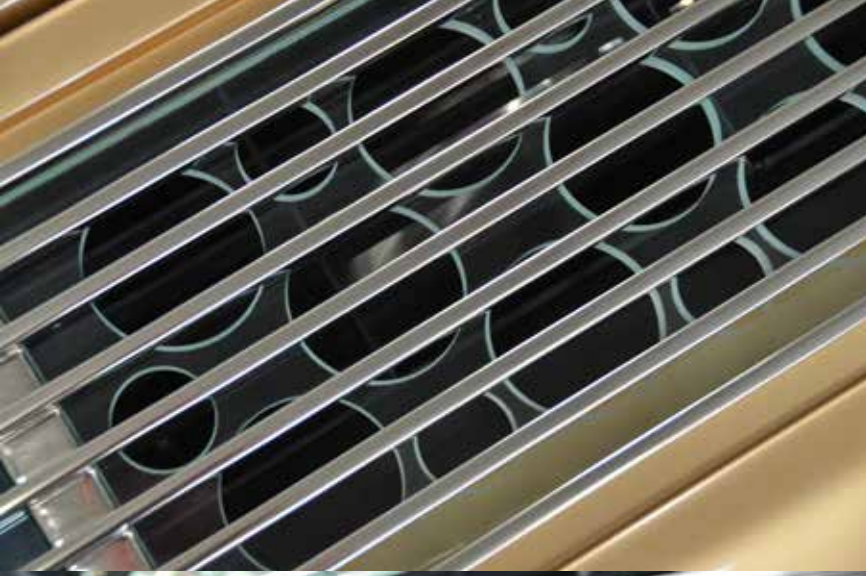
The sound, the action, and the way it absorbs road imperfections without upsetting the chassis or dumbing it down by being squishy...this car is almost indescribable. We fly up some of the most beautiful roads in the country with this Porsche resonating all around us as an extension of

the driver's will and desires. Thought translated to immediate and involving action.

There are no surprises in the handling or performance, which is partly due to fastidious, high speed tuning, on the roads north of Singer, which, to be honest, are some of the very best in the world. The compliance of the suspension and flexibility of the engine, combined with a very comfortable and usable interior, means these are cars that can actually be used and enjoyed in the real world.

There is fanaticism and loyalty to the form and the archetype of the 911 in everything Singer does. In my eyes, they have become the keeper of the





flame, or really two flames. First, they are carrying the torch for the real, air-cooled, driver-involved 911. But, more importantly, Singer Vehicle Design is providing something that many manufacturers are removing, the FEEL. Is a sports car not meant to be engaging? Involving? Yes, many of them are, but the authenticity of that involvement is leaving.

The feel of a truly engaging driver's car, and the fun, is Singer's most basic characteristic.

Singer did not start with the 964 generation 911 because it was pretty and fashionable, but because it drove honestly and directly, which is what Porsche intended.

Singer Vehicle Design will not go down in Porsche history as a footnote. It will remain as one of the purest exemplifications of the 911 form in its own chapter in Porsche history. The 911 reimagined by Singer is not only the most involving analogue vehicle in an increasingly digital world, it is automotive bliss that transcends what even the best from Ferrari, Lamborghini or even Porsche can deliver you fresh from a dealer floor.

Singer does not build the fastest cars in the world, or the most sophisticated, or the wildest, or even the most innovative cars. If you have one it is probable that 90% of the people who see it will think it's sort of cute, like an old beetle. What Singer does won't impress the masses, instead what they create is the best fusion of: feel, fun, joy, speed, beauty, and longing in the automotive world today. In a single word: **TRANSCENDENCE.**



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