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THE PURELY PORSCHE MAGAZINE

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REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2010

BOXSTER SPYDER CAYENNE HYBRID
911 TURBO S 911 GT3 RS 911 GT2 RS



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Speedart has bravely taken Porsche's new Boxster Spyder into an even tighter niche. We assess the end result... Story: Dominic Holtam Photography: Max Earey

There's no getting away from it; the Porsche Boxster Spyder is pure self-indulgence. There is no hint of practicality. This car is about fun, pleasure and enjoyment. It's an automotive trinket, a driving enthusiast's toy.

It doesn't seem like an obvious candidate for the attentions of the aftermarket, either. Porsche has already taken this model a fair distance from the standard car, with its stripped interior, weight saving programme and boosted performance. That's the kind of behaviour normally associated with the likes of Speedart, but that

hasn't deterred the Rutesheim concern from going even further with its take on this rare car.

It's a full programme of modifications, too, with performance, chassis and styling tweaks to produce a machine that will surely rival the Carrera GT for sheer exclusivity.

Visually, the big change comes from the 20-inch LSC wheels (the standard Spyder rolls on 19s), with a coloured lip that can be specified by the customer to match either the car's body colour or to colour-co-ordinate with elements such as the dials, seat belts or floor mats. There is an H&R sports suspension package available

(for non-PASM cars), which lowers the ride height by around 35mm (the Spyder is already lower than the Boxster S by 20mm) so the wheels tuck really sweetly into the arches.

The company offers all sorts of minor personalisation to customer specification, too: door pulls, seat belts, dials, carpets and decals can all be tailored and colour-matched. The only limit is your budget and imagination (or taste). The most important change, perhaps, is the chunky, 340mm, airbagged and TÜV-approved wheel. It looks tiny and feels different from the standard item, filling your palms nicely and it suits the car.



There are more serious engine revisions in the pipeline but for now this demonstrator makes do with a sports exhaust system exiting through twin 90mm tailpipes. Apparently this is good for around 10hp on top of the standard output of 320hp. But the extra noise makes it feel at least twice that.

To be honest, 330hp is a fairly serious chunk of horsepower, especially in a car that's as light and nimble as the Spyde – remember, the Spyder shaves a considerable 80kg off the Boxster S's

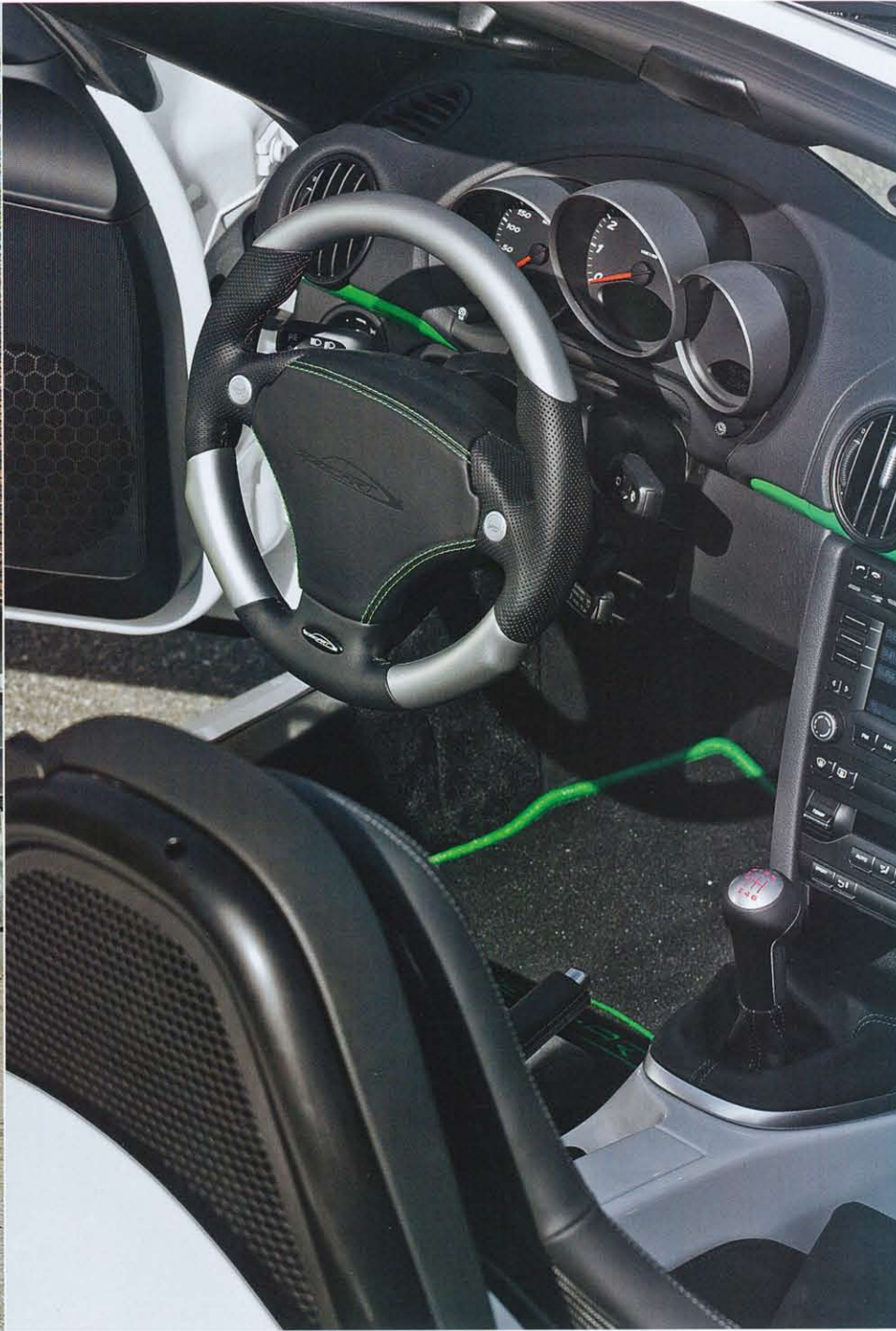
kerb weight, tipping the scales at 1275kg.

The exhaust system is a bit of Bond-style genius, whereby the noise levels can be upped with the simple press of a button actioned via a separate remote control fob. Gimicky? Yes. But a good way to impress your passenger? Quite possibly.

The tiny button steering wheel feels superb and the fatter rubber means there is a bit more weight to the helm. That's quite satisfying but there is a suggestion that a little bit of delicacy,

the odd shade and nuance of feedback from the front wheels, has been sacrificed at the altar of auto-couture.

The lightweight forged wheels themselves, do keep unsprung weight to a minimum but there is still the old trade-off to consider: less sidewall from the 235/30 section fronts and 305/25 rear tyres – the standard car wears a 35 profile tyre front and rear – greater traction but less finesse. I'm a big fan of the poise, balance and agility of the standard Boxster and personally feel that the



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aesthetic gains aren't worth the dynamic changes. Sure, outright grip and traction are improved, but at a cost.

It certainly doesn't feel lacking in shove, though – this is a car capable of a five-second sprint to 60mph and a top speed of close to 170mph even with the roof off. But it is the way it delivers – the meaty mid-range and gorgeous, linear sprint for the rev limiter. Keep the revs in the final quadrant and there is electrifying throttle response accompanied by a spine-

tingling exhaust howl. At lower revs the timbre is deeper, bass-rich and roty but it really screams up around the 7000rpm mark.

Tackling a challenging stretch of road is a joy in any Boxster. The perfect weight distribution, compact dimensions and unflappable poise are all evident – it feels like a precision instrument that allows you to laser in on each apex. Stir in perfect brakes with a lovely progressive pedal feel and you always find yourself exactly where you want to be and at exactly the right speed. In

fact, if there is one criticism it's that the chassis is so good, you find cornering speeds soon get uncomfortably high.

For me, though, there's something a bit wrong with the concept. Fifty years from now I'd imagine that an original, unmolested Boxster Spyder would be a nice collectible. So would I want to turn my long-term investment over to the aftermarket for some debatable colour-coding? The Speedart alterations would make much more sense, of course, on a

standard or used Boxster. But as an attention-grabber, this machine takes some beating.

Even with the doubts, there's a lot to love here. On an early summer evening, with the sun beating down, the smell of freshly cut grass hanging over the countryside and the roads clear of traffic, the Speedart Spyder delivers a very pure driving hit.

This car assaults the senses: the way the airflow batters you as speeds rise, the strident clarity of the engine note. It adrenalises, it thrills. It is not a purchase born of pragmatism, nor is it likely to be revered in the pantheon of Porsche greats. But right here, and right now, it feels truly, madly special. Not many machines can make you feel like this and for its very existence in this increasingly bland and restrictive world, we should be very grateful ○