

BOOK EXCHANGER

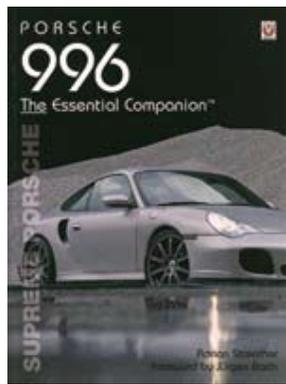
Porsche 996: The Essential Companion

By Adrian Streater
Veloce Publishing
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Breathes there a man with soul so dead, who never to himself has said, "I wish I knew more about my Porsche"? For those who want to know more, Porsche enthusiast Adrian Streater had already written "companions" covering the 911SC, the 964, and the 993; his 996 volume just came out in May 2008. The list price of this softcover book is \$100, but you can get one for \$64 at Amazon.com.

For potential 996 owners, it contains a detailed buyer's guide listing all of the 996 variants, changes (e.g., glove boxes first appeared in 2002), and options. They are supplemented by descriptions, option codes, and discussions of buyer concerns such as the notorious rear main seal (RMS) failure. The author occasionally injects pithy comments ("Luggage compartment and engine lid mechanical lever release system replaced [in 2002] with a draw button electric motor driven system...if the battery goes flat the luggage compartment cannot be opened to get to it.").

From the moment it appeared, the 996 was criticized by Porsche purists for a variety of reasons: it looks too much like a Boxster (gasp!) and not enough like Butzi's original 901, it isn't a "real" 911 because the engine is water cooled, the interior contains too much plastic, the car was welded together by robots and not by gnomes in Stuttgart, etc. In my opinion, a used 996 offers a lot of bang for the buck because its "mystique" surcharge is relatively small for a Porsche. A good low-mileage 996 typically costs less than an older 993 and not much more than a 964. Going from a 1989 964 C4 to a 1999 996 C2 didn't cost me much and brought significantly improved performance (about 30% in power-to-weight ratio plus far nimbler handling), comfort (it is easier for a short person to



see out of a 996), safety (traction control, side air bags, etc.), and lower maintenance costs (no more expensive valve adjustments every year).

For actual 996 owners, this book is an owner's manual on steroids. It

is loaded with tables of part numbers and specifications, photographs, do-it-yourself instructions for minor maintenance work such as changing brake pads. There is also a chapter on performance modifications. Most of the material seems to be compiled from Porsche technical documents and looks very authoritative. Some has been contributed by nonprofessional enthusiasts and should be believed with caution, like you would treat material found on web forums such as Rennlist. Together these sections account for the bulk of this very bulky (656 pages) book, and the amount of detail can be mind-numbing. Think of it as a reference manual, not bedtime reading, unless you are trying to cure insomnia. Unfortunately, the index is too short, making it harder for the reader to look up specific information. For example, there is no listing for "lights" in either the main index or the table of contents. Only by going directly to the "Systems" chapter did I find the eight-page section on lights. The 1300 photos are sharp but small and black-and-white, as befits a shop manual; this is not your usual coffee-table book filled with gorgeous color shots of Porsches.

Despite these caveats, I highly recommend this book for anyone who owns a 996 or is seriously thinking about buying one. It brings together a mass of useful information and technical advice that is hard to find elsewhere, and I have already benefited several times from consulting it. *Reviewed by Jim Condon*

As Porsche owners we are fortunate for many reasons. The manufacturer of our vehicle is an enthusiastic entity and the marketing department is always producing something to keep the rank and file excited about the product.

I am a periodical junky. I am especially a Porsche periodical junky and as such have found some quite excellent magazines to feed the habit. Porsche of course brings us the monthly **Christophorus**, full of glamour and glitter. **Excellence Magazine** is a top drawer US publication that does a well rounded monthly job of touching on all things Porsche. and of course we have the very nicely produced **Panorama** that PCA sends us each month.

But the hard core fanatical enthusiasts publications seem to all come from abroad. The Japanese are maniacs for machinery (and I mean that in a very complementary sense). They produce some of the finest publications in the world. Sadly very few are in my native tongue so I don't seek them out.

The Brits, however, do an astounding job of bringing monthly publications on every marque worth the copy. **Octane Magazine** is always a great read and covers high performance cars of all ages and makes. **EVO Magazine** is another great read with more of a modern outlook. They each have at least one Porsche article each month.

There are three English magazines that really do a stellar job focusing on Porsche. **GT Porsche, 911 & Porsche World**, and **Total 911** are top drawer monthlies well worth the price of admission. I have trouble paying eight bucks for a magazine, but these are worth it. They always have something interesting whether you are a vintage enthusiast or simply want the latest news. Check them out at any of the good book sellers. I'll bet you cough up the purchase price and come back next month for more.

by Mark Stubbs