

My original plan for this article was to deliver a bit of information about major M96/M97 engine "shortcomings." However, I believe there is already an overwhelming amount of information out there, and it will only pertain to a small percent of the total production. If you are still curious, do a search online for Boxster or 996 engine failures, and you'll find plenty of information...now, on to a story with a much happier ending!

After lots and lots of year-round mileage, the windshield on my Boxster was starting to show its age. In the evening sun, you could see that it had amassed quite a collection of tiny nicks, along with about four honest chips. I knew sooner or later I'd need to act. And then, as the weather grew colder and I had to use the defroster, one of the more honest of the chips began to grow itself a crack across the bottom of the windshield. And then in February, my state inspection came due, so I was forced to act. Despite being the consummate Do-It-Yourselfer, I knew that windshield replacement was beyond my scope. I called around and found a glass shop that could do the job for around \$600, and the deal was done. When I picked up the car, I was pleased: I had a clear, shiny new windshield and was ready for that state inspection. I turned on my radio and headed out of town, back home. I hadn't gotten far, though, when my FM reception began to fade...quickly. By the time I was about 10 miles outside of Charlottesville, none of the local stations were coming in at all! The folks at the glass shop had forgotten to hook up the new antenna. UGH! The next day I gave the shop a call and told them the situation, so we scheduled a time for me to bring the car back. On the day that the shop had the car, they gave me a call with some bad news...the story was that despite the windshield having an antenna in it, they were unable to locate the windshield's hookup point. They had called both the dealership and the windshield manufacturer and could not find an answer. HMMMM. I wasn't happy, and I certainly wasn't finished.

After some research both online and in the Bentley service manual, I discovered that the Boxsters and 996's have an FM amplifier located in the passenger's side windshield pillar. I figured that would be a good place to start. Disassembly begins by removing the sun visor, which is held in place by two torx screws on the outside and one smaller torx screw on the inside. With those removed, the visor snaps out easily. Next, the trim along the passenger side A-pillar needs to be removed. It's held in place by two metal tabs located about 1/3 and 2/3 down its length. These tabs hold that panel tight...I was pulling a lot harder than I thought I ought to be, when there was a loud snap and the panel came down. I would have sworn that I had broken something, but no, it was just the tabs popping through the slots they were held in. Whew! Beneath the trim, there is another metal cover, held in place with an 8mm screw. Out it came, and there resting quietly behind it was the FM amplifier I was looking for. At the lower end of the amplifier was the cable that routes to the radio, snaking down the pillar and back into the dash. And at the top of the amp was another smaller gauge wire that extended about 3/4 of an inch to where it was cleanly cut off. Bingo! I'm going to take a couple of guesses here: First, I bet that the person who removed my old windshield was not the same as the person who installed the new one. Second, I bet that somewhere along my new windshield, there is a small wire that should have been lifted from the edge and spliced to the little end coming out of the FM amp. Too late for that now.

The Do-It-Yourself gears began turning and I realized that I needed to "fabricate" my own antenna. Thoughts of an old Dodge with a mangled coat hanger sticking up off a nub on the fender went through my head, but were quickly dismissed. My antenna



would need to be somewhere that FM signals were abundant, but where the antenna itself would remain unseen. I saw that I could continue the antenna up the A-Pillar and then across the top of the windshield, concealed within the roof trim. In the parts bin, I found a nice length of copper wire and cut it to a suitable length. I spliced it to the bit of wire from the FM amp, secured it along the A-pillar, and then threaded it into the roof trim until it was tight and out of sight. It was time for the moment of truth. I turned on the radio and 97.5, WWWW was crystal clear once again...how about a station with less strength? I moved down the dial to 88.5 WVTB, and it too was coming in perfectly. I buttoned everything back up and took her for a drive to give my new antenna a real test. Maybe it's just me, but it seems that I've got better radio reception now than I did before the windshield swap. That's music to my ears!

Happy driving and wrenching
Jeffrey



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