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Wheels: Porsche 911 Carrera S Wins Over an iPhone Fan

By Andrew McChesney

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The wet track and curves at the Moscow Raceway gave the Porsche a chance to show off its superior handling.

Editor's note: Wheels is a section featuring car reviews.

I have a confession to make.

Driving never really interested me. After living in Moscow for more than 17 years, I found it easy to navigate the city with public transportation and the occasional taxi. But three years ago I started driving here and bought my first and so far only car: a humble Renault Logan.

Facts at a Glance

Porsche 911 Carrera S

Starting price:
5,241,000 rubles ($145,615)
The model that I drove
cost: 6,752,446 rubles
($187,785)

Technical specifications
0 to 100kph: 4.3 seconds
Top speed: 302 kph
Economy: 8.7 to 9.5 liters kpl

Source: Porsche

With this background, perhaps it is understandable why the Porsche 911 Carrera S puzzled me. The low-slung sports car is gorgeous. It is 400-horsepower rear engine and full-throttle roar as it streaks from zero to 100 kilometers in 4.3 seconds is outstanding. But, I asked myself, what sets this piece of German wizardry apart from other sports cars? Sure, it is more powerful than the 315-hp Porsche Boxster S, which I had the opportunity to test-drive last summer. But the 911's interior and thunderous roar closely mirror the Boxster's.

Then there's the Bentley Continental GT V8, another outstanding piece of workmanship that I test-drove a few months ago. It overpowers the Porsche 911 with a 507-hp engine. Furthermore, the Bentley offers a level of comfort unattainable in the Porsche.

So by all appearances, the Porsche 911 initially struck me as a fine but unexceptional vehicle, ranking somewhere between the Boxster and the Bentley.

Let me stop this narrative for one moment. Porsche fans, don't shoot me. Yet. Listen to what happened.

Perplexed over why sports car fans worldwide revere the Porsche 911, I turned to a photographer friend and racing aficionado Vlad for an explanation.

Vlad looked bemused. "Andy, do you like your iPhone?"

I had to admit that I did. Very much. I've bought three iPhones over the past five years, constantly upgrading to a newer model.

"That is why people swear by the Porsche 911," Vlad said. "The 911 is the Apple of cars. It has a fiercely loyal fan base. People idolize this car just like they idolize the iPhone."

Suddenly it clicked. The two-door Porsche 911, the flagship of Porsche's lineup, has enthralled car enthusiasts since its introduction in 1963. While the 911 has received continuous upgrades over the past 50 years, its basic concept has remained nearly unchanged. It's a legend.

Vlad did an excellent job putting the Porsche 911 into perspective. I just won't mention that his phone is a Samsung Galaxy.

What's Hot

I put the Porsche 911 Carrera S to the test at the Moscow Raceway, the only international-level

circuit in Russia. The late autumn weather conditions proved far from ideal. The sky was overcast and a light rain fell as I prepared to hit the track.

Complicating matters, we would not be able to push the accelerator to the max because the longest stretch on the track had been sliced into a couple of sharp turns ahead of a public racing event.

But I found that the rain and the additional turns on the track presented a new challenge to the car's performance and my driving skills. And the 911 shone brightly.

When you sit behind the wheel, you feel like the 911 has a mind of its own. It is pressing you, tempting you, to come along on an exciting adventure. You have to gently wrestle the car under your control, stifling any desire to see what thrills it might have in store. This constant battle between man and machine is the most thrilling part of driving the 911, both on the racetrack and on city streets.

That said, the 911 is equipped with the expected top-of-the-line technology, promising a safe and enjoyable driving experience. The tires gripped the car tightly to the slick racetrack. I did not manage to push past 190 kilometers per hour, though the Porsche promises a top speed of 302 kph. But the joy in driving comes in the handling, not the speed.

What's Not

Two issues surfaced over the weeklong test drive: the 911's low clearance and its speed. I faced trouble finding suitable street parking. With high curbs and scant parking spots, Moscow wasn't built for this car.

Remember what I said about the car having a mind of its own? I got two speeding tickets for 500 rubles each during the test drive. I blame the car.

It also should be noted that the 911 has a second row of seats crammed in the back. But the tight quarters limit use of the seats to two small children.

Bottom Line

The Porsche 911 Carrera S is indeed the iPhone of cars. But unlike the iPhone's six years in existence, the 911 has a half-century history that shows it is passed the test of time. Don't tell Vlad, but the Porsche 911 has a new fan.

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