

1975 Carrera 2.7

# Soul legend

This 911 has the heart and soul of a 1973 Carrera RS but without the price tag. It's the next best thing

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Against the crisp January sky, a delicate shade of metallic green drapes the immortal profile of Butzi's creation. Framed by a soft-white canvas of frosted grass, it's a scene to leave any 911 enthusiast motionless – happy to drink in this vignette for easily ten minutes or so.

I have time, despite the icy wind nipping at my ears. The Carrera is silent, and has been for a while as the shots you see on these pages are carefully constructed. Time, that is, to ponder the story of this car, not only of HLL 714N itself, but of the type and its journey to current fame.

Perhaps the frosted scenery was similar when Ken Allen took delivery of this Carrera on 3rd February 1975, but back then, of course, he had the option of jumping in and driving until the tank ran dry, and I, sadly, do not. It was his second Porsche, a 1972 2.4E having made way for the new Carrera, and with it, Ken was stepping up the Stuttgart pecking order.

Discuss the car with this petrolhead of a gentleman today, and his love for it quickly shines through. Although he sold HLL way back in 1993, he still clearly recalls the excitement of driving the car, and the thrill of owning it. Between 1975 and 1983 Ken put just over 50,000 miles on the clock, but changing times meant in the spring of that year he decided to put it into storage. With work premises close to his home, the thoroughbred Porsche was grumbling at the humdrum nature of its existence; it's a phenomenon that says quite a lot about the character of the car, and I feel echoes of it even today, as we shunt back and forth for the camera; more on which in a bit.

A humble Mini took the place of the Carrera as a commuting car, and eventually the demands of a large canine friend meant that the Porsche was taking up too much room for little reward. It was sold to Chris Turner Porsche with, it is believed, 51,626 miles on the clock. Ken was never to own another Porsche, his dalliance with the marque drawn to a close, but a constant history of BMW M car ownership ever since, right up to the latest hi-tech metal, proves the flame is well and truly still burning. But what had Ken bought back in the middle of the 1970s? The Carrera 2.7 was only made for two seasons – 1974 and 1975 – but it came at a pivotal time for Porsche. It was an era chock full of celebrated highs, but with its fair share of lows, too.

If the late 1960s and into the 1970s were the absolute glory years for Porsche and the 911, the years that immediately followed were tough ones. The 911 had been an enormous success, and established an enviable reputation for itself as a car for those in the know: a successful car on track, and a sharp, stylish, expensive road car for those with impeccable taste. In International sports car racing, the incredible 917 had succeeded in providing Porsche that elusive Le Mans win in 1970, and would repeat the feat the following year. They were halcyon days, and have quite rightly formed part of the legend that is the foundation of the company today.

But 1971 just didn't leave such a pleasant taste in the mouth. That year the big five-litre monsters in competition – already outlawed for 1972 after only three years – although still successful, were pushed much harder by the new three-litre prototypes from Ferrari and Alfa Romeo, set to take over for good the following year in the new formulae. And most tragically of all, both of Porsche's lead drivers, Jo Siffert and Pedro Rodriguez, each a superstar in the sport, were killed – neither while driving a Porsche (Jo was killed in his works BRM at Brands Hatch in

a non-championship F1 race to celebrate Jackie Stewart's F1 crown that year, and Pedro succumbed in a low-key sports car race at the Norisring, Germany, driving of all things, the 917's once arch rival – the Ferrari 512).

The 1970s were bringing changing times in so many ways. The 917, and the incredible roll-call of smaller prototype race cars that had preceded it under the direction of Ferdinand Piech, had cost Porsche a fortune, and were yet another element in unrest within the company. By 1971, the decision had been made: in the future, no Porsche family member would hold a senior management position within the firm. The same year, the

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world economy took a downturn, inflation was up, and there was even a strike at the Porsche factory. Sales fell. And then along came two factors that would change the face of sporting motoring forever: American-led safety legislation, and the oil crisis. The former, typified by the crusade of US campaigner Ralph Nader, would change forever the lithe, delicate metal bodies of sports cars and their freedom to express style; the latter meant big problems for those that made cars that liked a drink, and although Porsche engines were on the small side, the 2.4 liked a tippie if driven hard. With the 1973 fuel crisis, Porsche's sales volume slid 25 percent.

Porsche would go on to dominate the almost unlimited Can Am sports car series in 1972 and 1973, with the 917/10 and 917/30 flat-12 turbo race cars; the latter probably the most powerful race car ever built if you discount F1 cars of the 1980s in qualifying trim. But even these monsters were banned; out of step with the fuel crisis, and more to the point absolutely annihilating the American V8 opposition. From 1974, Porsche's motorsport activity would be production car based, according to new boss Ernst Fuhrmann, and there was much to promote as well – 1974 was to be a landmark year in the 911 timeline.

In August 1973 – for the 1974 model year – Porsche introduced the G series 911, and drew a line firmly under the chrome-tipped delicacy that had defined the car from its inception. The 911 was now ten years old – longer than most models hang around in today's marketplace – and some voices even predicted the car would be replaced, full stop. There's no evidence to suggest this was ever a serious consideration within Porsche, however. Not for the last time, the 911 was about to get a shot in the arm.

The 911 required bumpers that could absorb a 5mph impact. These so-called impact bumpers for many years made these next cars the poor relation of their 'pure' predecessors in certain circles, but that attitude is changing now. Look past the received wisdom and they're a masterstroke of design, incorporating the necessary technology to embrace the requirements of the time, improving the crash performance of the car and yet integrating seamlessly into the overall look. The 911 needed to grow up, and the solid look of the new car matched the times. For contrast, look at what Abingdon managed to come up with on the federalised MGB, and consider also this fact; an impact bumper 911 weighs only 25kg more than its traditional predecessor of the year before. Don't assume big bumpers mean bloated.

The bridge over this period was the immortal 2.7 Carrera RS, arguably the all-time classic 911, and conceived around a modified 2.4S for 1973. Although Porsche had a shaky start with this car – believing it would prove difficult to sell the necessary 500 units to qualify the car for homologation – it was in fact such a sales success that Porsche struggled to build later cars with the full quotient of lightweight bespoke components. Without getting sidetracked into the RS story on this occasion (as enjoyable a diversion as it is!) the new 2.7-litre fuel-injected flat-six gave the 911 the increased capacity necessary to be competitive in contemporary racing, and the ducktail spoiler did wonders for high-speed stability.

The 2687cc capacity of the RS was achieved by increasing the cylinder bores on the 2.4-litre engine from 84mm to 90mm. What made this possible within the relatively cramped innards of the flat-six was a switch from Biral to Nikasil cylinder liners, the latter being

### Specification 1975 2.7 Carrera

#### Engine

Air-cooled, flat-six  
Capacity: 2681cc  
Maximum power:  
210bhp at 6300rpm  
Maximum torque:  
255Nm at 5100rpm

#### Transmission

Five-speed manual

#### Suspension

Front: McPherson struts,  
Koni dampers, anti-roll  
bars  
Rear: Torsion bars, Koni  
dampers, anti-roll bars

#### Brakes

Front: 290mm ventilated  
discs, two-piston calipers  
Rear: 282mm ventilated  
discs, two-piston calipers

#### Wheels and tyres

Front: 6Jx15 Fuchs with  
185/70 VR15  
Rear: 7Jx15 Fuchs with  
215/60 VR15

#### Dimensions

Length: 4291mm  
Width: 1610mm  
Wheelbase: 2271mm  
Weight: 1125kg

#### Performance

Maximum speed:  
152mph  
0-60mph: 5.8 seconds





considerably thinner, a technology pioneered on the 917 race car. With mechanical fuel injection, a Carrera RS in road-going form was good for 210bhp. These were serious performance fireworks at the time, and relatively speaking, are still today. Legendary journalist and racing driver (and now sadly missed) Paul Frère timed an RS from rest to 60mph in just 5.5 seconds.

Come the 1974 model year, Porsche was well aware that it needed to progress the 911 not only for the reasons already stated, and in addition to giving the market something new, but also to reflect the changes in road driving. Revving the knackers off a 2.0-litre 911S was pure pleasure on the quiet and derestricted roads typical of the 1960s, but that 'golden period' was coming to a close. Car ownership was increasing, and the roads in critical markets were becoming clogged with traffic. At the same time, Porsche's client base was spreading, and it needed to attract new consumers as well; drivers that weren't so dedicated to driving, and that primarily bought a Porsche as a style statement. To meet this collection of needs, the firm fitted all G-series models with the 2.7-litre block and re-branded the bottom and middle of the range models from 'T' and 'E' to simply '911' and '911S' respectively. Both of these cars were now fitted with the new Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection system in the quest for improved emissions.

A larger capacity brought more torque and hence less of a need to rev the engine; good for the fuel consumption and non-dedicated owners' ears. Both the new 911 and 911S models produced 175lb ft of torque; decent gains over the old 2.4 T and E models (145lb ft and 152lb ft respectively). A base 911 could now also manage 20mpg and run for 12,000 miles between services; progress for the time.

At the top of the tree the 2.7 Carrera RS lived on, also

The plush red interior (below) is in superb condition but is very different from what you'd find in a Carrera RS. The 2.7-litre engine (right), on the other hand, is just the same as you'd discover in the legendary 1973 Porsche



in G-series body form and still with the same 911/83 engine. It no longer wore the 'RS' badge, though, and neither was it available in lightweight guise. Well, it would have been top of the tree, had Porsche not daringly unveiled the new 911 Turbo in the face of all this political and economic unrest in October of that year. The Carrera was the atmospheric engine grand fromage, but with an additional 40bhp, the 260bhp Turbo was part of a new movement in sports cars – the 'supercar'.

This was the world HLL 714N was born into early in 1975 as an H-series 911 Carrera. As an 'H' model, it would have received updates such as colour-coded headlamp surrounds, increased wheel arch protection and further soundproofing in the engine bay. 'But I see chrome' you shout collectively, and you're right, this car had option M446 fitted; chrome around the glass and headlamps instead of the new 'black-look' arrangement as standard on the Carrera.

What it also has is a socking great wing sticking out the back, known ever since as the immortal 'whaletail'. Developed from the 3.0 RS, this wing took the place of the ducktail spoiler of the original RS that was offered as an option the year before (except in Germany on account of its unfriendliness to pedestrians).

If there's one thing that strikes me more than anything about this 911, it's the timelessness of its design. Die-hard fans will have no trouble pinpointing this car, and I suspect the chrome around the glass and the single Durant chrome

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side mirror would be enough of a tip-off for the general car enthusiast to date this 911 at least by decade, if not by year. But I do believe that for the casual car fan or member of the public at large, removal of the registration plate would make it almost transferable over a 15-year period. Would many of them be able to tell it apart from a 3.2 Carrera – especially if it had its standard 'black-look' trim effect? I doubt it.

By now, the Carrera was a link to Porsche's past, sticking as it did with its mechanical fuel injection setup. But while this system was pretty useless at conserving fuel in government tests, it was and is superb at offering the driver crisp throttle response on the open road. The wider rear arches remained, and Bilstein dampers were fitted all round with a 20mm anti-roll bar up front and an 18mm one at the rear. It was, arguably, more so the drivers' 911 of choice than the demure but tricky four-speed Turbo.

Today, HLL has a slight grump with us. I can sense it; feel the annoyance in the slightly irregular beat of its flat-six as its fed big squirts of fuel, but tasked with merely reversing back a few feet or a slight sideways movement for the expectant lens. Once HLL was sold in 1993, it spent a brief period in Northern Ireland before returning to these shores in 1995, and then subsequently passing through a further two owners' hands, until its current residence at Josh Sadler's Autofarm operation in Oxfordshire, where it is now up for sale.

Each time I have to fire up the engine, it stabs into life so quickly I always think I've held it on the starter a fraction too long. It's as if the car is so eager to get driving, it almost gives the game away by firing up of its own accord as my fingers reach for the key. But I've got it sussed; I know it's alive, even on the short drive to our photographic location I could tell that. And now, with the pictures in the bag, at last I don't have to disappoint it with a feeble move just metres forward – and don't have to wince at the drunk on 'super' scowl coming from over my left shoulder.

Now we're properly moving, snugly ensconced within the unusual russet interior – very seventies, but cool if you like that sort of thing, and I do – there's the most incredible sound filling the cabin. To try to describe it to someone not experienced in its tones is a mightily tough assignment for a writer. It would be easy, I can say without any compunction, to fill this feature with a detailed account of its subtle inter-melodies and resonances, building and subtracting as the revs take it through successive octaves. Or I could just say this: it sounds marvellous.

And it's fast, too. Not only is the initial response so ably amplified by the light kerb weight of just 1125kg (much less than a current Golf GTi and probably around 25-50kg heavier than the preceding Carrera

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RS in Touring specification) but as the revs wind up with delicious drama the speed rises accordingly. With 1970s braking, chassis and tyre technology, this is a car that requires real concentration to drive quickly, because the abundant performance means you arrive at situations rather quickly.

Regression, the process where a human is forced to unwind their own personal evolution until, at it's most extreme, they are little more than a child, is usually associated with the evil and shadowy world of state interrogation and torture. But driving this Carrera is, for me, a temporary and wholly pleasurable form of regression: it is simply a joy to sense this mechanical organism beating beneath you; to feel and smell its character awakening as the oil temperature levels out. As the miles pass I realise my wide-eyed expression, caught momentarily in the rear-view mirror and blank from the trouble and toils of the everyday, is akin to a child's when taken to their first motor race or able to ride their bike for the first time without stabilisers.

It does all those 911 things you've either experienced and know well or have read about with anticipation since you were knee high to an 'elephant ear' door mirror. The steering squirms around through the thin rim, the ride is firm but connected, the brake pedal perfectly weighted for real driving but no doubt alien to those weaned on modern servo assistance. And then there's the gearbox, the dear old 915 type. I think it's a 'challenge' shall we say, and I sense HLL views my initial attempts, especially the flick across the gate from second to third, as a necessary evil it must suffer to facilitate forward motion and the opportunity to consume further miles of asphalt. Again, those used to modern 'boxes, had better don gown and pick up text books to study hard at the school of precise and timely gear changes, if they're to avoid heavy punctuation of the Carrera's progress.

There is a comprehensive history file of work that's been done in the past, and sobering reading it makes too, but much of the reason behind HLL surviving today is due to this care. Remember that 911s were not comprehensively galvanised against rust until the 1976 model year, and thereby this Carrera was much more vulnerable to being ravished by the elements than its protected successor, the Carrera 3.0. Walking around it today and examining closely, HLL is not in concours condition, despite having significant body renovation and a full respray at the end of the previous decade. It has a patina which will either instantly delight, or make prospective owners ask themselves whether they want to reach for their pockets to lavish further time and money on it or not. At £48,000 that's quite a big question, but I'll tell you this: you'll never know how much I wanted to keep on driving past your gate, Josh...**911**

