

What makes a Porsche a Porsche

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What makes a Porsche a Porsche? That little question can conjure up all sorts of opinions from people who love Porsches. We have all read comments in magazines and have heard them in discussions many times before; that *the last true 911 built, ended when Porsche switched from the air (oil) cooling to water cooling*. That *any water cooled car can not possibly be a Porsche*. That *914's and 924's were just impostures*. That *Porsches are too heavy*. That *a real Porsche can only be a two seat sports car*. That *real Porsches have to be built in Stuttgart*. Then came the Cayenne! Holy Moly, an SUV! Surely *the Cayenne can't be a Porsche!* What's next, a Sedan? (We'll save that one until 2009 with the Panamera). Well, let us look at each one of these statements to see if any of them really hold up to the historical facts.

The last true Porsche was air (oil) cooled. Sure the 550, 917, 906, 356, 904 and many other air cooled Porsches were wonderful cars. But that statement would mean that the 959's, 962's, 996RSR's and GT1's, all of which had some form of water cooling, could not be true Porsches. But each of those cars were not only good cars; they were iconic Porsches. Don't forget, it wasn't Porsche who ended the era of the air (oil) cooled engine. It was emission control, noise regulations (cooling fan related) and just managing the heat from higher and higher horse power engines. So how could being air (oil) cooled, be the only criteria that makes a Porsche a Porsche?

The 914's and 924's were impostures. Sure, these cars did use some non Porsche parts. And they were supposed to be VW's or Audi's from the onset. But these cars were designed by Porsche for a low cost entry into the sports cars arena. Porsche saw their potential, and after VW and Audi passed on building them, Porsche kept them for their own. As far as their performance on autocross or race tracks go, they do extremely well. If you ever happen to see a 914-6 on a track, you will come away with a new opinion of how fast and well mannered these cars can be.

Porsche's are too heavy! Every car manufacturer is saddled with the same government regulations. And every manufacturer fights to avoid an increase in

weight from year to year. Most Porsches now have six airbags, eight in the Cayenne, a side impact bar, roll over bars, six computers, crash zones, ABS, ASR, ABD, PASM, PSM, PCB, PCM, Variable Valve and Variable Ram Air Runners just to mention a few of the features that are packed into each car. All of these features are added for safety, performance or fuel economy reasons and they have one thing in common; each one adds just a little more weight to the vehicle. Even by going to exotic materials like carbon fiber, it is difficult to get the cars weight much below 3,000 lbs. Unfortunately; the days of the *safe* 2,000 lb car are over. However, if you judge the cars on their performance, then the new cars look pretty good. Every new model is designed to out accelerate, out brake and out corner their predecessors. Porsche has to be doing something right to make this happen.

The statement that *a Porsche has to be a two seat Sports Car* is just crazy. Don't those people ever look behind their own 911 sports seats to notice that there are two seats directly behind them? According to Porsche sales, it still appears that the 911 is still a fairly sought after *Sports Car*. Their assembly line runs two shifts per day, and if you want to order a new 911, you will be waiting twelve months for delivery. Pretty good for a sports car after more than forty years of production and four seats.

To be a real Porsche, the car has to be made in Stuttgart. Well, from the beginning, Porsches haven't always been made in Stuttgart or in Germany or even by Porsche. Gmund, Austria was the location of the first 356 production before moving to Stuttgart. I don't think many would consider these cars to not qualify as Porsches. Then came the 924-944's. These cars were produced by Audi about 50 miles north of Stuttgart. Only the last of the 944's were actually produced in Stuttgart. Today, the majority of Boxsters and Caymans are made in Finland. Their build quality is at least as good as the ones being produced in Stuttgart. When someone buys a used Boxster, they do not check the VIN # to see if it has an S for Stuttgart or a U for Uusikaupunki and then discount the price accordingly. No, they look for the Porsche Crest, and that is enough to verify the authenticity.

Saving the best for last, the heresy of all heresies, a four wheel drive SUV! Ugg; the Cayenne! Well, think back a few years ago to an event called the Paris-Dakar Rally, that Porsche won twice. Porsche