

# RETRO PASSION

We head to Germany to test Roger Kaege's re-imagined 450-horsepower 993.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY IAN KUAH



Most Porsche fans have seen well-executed 911 backdates over the years. The trend began in the early 1990s when some enthusiasts started to update cheap F and early G-Series 911s to make them look like 930-gen 911 Turbos or even 964-gen 911s. When values of 1973 Carrera RS 2.7s went through the roof, along came the long-hood F-Series backdates based on the G-Series 911 3.0 SC or Carrera 3.2. Many of those backdated conversions were well-executed and were visually faithful evocations of the Carrera RS 2.7 they were meant to mimic.

Another category of backdated 911 was born in Los Angeles in 2009 when Singer revealed their plans to re-imagine the air-cooled 911 in styling, innovation and finish using the 964 as their core vehicle. Then in 2017, the quest for the Holy Grail of updated air-cooled 911 was joined by Gunther Werks, a fellow L.A. resident who uses the 993 as their base car.

Take the spotlight off California for a moment, and Kaege Retro in Germany has also been creating its own 993-based cars since 2010. Today, Kaege Retro's creations have even been likened to being German Singers. Roger Kaege takes this as a compliment since his creations are also top drawer in design and quality but less expensive.

## THE RUNDOWN

Based about 40 miles southwest of Frankfurt, Kaege Retro's workshop stands out as the only modern building in the heart of the village of Stetten. The workshop, showroom, and office are well laid out and scrupulously clean, a favorable first impression that told me something about the methodical mindset of Roger Kaege, the man behind the company. After we introduced ourselves, I was treated to a tour of the facilities where a team of 12, including Roger and his wife, build the Kaege Retro creations.

As his father's business is the Mazda dealership in a nearby town, Roger Kaege grew up around cars. He recalls that it was 20 years ago that he started his original Porsche repair and service company in a small workshop about six miles away. With a wealth of Porsche expertise behind his team, Kaege decided to create backdated 911s using the 993 as the base car. However, as this project car was put together in his spare time while building up his business, it was not completed until 2016. A second car was delivered in 2018. So far, 27 cars have been com-

missioned, 16 of which have been delivered. The blue car we tested is number 15, while the others are with their delighted owners in Germany, Hong Kong, and elsewhere. The two Targa versions built so far live in Germany and Spain.

“When I mapped out the details of how I would build my cars, I was very clear that they would use as many original Porsche parts as possible so that they could be easily maintained by Porsche dealers around the world,” explained Roger Kaege. “And where we think certain aspects of performance can be improved, we use uprated Porsche components from special editions or later models.”

Kaega clients thus have the choice of rebuilt naturally-aspirated 286-hp 3.6-liter Varioram and 300-hp 3.8-liter flat-six engines, while 993 Turbo power comes in 450-hp Turbo S or tuned 510-hp guises. The only exceptions to the Porsche OE parts philosophy are the suspension, wheels, tires, and bespoke exhaust system since technology in those areas has moved on in the intervening years.

From day one, Roger Kaega was emphatic that the fit, finish, paint, and trim of his unique cars would be a match for the highest-end out there. As a result, every Kaega Retro 911 emerges as a brand-new car in every respect, apart from the date the base vehicle left the factory. While the carbon-fiber-bodied Retro Turbo looks like a backdated long hood 911, the angels are in the details, so the saying goes, and the more I looked at the fine details of the Kaega 911, the more impressed I became. And yes, all the screw heads on the door trim panels line up, so a concours judge would be happy!

I asked Kaega to open the luggage compartment lid and lift the carpet away so I could inspect this often-neglected area. To my surprise, under the fitted carpet was a carbon-fiber molding that holds the jack, warning triangle, a tow strap, and other accessories. The fuel tank, battery, and fuse panel compartment are also beautifully trimmed in cognac leather, as is the center of the strut brace. That is all part and parcel of the meticulous build process that involves approximately 2,500 hours of labor per car.

A car's stance is very important, and the Kaega Turbo nails this perfectly with its Fuchs-look Kerscher FX wheels in 8.5J and 10.0J x 18-inch sizes; shod with Michelin rubber in OE 225/40ZR18 and 285/30ZR18 sizes, they fill out the wide



*Utilitas concubine iocari ossifragi, utcunque verecundus rures circumgrediet matrimonii. Quadrupel vocificat tremulus apparatus bellis. Matrimonii suffragarit apparatus bellis. Optimus adfabilis conubium santet quadrupel, quamquam oratori comiter senesceret concubine. Syrtes cor*

arches perfectly and help to give the car its tough, planted look.

On the subject of functional details, the carbon-fiber front air dam looks great, as do the visually subtle carbon-fiber side skirts that fill out and connect the area between the wheel arches as your eye moves towards the rear valence. From an aerodynamic point of view, these side skirts reduce air spill along the sides, while the rear valance trim that goes up and over the exhaust helps to clean up the departing air, thus reducing drag. Well thought out details like this all add up in the overall scheme of things.

Open the carbon-fiber engine cover with its classic ducktail spoiler, and you are confronted by an eyeful of 993 Turbo S intercooler, which looks smarter than usual thanks to being trimmed in carbon fiber. As the rear lid and spoiler of the Kaega car differ from the 993 Turbo, the intercooler mounting brackets are modified to suit. The large carbon-fiber and chrome air intake grille insert on the horizontal area ahead of the ducktail spoiler serves the same function as the grille normally seen on the factory 911 Turbo whale-tail. On the rear side of the ducktail, a vent is incorporated to help extract hot air from the intercooler and engine bay. As with every aspect of this car, considerable thought was given to both func-

tion and aesthetics, and this long, thin air vent grille even incorporates an LED third brake light in the middle.

While it would have been easy for Kaega to use the F or G-model 911 taillights, new Hella LED units that mimic the round lights of the 1967 911R are used, with matching themed units for the front sidelights. The modern LED high-intensity headlamps with clear glass covers each have a daytime running light bar.

While the stock 993 Turbo of 1995 was good for 408 hp (Euro-spec), the 450 hp output of the limited edition of 345 Turbo S cars made for the 1997-1998 model year equals that of the 1998 993 GT2. Made by Porsche's Exclusive department, this swan song for the air-cooled 911 Turbo features an uprated 3.6-liter engine with a pair of larger KKK (Kuhnle, Kopp & Kausch) K-24 turbos, an additional oil cooler, and a suitably remapped Bosch Motronic electronic control unit.

That is the engine spec used for our featured Kaega Retro Turbo, and the big numbers are 450 hp at 5,750 rpm, with 431 lb-ft of torque at 4,500 rpm. Stopwatches recorded a run from 0-62 mph in 4.4 seconds, with 100 mph coming up in 8.9 seconds on the way to 186 mph. Where the factory 993 Turbo is all-wheel drive only, and our feature car retains that arrangement, Kaega also offers the choice of rear-wheel drive.





## BEHIND THE WHEEL

While the engine internals are stock 993 Turbo S parts, the bespoke stainless-steel exhaust is not. The twin center pipes fire off a flat-six bark when the engine first catches, with a deep turbocharged grumble when you are tooling along at a canter. There were no tunnels or high walls out in the open country where we tested the car, but with the windows down, the inspiring flat-six howl we heard at high revs just before swapping gear ratios was promise enough.

The KW-built fully adjustable coil-over suspension is set up to deliver a relatively comfortable ride along with crisper handling. Thanks to expertly set up geometry and modern Michelin rubber, the hydraulic power-assisted steering feels even better than I remember. The way the car goes down the road inspires confidence and puts a big smile on my face.

The factory Turbo S from 1998 tipped the scales at 3,307 lbs. But with only the inner structure and doors of the Kaega Turbo remaining in steel for crash safety, the lightweight carbon-fiber panels shave over 350 lbs off the factory curb weight. That confers a power-to-weight ratio that makes for a more rapid daily driver despite factory stock Turbo S power. So long as you are in the correct ratio of the six-speed manual gearbox, a groundswell of torque from the twin-turbo engine provides a solid shove in the back that builds rapidly with revs.

In everyday driving, you surf that big wave of torque, modest throttle inputs moving the car rapidly and effortlessly towards the horizon. This is not a sprinter like a classic Carrera RS 2.7 but a long-legged GT car that can cover considerable distances with minimal effort. We noted the relative calm in the plush cabin at an 80 mph cruise on a light throttle makes for civilized highway mile munching.

However, should you fancy a burn-up on a twisty road, the Retro Turbo will do that with gusto. Here the uprated suspension, larger wheels, and modern rubber confer lower roll angles and greater mechanical grip than the stock factory 993 Turbo S could muster when it was in

its prime. The driving dynamics of Kaega cars are fettled on the Nürburgring, and Roger Kaega told us that one owner requested a roll cage as his car will be a dedicated track-day weapon.

While the exterior of this car is a beautiful metallic blue from the cool side of the color spectrum, the interior is a haute couture fest, draped in expertly tailored warm cognac leather, with cognac and white pepita cloth on the seat centers and door panel inserts. The instrument faces are all bespoke, and another neat touch is the Kaega Retro logo that appears for a few seconds when you switch on the Becker retro-style head unit that hides a modern suite of features like navigation, Bluetooth, and a USB media input. This retro-look head unit provides the audio sources for the GermanMaestro / MB Quart power amplifier and speakers.

### 1998 Kaega Retro Turbo (993-based)

Drive	All-wheel drive
Layout	Rear-engine
Wheelbase	89.45 inches
Engine	3.6-liter twin-turbo flat-six
Transmission	6-speed manual
Horsepower	450 hp
Torque	431 lb-ft
Weight	2,957 lbs
Pounds Per HP	6.6 lbs/hp
0-62 mph	4.4 seconds
Top Speed	186 mph

## THE VERDICT

I have to confess that I fell in love with this Kaega Retro Turbo, which takes the resto-mod art to a very high level. But that is my subjective opinion. I was pleased to later learn through a mutual friend that a well-known car collector with a passion for fine design and craftsmanship recently took delivery of not one but two Kaega Retro 911s. This enthusiast has Pagani and Koenigsegg hypercars, a Carrera GT, and 918 Spyder in his extensive collection, so I think that says it all. ■