

CLASSIC DRIVER

911 reasons to live fast with Porsche RS guru Thomas J. Schmitz

Lead

Over the last 25 years, Thomas J. Schmitz has coincidentally sold around 911 Porsche 964 and 993 RS models from his dream factory in Telgte, Germany. Suffice to say, if there's a question about these driver-focused sports cars to which he doesn't know the answer, it's probably not worth asking...



It's probably fair to suggest that Porsche itself is the only one to have sold more 964 and 993 RS and Lightweight models than Thomas J. Schmitz of [German Sports Cars](#). The German former fashion entrepreneur founded his dealership in the mid-1990s with the intention of selling a whole manner of classic and contemporary sports cars (and even Harley-Davidsons). But that all went to pot when he fell head-over-heels in love with a Porsche 964 RS he'd bought for himself and decided to dedicate his entire business thereon to selling the rarest and most collectable of these rare, lightweight, and driver-focused 911s – think 964 Cups, 993 RSs, 993 GT2s, and the like.



In the 20-plus years since, Schmitz's fair and transparent practice and high-quality cars have united hundreds of passionate Porsche drivers. We paid a visit to Schmitz's automotive treasure trove in Telgte, Germany, to ogle the air-cooled rarities currently for sale and, of course, pitch some questions to the 911 expert.



What are your earliest automotive memories?

I have many memories from when I was a child, from sitting in the rear seats of my mother's great-sounding Alfa Romeo GT Junior to watching Formula 1 races with my father. One of our neighbours also had a fabulous collection of sports cars, which I visited whenever I could to see his Ferrari 512 BB, Lamborghini Countach, BMW 507, and Mercedes-Benz 300SL.

What was your first car?

My very first car was an Alfa Romeo 1750 GT, though the first car I learned to drive properly was an Alfa Romeo 1600 Duetto Spider, which I really loved. I bought my first Porsche, a 911 2.7 from 1977 or '78, when I was 21, though I sold it for another car. That was how it worked back then – step by step!



What prompted the decision to establish German Sports Cars?

After my father died in 1992, I suffered depression and sought to change my life by doing something different. I decided to turn my hobby into my job and started working in the car business.

Why did you gravitate towards Porsche and, more specifically, its lightweight models?

I actually didn't like Porsches as a child – I preferred Italian cars like my mother's Alfa and the Ferraris and Lamborghinis belonging to our neighbour. In the beginning, I concentrated on all kinds of sports cars. But in 1996, I bought myself a Porsche 964 RS as a daily driver and track day toy and immediately fell in love, so much so that I ended up driving it every day.

Compared to the 930 Turbo I owned prior, the 964's driving experience was so much purer. There are many other sports cars on the market, both older and younger, but none is as pure, honest, and fun as a Porsche RS or Lightweight model. Combined with high quality and bulletproof reliability, they were lightyears ahead of their peers.



Since founding the business, can you quantify how many of each model you've sold?

I'd have to say around 500 of the 964 RS, 300 of the 993 RS, 15-or-so of the 964 Turbo S, and possibly 50 of the 993 GT2. There have also been several 964 and 993 Cups, 964 3.8 RSRs, and 993 RSRs. Let's just say I have 25 years of experience with these cars and people in the Porsche world recognise that. I do feel proud when the Porsche community refers to me as 'Mr RS' or the 'Lightweight Pope'.

Lightweight Porsches are designed to be driven hard and enjoyed – do your customers drive theirs?

When I started the business, it was a very small market and it felt like I was the only one who truly believed in these cars. But that meant I didn't have to compete with official Porsche Centres, allowing me to establish my company as the leader of this niche.



Over the years, the market has changed a lot, as have our customers. Whereas almost all my early customers used to drive their cars on both the road and the track and derived great pleasure from them, a few years ago that changed and more cars were bought by investors and collectors. Many cars were rarely driven, but rather kept in pristine collections and taken to club meetings or the occasional concours event. I have the feeling that we've gone full circle and, while we still have passionate collectors, people now want to use their cars again and make the most of them.

And what about you? We noticed there are many trophies in your office - are you also a racer?

I always have and always will love to drive. To be honest, I don't drive these Porsches every day anymore because of their value, the terrible traffic... and the points on my driver's licence! I used to do many track days and even started racing. I did several sprints and endurance races in classic Alfa Romeos, BMW DTM cars, and, of course, Porsche 911s.



The market for collector cars has fluctuated greatly in recent years - how would you analyse its current state?

There will always be ups and downs and it's no secret that the last year or so has been difficult. I wasn't in the business in the late 1980s when the market nearly crashed, but I definitely felt the negative effects of 9/11 and both the housing and financial crises. What can we do to stop it? Nothing is the answer - we can only react. One thing is for sure: sports cars are still the most desired toys for big boys and I think this will remain true for a couple of decades. The outlook is positive.

In your opinion, what are the greatest road and racing Porsches?

That's not an easy question to answer! The racing cars are easier to judge - that would have to be the 917 - but perhaps the 993 GT2 or Carrera 2.7 RS for the road cars.

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2019

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