

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Air-cooled counselling with bohemian Porsche addict Frank Cassidy](#)

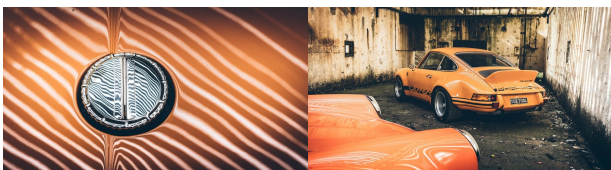
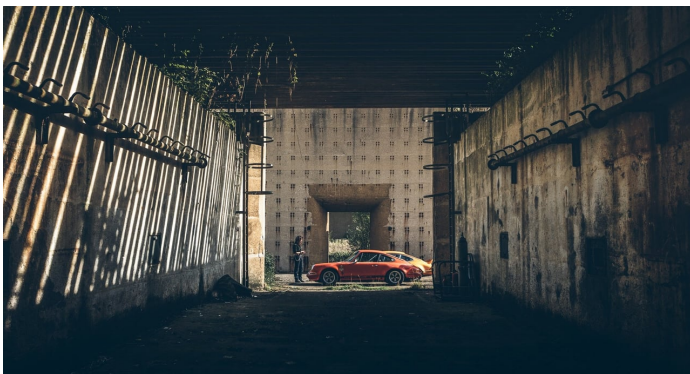
Lead

For Frank Cassidy, Porsche is as much about people and community as it is the hot-rodged air-cooled 911s that so beautifully represent his personality. That's why he's building a promised land for Porschephiles close to his Oxfordshire home. We caught up with him and two of his most treasured 911s...

Ever since his mother bought him the Herbie films on videotape when he was a child, Frank Cassidy has obsessed over air-cooled Volkswagens and, perhaps inevitably, Porsches - he was, if you will, bitten by the Love Bug. But while it was the cars themselves that hooked him in the first place, it was the subsequent relaxed and inclusive community of Porsche owners, mechanics, and enthusiasts in which he found himself that really fueled the passion.



Without that diverse network, Cassidy would not have been able to experience the evolution of the air-cooled Porsche firsthand, understand how to properly hotrod a 911 to best represent his personality, and better himself as an air-cooled driver. It's for that reason that he's flipped his life upside down and founded [Boxengasse](#), an exciting new business park dedicated to the pleasure of Porsche ownership, in Oxfordshire, England. We joined Cassidy in the passenger seats of his brutish 1972 ST and 1973 RSR hotrods to understand how his passion for Porsche has snowballed to such an extent.



What are your earliest automotive memories?

My dad saved and saved as much as he could and bought a Porsche 911 Targa from 1984. My mum would take me to and from kindergarten in that car and one day, we were driving down the road and three guys wearing balaclavas ran across the street and sped off in an estate car.

Thinking it was a robbery, mum set off after them and I remember her frantically telling me to memorise the number plate. We howled around London for around 15 minutes until, eventually, she let them go because it was getting a little sketchy. Obviously, you can imagine I was a hero at school after that one! That was the first time I'd heard a flat-six bouncing off the walls and from that point on it was always Porsche for me.

What was your first car?

My first car was a Volkswagen Beetle that I hot-rodged to within an inch of its life. But once I'd finished, I wanted to go faster. A Beetle has its limitations, so I bought a Porsche 911. In those days, the 964 was the 911 nobody wanted because they had a bad reputation for unreliability and the global recession had hit.



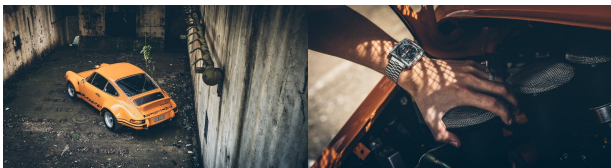
I bought mine for eight grand and it was an absolute bucket. It blew blue smoke, it sieved so much oil that you couldn't see out of the rear window, the paint was cracked, and the interior was ripped and torn. But I didn't give a shit because it was my first 911 and that meant the world to me. I drove that car non-stop around London until the engine just gave in. The dealer I bought it from took pity on me and bought it back for not much less than I bought it!

How did you start modifying Porsche 911s?

Naturally, I bought another 964 straight away. I fitted a set of 18-inch wheels and I couldn't believe how different the car felt as a result. There was a whole movement of us in London which came together to modify 964s and help each other out. We did alpine tours and track days together, and every time a car broke, we'd help each other out to find parts. The 964s were great cars because they were cheap and you could hot-rod them without feeling guilty - if you put it in a wall on a track day, you'd just rebuild it.

You've clearly got a special affinity with Porsche - what do you find so appealing about the brand?

Don't get me wrong, I appreciate other marques. But there are two things I love about Porsche: the people and the cars themselves. On the people side, Porsche is not an exclusive brand - you can buy everything from a three-grand Boxster to multi-million-pound sports-racing cars. That means you naturally get a wide demographic of owners and meet people from different creeds, backgrounds, and religions, all of whom come together for a shared passion. It's a diverse group and thus not elitist in the slightest. I love the inclusivity.



Car-wise, the air-cooled machines are challenging to drive. They're old-school and analogue, and if you don't treat them with respect, they'll punish you. They're imperfect, but their imperfections are a very human quality, which helps you to form strong relationships with them.

Is there a balance between form and function when you're building your own Porsche 911?

Porsche's philosophy has always been function before form. And I think the cars look a certain way because they need to perform a certain way, so the aesthetics and the drivability are intrinsically linked. The flared arches on a 1970s Carrera 3.0 RSR, for example, are there to accommodate wider tyres and give more grip, not just to look pretty.

When I start any build, my priority is to get to know the car and iron out any fundamental issues. Then it's a case of figuring out which direction I want to take the car - am I going to take it to the track, for example, or will my wife ever be seen dead in it? You need to spend the time figuring out exactly what you want to do with the car before you spend lots of money on pretty looking things. Only then can you think about what can be improved and what parts of your personality can you inject to make it unique to you. Because ultimately, it will become a representation of what driving means to you.





Could you tell us a little bit about what else you have in your garage?

It's easy to be a jack of all trades and a master of none, so my goal was to try and understand the evolution of the air-cooled cars and to get better as an air-cooled driver. In order to do that, I started with a 964 and went backward. So I've now got a car that represents every generation of the air-cooled Porsche, book-ended by an oval-window Volkswagen Beetle and a monster 600bhp 993 GT2 track car.

What is your most memorable moment behind the wheel of a Porsche 911?

I have two. The first is of being on track at Spa-Francorchamps with a bunch of the 964 guys all driving hot-rod'd 911s. The other is of being on alpine tours because the views are so incredible and the roads are challenging with camber changes and different surfaces. They're also dangerous - last year, I had complete brake failure going into a corner and it didn't end well. But the reality is that if you drive these cars as much as I'm humbled to be able to, you're going to get a few bumps and scratches along the way. You've just got to keep calm and carry on.



How do you feel about the soaring values of air-cooled Porsches of all ages?

It was definitely more accessible when I started mucking about with air-cooled Porsches. It's a difficult one because, on the plus side, anyone who can afford a classic Porsche has worked damned hard for it and you need to give the money the respect that it's due - no one can afford to burn pound notes. At the same time, however, it's prohibitive for me because I can't find donor shells anymore. You can't buy a 911 and sanely rip it apart because you're destroying what is becoming a rare and incredibly desirable car.

What prompted you to start Boxengasse and could you tell us about the concept?

I wanted to create a promised land for Porsche guys - a place that not only encompasses servicing and parts but also the people behind the machines. So, encouraged by my wife, I decided to create a bricks-and-mortar aggregator in the form of a business park to try and get various specialists, including Autofarm, under one roof and embody the devil-may-care camaraderie of the Porsche world.



It's not about what you drive but rather how you drive it. Both owners and mechanics will feel at ease at Boxengasse, whether they're at one of the events we'll hold or simply during a routine service. With classic car ownership, things go wrong, so you need to be around like-minded people who are sharing the same problems. It's like group therapy - you're all addicted to cars and when you have issues, you talk to your friends about it.

What is your dream car, regardless of value?

The temptation is to say I'd like to own a Porsche 934 or a Carrera 3.0 RSR. But the reality is that those cars are extremely rare and you really don't want to risk breaking them. So actually, my grail car is a high-mileage shit-box built exactly the way I want it and that I can drive forever and ever.

Photos: Alex Lawrence / The Whitewall for Classic Driver © 2018

Gallery

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