

BLOWN AWAY

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It's 40 years since the first Ruf turbo hit the highway, and we reprise the experience, back to back with a 30-year-old Ruf turbo R. Plus: we take part in a Ruf trackday, and Alois Ruf tells us about the concepts behind his latest Yellowbird



The Swabian blacktop leading away from Pfaffenhausen is smooth, straight and, before long, sufficiently hilly to throw in some nicely cambered corners; it's our happy hunting ground when we try out Ruf's amazing supercars, and our annual pilgrimage in late September is no exception.

This time, Alois has generously presented us with the original Ruf turbo

3.3 Coupé from 1977, the car that kick-started the entire Ruf oeuvre. Our turbo-titan friend had taken over the family garage business in 1974, and immediately began to indulge his predilection for forced-induction 911s. Not only did Ruf up the performance levels considerably, he massaged the bodywork in a distinctive manner, too – and this, don't forget, was a full ten years before the Yellowbird CTR-1 cemented his

reputation as a giant slayer.

Visually, the turbo 3.3 has an understated Ruf front bumper, spoiler and air-dam panel with a huge oil cooler in the centre, flanked by twin vents and topped with headlight washers, contriving to emulate more the 3.0 Carrera RS than contemporary impact-bumper 930 styling. The rear is distinguished by a large whale-tail of IROC proportions, incorporating an oil cooler inside it, while

the rear bumper panel is less prominent than the regular factory Turbo, with no over-riders and minimal number-plate lights. It's fitted with Fuchs wheels and Michelin Pilot SX tyres on the front and back, 205/ 55 ZR16s and 225/50 ZR16s. The gorgeous Oak Green Metallic coachwork is complemented by the cabin upholstery, consisting of green leather with a blue, turquoise and mint checked tartan in the centre of the seats and seat backs.

Engine capacity rose from 3.0 to 3243cc by means of 98.9mm pistons and barrels, increasing power from 260bhp to 303bhp, without the benefit of an intercooler. The transmission features the Ruf 5-speed gearbox, a decade before the 930 received 5-speeds. The suspension was adjusted to match the car's new higher performance potential, with lowered torsion bars and Bilstein gas-dampers, and back in the day, a customer could

specify the kind of ride he preferred and the car would be set up accordingly. The 3.3 turbo tips the scales at 1250kg, a saving of 200kg over the standard 930.

I put it to Alois that, back in '77 with the turbo 3.3 he was way ahead of the game, as far as what Porsche themselves were doing with the 930: 'I felt on my first test drive of the 3.0 Turbo that the 4-speed was not a good solution; for me it was missing a gear, and, if it did have an extra



gear, the car would be a lot more driveable, especially with the power delivery of that engine, and this is why I built the first Ruf turbo as a 5-speed. And that 5-speed is based on a 915 gearbox, the same as the 915 gearbox that Porsche used in Le Mans which had a stronger ring and pinion, and this is the gearbox that we used for this prototype. Then after that we started the development of the Ruf 5-speed that was based on the original 930 gearbox which had all the stronger gears. The 930 gearbox was a derivative of the 917 gearbox, which was capable of transmitting 1200bhp of turbocharged power, and that had much wider and thicker gears, and that was the base gearbox for the 930, and then we put on an extra gear and this is how we came to the dog-leg 1st. We knew that if we went opposite reverse gear we'd have an extra space that is not used, so we have that shifting pattern. The dog-leg idea came from Le Mans, because they needed a take-off gear and that was the dog leg gear.

I personally find the shifting pattern of the dog-leg 5-speed much more pleasant than the later 915 gearbox. For example, if you change up to 5th in the 915, or any other modern 5-speed where the notch is to the upper right, you have to do it at very high speed, and you have only one hand on the steering wheel and then you look for the

parts supply was slow. 'We never made enough,' he says; 'initially, the price of the gearbox was about 10,000 DM, and I thought nobody would be so crazy as to buy that gearbox, because if you ordered a new car you had an option to have it as a 5-speed, which would cost you 5 to 600 DM for an extra gear, whereas in our case you

Ruf turbo R is based on the 993 Turbo and gets a useful power increase to 490bhp. Below: Original road test from Germany's *Auto Motor und Sport* magazine showing typically lurid tyre smoking antics

“ I felt that in the 3.0 Turbo, the four-speed was not a good solution ”

gear; but with the old dog-leg gearbox, when you were going from 4th to 5th, you just pulled the lever down and you were not searching for a gear.' Numbers made of the turbo 3.3 were small, partly because Alois was at first conservative in his expectations of customer interest, and also because

had to replace the gearbox and that was 10,000 DM as an exchange, so I thought nobody will really order that, but after the press reported that it was a completely different car there was a big demand. But the problem was the wait for the parts; no matter whether you ordered 10 or 100, it





was 18 months until I got the pieces.' Our second contender for the Ruf badge of honour is the turbo R (note lower-case t). To be clear(ish) about the nomenclature, the 993 generation of Ruf was the 'turbo R' and the 996 generation was the 'R turbo'. The turbo R was based on a wide-body 993 Turbo, contemporary with the CTR2 and CTR Sport, which were more expressive at that time. According to PR man Marc-Andre Pfeifer, 'Ruf sought to build a car that was technically two or three steps ahead of the regular 993 Turbo, without it being too noticeable from the outside. Some major

parts were changed, like the front and rear bumpers, and we always had special wheels, suspension and brakes, but mostly technically focussed. Then of course the cognoscenti see that the rain gutters are missing, so the turbo R is the perfect enthusiast's car because you can enjoy the driving without everybody noticing what it really is. People who know a bit about the 993 Turbo series see something is different but they don't really know what it is, and in the interior it's the same thing, with subtle changes like the Ruf mats and Ruf pedals and Ruf steering wheel. The leather is

special, and the whole interior was made to lightweight spec with a special pair of seats, and it was completely individualised to whatever the customer wished to have. The turbo R is lighter, because we keep the interior and the equipment more minimalist, but the car feels good with the extra horsepower and the extra performance. As an option for somebody who wanted to be a little wilder than the standard 993 Turbo but not as crazy as the CTR2, this was in between – a wolf in sheep's clothing.' Powerplant is a twin-turbo 3.6 flat-six. 'The 993 Turbo S came out at the same

The turbo R is poise and perfection on the road although we didn't check out the claimed 204mph top-speed
Styling cues are relatively subtle, with Ruf styled front apron and cooling ducts at the rear

Where it all started. Ruf enlarged the 930 turbo engine to 3.3-litres a couple of years before Porsche got round to it and developed a five-speed gearbox, based on the 915 'box
Got to love that interior combo and the wonderfully '70s check cloth inserts. Right: This early car pre-dates Ruf's own five-spoke wheel design, so Fuchs it is

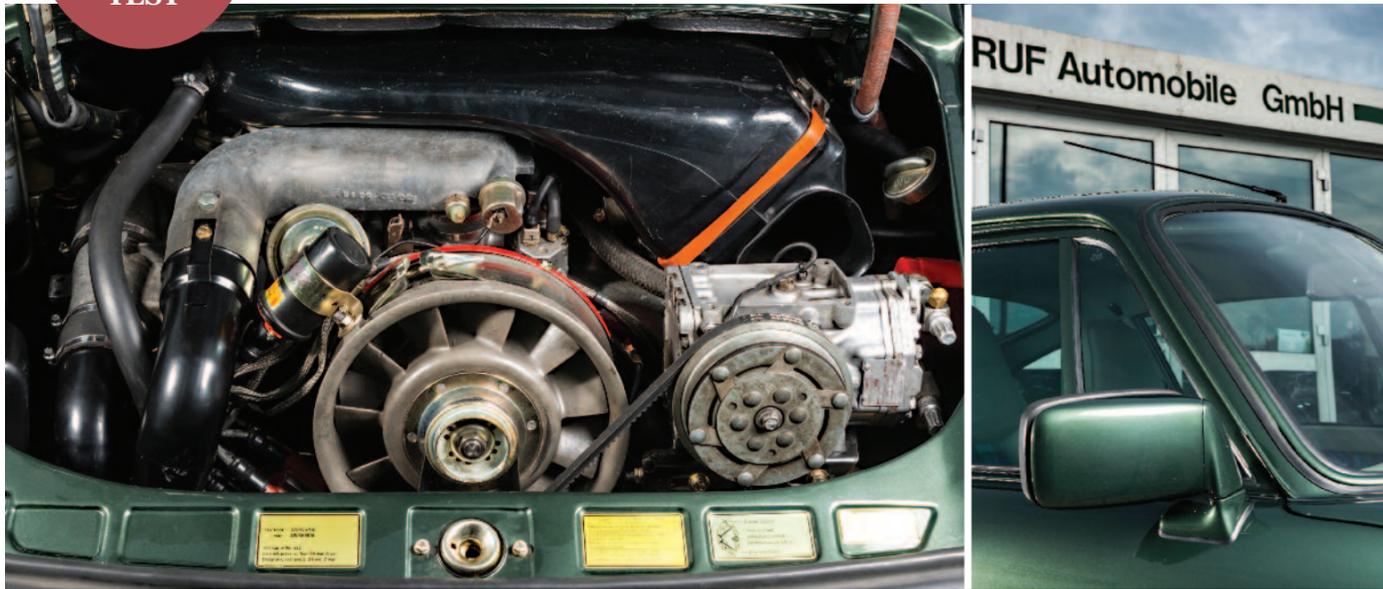
time, with 450bhp, causing 993 Turbo owners to look for possibilities to upgrade without spending another 200,000 German marks, and the Ruf turbo R looks less intimidating than a 993 Turbo S, but with 490bhp it performs better.' Both our test cars are non-sunroof versions: 'normally you can say 85- to 90-per cent of Ruf cars were made without a sunroof, especially the newer models; they go 330 to 340kph on the autobahn, and due to cabin pressure and wind turbulence not many people want to have a sunroof anymore.' Nothing so self-indulgent as a sunroof for us, then!
The Swabian blacktop is calling. We're generally untroubled by traffic and we give best to mega farm machinery. I start off with the silver turbo R, and it's the sensation of the immediacy of its performance that's most striking; that get-up-and-go, and it's alive in every sense, from the feel through

the steering wheel – perhaps surprising given the all-wheel drive chassis – the feedback from the ride via the firmer dampers, the response to the throttle, and the very fast acceleration it provides. The book says it can go from 0 to 62mph

shifting into the slots between 2nd and 3rd. The steering is perfect around the bends, and engenders a feeling of confidence in the planted poise – as you'd expect from a finely hand-crafted car that's clocked a scant 28,750km mileage.
My co-driver is Alois's son, Marcel, and we switch cars, so I've gone back in time, handling the turbo 3.3 and its 5-speed 915 gearbox. It's beautifully finished inside, wonderful matt green leather, almost a camouflage colour that matches some of

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the green in the tartan and the colour of it is simply gorgeous with its matching Fuchs wheels as well. It would have seemed very plush in the late '70s. The 3.3 turbo's acceleration is vivid, if you compare it with a

are spot-on, from pedal accessibility, the relationship of pedals to steering to gear shift is fabulous, and, like all subsequent Ruf's, this is a car that was way ahead of its time. Although it's 40-years old, the 1977

the one aspect that makes the car feel a tad dated. I reflect that, with the 4-speed 930, you're relying on the guts of the turbo to do the business for you with the acceleration, whereas with a 5-speed 'box, clearly you have much more of a feeling of the vigour of the car via the turbo; it brings a new versatility to the driving experience, coupled with some delightful popping and banging from the 3.3 turbo on the over-run.

Snaps taken, we drive at no less a focussed pace back across the farmland roads to the Ruf enclave that dominates this Bavarian backwater. There's little similarity between our two charges, save that they're both hand-built with the same kind of attention to detail. I'm keener to find out from the man himself what's in store with the latest Yellowbird, the 2017 CTR.

Above left: 3.3-litres and 303bhp, compared to the standard car's 3-litres and 260bhp

Life begins at 40, they say. Ruf's original turbo has weathered well, although at the wheel JT is showing signs of advanced wear!

“ Like subsequent Ruf's, this is a car that was way ahead of its time ”

930, and the response to the steering input is positive, the ride is just fabulous – you feel the tiny undulations in the road, but not in an adverse way; it's just communicating the ground it's covering. The ergonomics

car does have more personality than the turbo R, and of course it may not be as quick but there's obviously more of a period ambiance about it. Here, too, the brakes demand firm pressure, and that's perhaps





So, 30 years ago, the Yellowbird CTR-1 consolidated Alois Ruf's reputation when it trounced the world's supercar fraternity in a track test at VW's Ehra-Lessien proving ground. And at this year's Geneva show Alois introduced the latest Yellowbird, the 2017 CTR.

It is just as innovative as the last two Ruf models we sampled last year, the so-called Ultimate with its carbon-fibre body/chassis, and the SCR that's basically a 997 GT3 RS clad in classically 964-style bodywork. The latest CTR is nothing if not radical. The thinking was to recreate the whole Yellowbird philosophy in a modern way, based on a central monocoque with built-in roll cage and front and rear sub-frames carrying powertrain and suspension running gear, clad with carbon-fibre body panels.

The 2017 CTR Yellowbird takes pride of place in the showroom, while a second car (presently a promising mint green hue) is under construction in the workshop. It looks like nothing so much as a racing car in-build. We gaze at the spectacle on the hoist, its component parts plain to see, while Alois provides the guided tour. 'It's a very strong central monocoque. You see the crash structure in the front, a subframe made in lightweight steel; this is also where the supports are for the front axle and the wishbones. This is bolted onto the monocoque just like the rear subframe structure. This is all new, so it borrows

nothing from the existing 911s, apart from the silhouette; it's an entirely new car. The yellow car in the showroom is the same structure as we have here.'

It's a bit uncanny: you have the impression that you're looking at a classic 964-era 911, but beneath the skin lives the integral rollcage within the monocoque, which serves to stiffen the body structure. 'The chassis is a carbon monocoque with carbon skin, and the front and rear wings, doors and lids are in carbon-fibre. The rear

subframe serves to cradle the engine, and at the front we have three water radiators; the oil is cooled via a heat exchanger.' It has horizontal inboard springs and damper units, operated by pushrods – similar to the mid-engined CTR-3 – and you can also see the drop link pick-up points for the anti-roll bar. The engine is a water-cooled twin-turbo 3.6 flat-six.

'The horizontal spring and damper units have separate reservoirs to stop them getting too hot, operated by a pushrod arrangement from the front suspension, which keeps the un-sprung weight inboard

and also allows more room between the structure of the car and the wheel, so the unequal length double wishbones are unimpeded and we also have a very direct response to the longitudinally-mounted shock absorbers.

Longitudinal dampers also give you more space in the trunk.' On the yellow Geneva show car, the transverse dampers are visible through the rear window, though they won't be on display in production versions; 'too much dust and road noise in the cabin,'

It's a 911, but not really as we know it. This is the Ruf CTR Yellowbird rebooted for the 21st Century

says Alois. We'd have them underneath a glass panel for novelty value.

How does Ruf comply with TÜV approval for a car like this; do they have to crash a car, for instance? 'Fortunately, we don't have to crash a car because we are a small volume manufacturer, so the virtual crash on the computer is sufficient, together with all the engineering work and the calculations, and that is expensive enough.' The 2017 CTR encapsulates the latest concepts in racecar design, rendered roadable, yet ostensibly it recalls an early '90s 911. 'Yes, and the main idea is to bring



The man himself. Alois Ruf talks us through the 2017 CTR concept

back the feeling of the original Yellowbird from 1987, which was the first car that didn't have rain gutters, so of course we have this feature in the 2017 car.' There's a pair of NACA ducts either side of the rear wings below the three-quarter windows – familiar from other Ruf's like the RCT, though more dynamically configured; 'these air intakes are a new feature,' Alois explains; 'they are for the combustion, for the engine to breathe, and this one is the air intake just for the intercoolers.' Slats in the rear bumper panel recall the Yellowbird, too.

CTR No2 in construction. Note central carbon-fibre tub with front and rear spaceframes attached

Back in the showroom we contemplate the Yellowbird show car. Sure, it bares many typical Ruf retro-classic hallmarks, but like the extraordinary SCR, there's more to the 2017 CTR than meets the eye: look carefully at the door, and you see it's

about 30mm thicker than a regular 911. 'We sent this car to the gym and made it sportier, built some muscles, and the wings are wider than the 930; in fact, they are the same width as a 959, but it's not that obvious because we went with more body

we moved the headlamps 20mm further outwards than they would be on the 964. It's all more homogenous, and with this extra 20mm the front wings don't look so fat anymore.'

The wheelbase is 70mm longer than

“ Like the SCR, there's more to the 2017 CTR than meets the eye ”

and more curves so it still looks subtle and it's also better for the aerodynamics, too. I was never particularly a fan of the wide-arched look; the whole side of the car has moved outwards. And you will notice that

the 993 – the same as a 997 wheelbase – achieved by moving the rear axle back by 50mm. 'So, we have 5cm more bodywork ahead of the rear wheelarch, and 5cm less behind the rear wheelarch, and 7cm behind





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Man and machine. You'd be pretty happy too! Below: Computer rendering shows just how radical the 2017 CTR is under the skin. Indeed it shares very little with a 911 or Porsche of any description at all, save for the 3.6-litre twin turbo flat-six, but even that will be extensively fettled by Ruf

the front wheelarch – and the eye doesn't catch it because the car has a longer door. Let's say the shape of the good old 911, the car that we love so much, just went into another evolution, but without becoming bulky like the 991s are today.'

The brawny 2017 CTR's biceps sport other details, too, like the flush door handles and oil filler in the right-hand rear wing. 'That was in the first CTR as well, and it still works for putting the oil in and checking the oil level. The headlamps are an entirely new design with LED technology, and so are the turn signals and

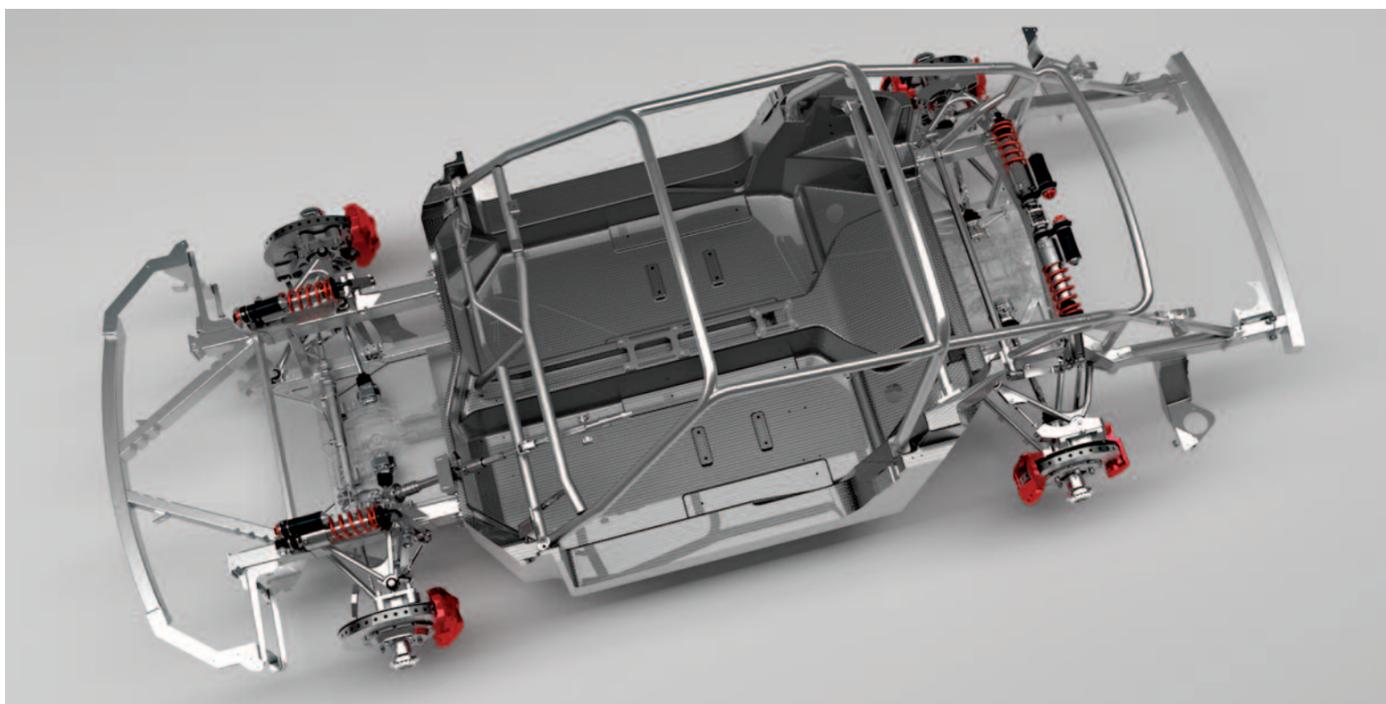
the tail lights. Another subtle difference is that the tail lights are 40mm larger, and we moved the whole fender outwards so it doesn't project such a huge arch.' The wheels are 19in Ruf wheels shod with Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s, 245/35 ZR 19 on the front and 305/30 19s on the back.

Over the next two years, Ruf will produce just 30 of the 2017 CTR Yellowbird.

'It's classic, but it's ultra-modern. The suspension, the chassis, the structure, these are all things that have never been available in a 911 previously; this is all entirely new, it only has the familiar shape. It has been my

dream to come up with this combination of a car that carries the spirit of something that we originated 30 years ago, and combine it with more modern technology. I call it an analogue car because it will be minimalistic as far as electronic devices are concerned. It will have ABS and a stability system and the rest is in the driver's brain and butt!'

There's no mistaking the passion Alois feels about his new creation: 'This car was built from my heart for the people who feel it with their heart.' We'll drink to that; sometime soon it will be a going concern, and we can't wait to have a go. **PW**



WHEN THE GOING GETS RUF



The Ruf get tough – and it doesn't come much tougher than a trackday at Hockenheim – at least as far as high-speed cornering's concerned. That series of sweepers into the start-finish zone is awesome.

At least once a year the Ruf family clubs together for a rally in a blissful scenic location, which often incorporates a trackday session on a race circuit. Numbers vary, and Ruf owners at this year's gathering number a dozen cars, plus a few regular Porsches of the GT3 persuasion, as well as our road-trip Cayman.

We're greeted at the trackside Hockenheim-Ring hotel by Alois's PA Claudia who's arranged a presentation and dinner for the Ruf-owning (and aspirant owner) attendees. Alois and Estonia are late, having had a slight alteration en-route from Pfaffenhausen in their SCR, squeezed onto the barrier by an errant Golf in an autobahn contraflow. No matter, little harm done, and the party goes ahead.

In gorgeous sunshine, the Ruf and Porsche

cars form up in the pit-lane, divided into three groups according to competence – and I am flattered to be directed into the 'most experienced' one. First up, we are shown onto an expansive skidpan within the paddock where a pair of instructors demand we emulate their GT3-style antics on the coned route around the Tarmac. PSM is turned off, and I dial the Cayman's wheel-mounted settings round to Sport Plus. Some drivers perform better than others, even in my 'experienced' group. Two hoses are gushing, so as I'm circulating the car is getting a drenching. 'More aggressive application of throttle and brake,' my instructor yells at me through the window, 'and use just 1st gear,' so I jab the pedals accordingly, relying on tyres and the Cayman's mid-engined poise whilst twirling the wheel to avoid rotating the car.

Next up, I have had the thrill of driving the SCR really hard on the wide expanses of the actual circuit – an awe-inspiring experience in itself – and judging braking distances is key

because I'm travelling extremely fast, using all the revs and diving into the turns, aiming at marker points on apexes, riding the kerbs a little bit and powering out onto the straights. It is a thoroughly riveting exercise, and I am very warm indeed. The instructor in his 996 GT3 dictates the pace, followed as closely as possible by a retinue of Ruf's and a handful of modern 911s, and each one takes it in turn to follow him, so after completing a lap when you've been right behind him you peel off and the next guy follows on behind the instructor. Is he being kind to me? I have the SCR pretty well up behind him, and on the longer straights I have no trouble holding onto him. I fancy I can brake later into the turns but he is swifter out of them. Anyway, it's academic as it's so much fun, lapping a circuit with such a poignant depth of history as Hockenheim has, in amongst the Ruf fraternity. They're staging the German GP here in 2018, and it will be amusing to reflect that I've driven the Sachs-Kurve flat, in an SCR, ahead of the stars.

Quite a line-up. They're not all Ruf's, but the vast majority are and make for a quite a demonstration of Ruf's illustrious history

