

2009 is an exciting year for Porsche technology. They've introduced two items which look to be fundamental pieces of the Porsche landscape for a long time to come. Of course, I'm talking about the PDK transmission and Direct Fuel Injection. You've probably already read some about these two items, as they've received due publicity from Panorama, Excellence, and a host of other sources. Being the local tech guy, however, I felt obliged to get a firsthand look and offer my own take to the rapidly accumulating hype. (What a great excuse to go seeking a test drive in a new Porsche!) Jason, the sales manager over at Flow/Porsche of Charlottesville was more than happy to accommodate my request, and set me up with a drive in a 2009 Carrera S.

Notably, the car was equipped with the PDK transmission, Sport Chrono with both the Sport and Sport Plus modes, and 19" Carrera S II wheels. I had four questions I wanted answered: How does the "automatic" shifting feel? How does shifting the PDK manually feel and work? How's the power delivery with the new fuel injection? and, How's the fuel economy for the car?

Jason set me up with John Slaughter as my mentor for the test drive. I told him what I was seeking, and he told me about how the Sport Chrono with its normal, sport, and sport plus modes would affect the characteristics of the car. In the normal mode, shifts are meant to be either unnoticeable or subtle. To maximize fuel economy, engine RPM's are kept low unless your right foot suddenly demands more. John told me to expect the car to cruise along at 45mph in 6th or 7th gear at around 1200RPM. Skeptically, I asked him if this would be lugging the engine, to which he just smiled and said, "Wait 'til you see the torque this car makes". He was right. At low RPM's that my Boxster S would hate me for, this car has plenty of get up and go. And if the trans senses that you are demanding more than the high gear has to offer, it quite suddenly lets the engine spin furiously into the power band, drops to a more appropriate gear, and slams

you back in the seat as the car launches forward. Letting off the gas, the car went nonchalantly back into the high gear and acted as if nothing had happened. Wow! Just driving along without any more excessive demands, the car behaved as well as any luxury auto should. Just for kicks, we took the car out on the interstate, and the onboard computer showed almost 30mpg.

The Sport mode is intended for those spirited drives that we know are kept within the parameters of highway law. Here, shifts are meant to be heard and felt. The sport mode puts shifts considerably higher into the car's power band, allowing the driver to cruise along with more power immediately on tap. Coupled with this, the transmission shifts the gears faster, creating a pleasant "punch" from the rear of the car. Using the transmission in manual mode with the Sport setting, shifts felt like an aggressive (but not abusive) shift with a true manual transmission. Along with the more sports car feel to the trans/engine dynamics, the sport mode also firms up the car's suspension. As we drove along curvy roads near Monticello, the car remained flatter in the turns than it did in the normal setting, and much more of the road's surface and irregularities were transmitted through the seat and steering wheel. This was not the behavior of the polite luxury vehicle I had been driving moments before!

Following that happy experience in Sport mode, John told me that the Sport Plus mode was really intended only for track or autocross type driving, and not for highway use. Talk about your, "Told me not to, so I HAD TO," moments. I think he set me up. The Sport Plus honestly transforms the car. As soon as you press the button, you notice the suspension change. The car becomes so firm, it feels like it has aftermarket coilovers on it. The steering



wheel comes alive, as does every bump and stone in the road. To compliment this, the trans drops to a gear that keeps the engine spinning at least 4000RPM. I slowed the car to a first gear crawl, and then opened her up. Ummm, the Direct Fuel Injection in the 3.8 works very well. Holding the steering wheel with both hands for all I was worth, I noticed no problems with fuel delivery. When the PDK hit second, it did something completely unexpected. It shifted violently. It shifted in the way that track instructors tell you not to shift your manual transmission. I looked at John like I had done something wrong, and he said, "That's the way Porsche made it". The car is unbelievable, and the new technology certainly deserves the media attention it's getting.

A defining element in the Porsche philosophy has always been to build sports cars that are both practical and race worthy, and they are indeed continuing in that tradition.

Happy driving and wrenching!



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