

Cargraphic 997 Turbo

Bolt-on extras

If you want to improve the performance of your 997 Turbo in a way that can be returned to normal with ease, then Cargraphic has the answer

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Many tuned 911 Turbos are sheer, chest-slapping displays of brute force designed to show just who is the strongest of them all. The Silverbacks of the 911 world, they are big, lairy and brutish machines that destroy their tyres in flamboyant displays of sheer output, if not quite outright speed. Cargraphic has a purer, simpler vision.

This company is all about the GT3, and the lightweight Porsche is its signature dish. For the Turbo, Cargraphic does make a 650bhp kit, but is keen to show off its smaller conversions – bread and butter that consist, perhaps surprisingly, of bolt-on kits.

“Most customers lease their cars as a way of keeping at least a little money from the taxman,” says Michael Schnarr who heads the firm with brother Thomas. “Therefore the best-selling kits are always going to be bolt-on, so you can remove them completely when the car goes back.”

That explains the snazzy range of lip spoilers, wheels and engine trimmings like back boxes that makes up the vast majority of Cargraphic’s business. There’s a lot to be said for boxing up and shipping out minor tweaks that don’t tax the engine, and Cargraphic has carved out a reputation for fine-handling machines that are faster on the stopwatch without the major drama of some of the other big names. It also has global distributors that can handle the upgrades in-house and, as such, has become one of the bigger suppliers of exhausts and wheels in the tuning world.

Cargraphic has built a formidable reputation for performance wheels throughout the sports car industry and now supply them for Aston Martins, Lamborghinis and Ferraris, as well as Porsches, Audis and even lowly

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Golfs. And it all sits atop the firm’s 20-inch Racing wheels with painted black centres to complete the RS-style look.

So the Stage 1 upgrade to the 997 Turbo is a big deal for the brothers, as globally the kits could sell in the hundreds. They will. A dominant performance at the Tuner Grand Prix for the last three years has reinforced Cargraphic’s reputation as a franchise player and customers are flocking for the subtle handling tweaks that make the world of difference.

After just a moment behind the wheel it was easy to see why. Most tuners decided the 997 Turbo was too soft, too well rounded and too boring, so they did the equivalent of sticking a screwdriver through the exhaust and dropping the suspension to give the whole experience a little more life, a little of that old passion. Cargraphic, though, has gone its own way.

The brothers have accepted the evolution of the 911 line-up more gracefully than the majority of the tuning fraternity. Besides, they get their kicks from stripping more

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than 100kg from the GT3 RS for its Tuner Grand Prix entry, so it has embraced the Turbo's role as the limousine of the line-up and is perhaps the most clear-cut of the tuners when it comes to a full range.

Give them a GT3, or better yet an RS, and they will build you a racing car with pin-sharp handling and an exhaust that sounds free-range fresh every time you open the throttle. But give them a Turbo and, more often than

not, they'll recommend the gentle fettle employed on the orange machine here and a complement to the sharper racecar in the garage rather than a direct replacement.

And you can also see the cogs turning in the customer's head with this particular car. Having purchased his bright orange RS, the following Turbo had to be the same colour. In fact, this was the first one to be ordered in this hue from the factory, but you can bet it won't be the last as orange makes the car look fantastic in the German sunlight. The haunches pick up every hint of blue from the sky at a standstill and the mirror finish gives them added muscle.

Editor Raby loves orange cars, and it's become such an integral part of the Porsche DNA we should all celebrate cars like this, even if the owner doesn't realise how much of a tribute this machine really is.

The lip spoiler should maybe colour-coded, and they'll do it for you. Cargraphic cannot transform the whole look of the car with a strip of plastic and rubber,



but it does draw the eyes from those bling heavy indicator LEDs and that can only be a good thing.

For those that want to go further there's a GT2-look rear wing, carbonfibre mirror housings and even lightweight carbon-fibre doors that will shave at least 7kg apiece off the car's final weight. Now it would take an exceptional driver to feel such a difference, especially on the relatively porky Turbo, but they are out there.

And on the road, they'll revel in a car that's every bit as easy to drive as the car that emerged from Zuffenhausen. It's a 911 Turbo, with no rose joints in the gearchange, although they do provide a short-shift kit, no extravagant interior, it's just a breathed on Turbo that will give the car the performance advantage at the traffic light Grands Prix.

Simple engine management tweaks, a DME control unit exchange, a new air filter and Cargraphic's own exhaust system liberates a massive 544bhp from the base Turbo, together with a sledgehammer number of 588lb ft of torque. That's more than enough for this chassis and, though there are cars with hundreds of horsepower more, they are probably not much quicker. Cargraphic's car is balanced, relaxed and barnstorming fast.

Those extra horses give the whole car the added kick it needs and figures of less than 3.5 seconds to 60mph courtesy of the squat suspension and sticker tyres would be no surprise. With the gentle added push through the whole range this car feels like it would leave a confused and befuddle Turbo driver in its dust in a straight line and as a speck in the mirror on the twisting road. It's just that bit keener, that bit tighter, and yet just as comfy. It's everything we wanted from the base car.

While the exhaust doesn't rip into the cabin as it does in other tuners' hands there's a throatier note on start-up; a gentle thrum that gives it that added menace a Turbo needs. The current car is a feat of engineering, but its character is muted beyond reason in pursuit of mass appeal and, as an enthusiast's car, a standard 997 Turbo would be hard to justify. Cargraphic has unlocked that hint of character, it just about sings at the

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higher revs now, but the Schnarr brothers have worked with the luxury aspirations to keep the car soothing at Autobahn speeds. This is every bit the commuter car.

Despite sitting 35mm closer to the ground on the firm's sports suspension kit that works alongside PASM to retain the duality of the car, it carries a relaxed, assured gait down the main road and fingertip control was a formality. Of course the 8.5x20in and 11.5x20in front and rear wheels transmit more of the road's subtleties through to the wheel but it's not something that will ever make this car a chore to drive. Instead of the disconnected feel, this car lets you know exactly how much speed a corner can take, before providing comfortable progress all the way through it.

As with the original Porsche this car will pitch into understeer when pressed too hard, but that's always the safest option and Cargraphic has cut enough of that inherent front end push to ensure it only slips wide under far more aggressive treatment. For the most part the car cuts in harder, faster, and will hold the corner far more keenly than the original, but then most customers will never truly feel that extra layer of ability.

The 997 Turbo is such a technically brilliant car that nobody was left complaining was too slow, it was only the lack of feel that proved an issue, the lack of emotion, the sheer triumph of engineering over experience. Cargraphic gives the car back a touch of that hunger, without doing anything that can't easily be reversed when it comes time to return the car to the leasing firm.

● Cargraphic is at www.cargraphic.com

