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World

FVD

993 TURBO CAB



**WE DRIVE FVD'S MONSTER GT2
LOOK 993 CABRIOLET WITH
650BHP AND A NEW MEANING TO
'WIND IN THE HAIR'**

RAGING BULL

Hurtled at breakneck speed through the Black Forest aboard a nutter 993 turbo Cab, we get a taste of what FVD's tech team is really capable of

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Photography: Antony Fraser



Robert De Niro would be proud. Or indeed, Jake LaMotta, for this FVD 993 Turbo conversion is none other than Raging Bull, an untamed riotous puglist bent on delivering punch after punch in a relentless quest to sublimate the opposition. Not to mention its driver... This is one of FVD's flagships, a perfectly innocent 993 Cabriolet which proprietor Willy Brombacher has transformed into a GT2 in a bid to create the epitome of car craziness. It's immodest too, its convertible persona sparing no blushes as we tootle as innocuously as possible through friendly Freiburg on our way up to the elevations of nearby Schauinsland hillclimb (4,213ft/1,284m). Introvert it is not. This black Cab could land us in the calaboose, so at first we go gingerly, prowling the first leg to make sure there are

no cops lurking, as is their wont at this haven of habitual speed freaks.

And off we go! Throwing fisticuffs in a hair-raising blitz up the hill, we howl heavenwards like a banshee and I'm knocked into the back of my seat as if I was a puppet! Winding ever upwards around the sinuous curves, the scenery's a blur as we surge at unabated speed from one turn to another. Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee, fancy footwork on the pedals and opposite locking out of the hairy hairpins in a non-stop fight-club frenzy. It tracks swift and true, and it'd be hypnotic if the prospect of successfully negotiating the next bend wasn't so attention-grabbing. Breathless, and with pulses racing, we pull up at the halfway house for a timeout – and a fortuitous ice cream to cool off with. In a clearing stands the boxer:

end of round one. You're mad, you are!

We've been here before in FVD's 4.0-litre 997 GT3. It was damp then, but at least it's dry now, otherwise we'd be out for the count. It's a serious bit of road. Schauinsland was a big time venue on the European Mountain Climb Championship calendar in the '50s and '60s; in 1965 you'd find such luminaries as Reinhold Joest, owner of the currently victorious Audi Le Mans squad, handling his own 356 Carrera, and scroll back further to 1936 when, astonishingly, Bernd Rosemeyer flung his monstrous Auto-Union up here in the German Mountain-climb GP, slip-sliding the corners. In a way, our Raging Bull 993 feels scarcely less rampant.

And yet, its inclinations may be those of a prizefighter, but it is docile as a lamb out of the ring. This sparring partner is so tractable you can just

bumble along at no revs and it's totally docile – until you floor the accelerator in a fairly unsubtle way, at which point it comes alive and takes off like an agitated bear, and I have to concentrate very hard on being in control of it. There's a distinct snort from the wastegate after every gearchange, like a whiplash, accompanied by a touch of wheelspin, and I can feel the tyres struggling for grip as the chassis tries to skip sideways. Suddenly I'm travelling so fast my whole body is in tension, waiting for the next bang, bang of the turbos. It's exhilarating folly.

Contrary to this brutal power delivery, the gearshift is precise and delicate to the touch, and it's got a bigger clutch too, taking account of the additional power. 'It really is a monster,' agrees Willy, 'and you need to be an experienced driver to handle it.'



It's a 'Raging bull'! The car that is, not Tipler, although there's easily enough power to blow his hat clean off. This is a showcase for FVD's work and products, and so they've thrown everything at it. A Cab might seem like an odd choice, but in Germany they like Cabs even more than us Brits

No worries in the curves though. Turn-in is acutely agile and its handling is flat and easily controllable. But it is staggeringly fast when the turbos cut in. This could be addictive.

What of the practicality? Very comfortable – unless you're hammering it, when you feel you're on the ropes. The automatic roof is quick and efficient in operation and takes 20 seconds to retract fully. Below the canopy it has all the visual hallmarks of a 993 GT2, though as you'd expect, none of the 57 GT2s built between 1994 and 1998 was configured as a soft-top. The GT2 was a homologation special, created to meet FIA race requirements in order to contest the GT2 category of the BPR Global GT series. They did OK too: Rook Racing's 993 GT2s scored a class win at Le Mans in '96, finished 2nd in '97 and 3rd in '98, and there were plenty of other successes for the GT2s in top-level endurance racing.

Remarkably, considering the power it dispenses, FVD's GT2 turbo Cab started life as a standard 1995 C2 Cabriolet shell, though that's as far as it goes on the standard car stakes, as everything but the rag-top is different – even the seats, steering wheel and cabin upholstery have been changed. To begin with, the hull was seam-welded for extra rigidity, with a few steel plates added where necessary. 'We didn't want to make it too weighty because the 993 Cab was already a heavy baby,' says Willy, 'but when you compare it to today's cars it's still not that heavy.'

Considering its roustabout persona, the cockpit is a totally civilised environment. There's a special Ative steering wheel complete with airbag, Recaro sports seats upholstered in Connolly's Jaguar XJS leather, plus

carbon trim across the dashboard, while the dials are silver FVD items. When I'm hard on the throttle the boost gauge is registering 20, though apparently that's because it's an American gauge, and in fact the maximum boost is 1.3 bar at peak revs. The car was painted this particular shade of charcoal black and fitted with pale leather seats because initially Willy anticipated it would be sold on to an Arabian country where black upholstery would be less than agreeable, given the heat factor. Quirkily, the wheels are different colours on either side – orange and black, the legacy of a show – and the big eight-piston caliper Brembo brakes with 380mm discs front and rear are visible through the spokes. The steering may be nicely weighted but the clutch is a muscle builder: 'it's got a special clutch,' Willy reminds me, 'so after a while you'll find you've got a left leg like Arnold Schwarzenegger!' That'll do for The Last Stand, then. Terminate me now...

It's the brainchild of Willy's fertile imagination, a bit like Clint Eastwood's Million Dollar Baby, to maintain the boxing metaphor. Willy loves classic Porsches and has every opportunity to apply as many of the products as his business handles, and there was no stinting with the 993 Cab. 'It was built to showcase what was technically possible with a 993,' he says. Let's start with the Cab's appearance: the front splitter is GT2, and those wheelarch extensions, as bloated as a boxer's gloves and attached to the bodywork with stainless steel screws, were specially configured for FVD as GT2 lookalikes, but can be ordered by 993 owners with similar bellicose aspirations. They were designed for racing applications as easily replaceable arches in the event of a coming together, and can be in



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fibreglass or carbon-fibre, and they're available for narrow- and wide-bodied variants. They're linked front to back at floor level by aerodynamic sill skirts. That gigantic GT2 rear wing is in Kevlar, painted inside and out. The paradox is obvious: a 993 Cabriolet is meant to be a suave boulevard cruiser, not some brawny bruiser with attitude. And that's the point: no one has done this with a 993 Cab – till now, so it's making a bold statement. 'I wanted a race car where I could open my roof,' is Willy's rationale. And a racer is what he got when they set about building it. It's basically a 993 GT2 twin-turbo engine but FVD bumped it up from 3.6- to 3.8-litres by fitting bigger cylinders and pistons – their stock-in-trade. The flat-six breathes via a pair of

K24/26 KKK turbochargers, it has special 3mm cams and a bigger oil pump, and the intercoolers were sourced from Porsche Motorsport. 'Everything is from the GT2 Evolution cars,' asserts Willy; 'with special intake manifolds with the air filters left and right to get enough air for it to breathe. It is practically the same engine that Porsche used from '95 until '98 in the racing 993 GT2 turbos. Even the gearbox is from a 996 GT2, which has longer ratios and a cable shift, but let's say technically it's like the 993 Turbo's but the ratios are different. It was necessary to fit a stronger 'box because of the power, because the first time we put the engine on the dyno the trace showed 850bhp, and when we put it in the car it was impossible to drive.

Lurking under bulging rear end is a 993 GT2 engine that has been stretched to 3.8-litres and breathes via a pair of K24/26 KKK turbos. First time on the dyno it produced 850bhp. FVD have now wound it back to 650bhp!





“Willy concedes that what’s really needed is four-wheel drive to really anchor it down”



I thought, hey, somebody's going to get killed with this thing, so we de-tuned it to 650bhp.' Willy concedes that what's probably needed is four-wheel drive to really anchor it down. 'We have all the 4x4 parts ready, and that was going to be the next step, but we've never had time to change it over. If we had, then we'd have enough traction because right now, in third gear when you step on it, you get wheelspin. And that's even with the longer ratio gearbox. The top speed is a little bit over 300kph, but then I lifted because I saw the roof begin to bow!'

The suspension is fully adjustable with ten different settings based on Bilstein dampers, and it's also lowered by 65mm. 'You can adjust it so it's not too soft, though a few guys who are used to the new 991 will still say it is too hard, but it is definitely streetable and the driveability is just awesome, and that was what we

were looking for. It's not a race set up, though you can have fun on the racetrack. I have done a few laps with it on slicks and it's really enjoyable, but that car is not made for the race track, otherwise you would have no fun on the street.'

Willy likes classic 911s and his business is structured around keeping them going, and so of course he takes the long view. 'What we have here is the maximum that you can do with a streetable air-cooled car. The nice thing is, you look at that car today, look at it 15 years ago and look again in 15 years, and it's timeless. There will be always something unique about the 993s; their styling is different from all other 911s and their spec is the most sophisticated of the air-cooled cars.' For that reason, Willy thinks we shouldn't be surprised at the price of a regular 993 Cabriolet: 'A good 993 fetches between €60- and €70,000; the prices for these cars



are going through the roof now. And that's also true of the 964. We had a customer who sold his 993RS three weeks ago – it was like new, with only 4,000km – and he got €285,000, which was three times the money the car was in '95 - '96. It's €120- €130K for a 993 Turbo, and a 993 Turbo S is €200K now.'

It's not all mouth and trousers; Willy puts his money where his mouth is. You've seen the ads: in every issue FVD exhorts us to upgrade our Porsches with some amazing piece of kit, and we're always sorely tempted. A set of 3.8 barrels and pistons for a torquier 964? A very attractive proposition, and one perhaps to save up for. They don't just do parts; FVD preps, tunes and restores as well. Its base at Umkirch near Freiburg in the Black Forest foothills is heaving at the seams with Porsches from all eras in various states of refurbishment. A rare 356 Carrera in the throes of a rebuild of its four-cam flat-four engine (cost: €100K!); a 996 GT3 getting front suspension-levitation, a 964 having one of their demon exhausts fitted; even a '50s VW splitly bus up on a hoist receiving a new floor.

Check FVD's website and there's an astonishing amount of equipment available for all Porsches, from the tiniest screws and washers to the juiciest exhaust system. Willy tells me that, of their new lines, the most enquiries are currently about the 4.0-litre and 4.2-litre capacity upgrade kits for the 996 and 997. 'Those are ready now,' he says, 'cylinders and pistons and all you need, and it's all made for us by Mahle. The tests were all perfect, and you know Mahle's reputation. We have road-driven them, we have done the dyno testing, and it's a complete package.' FVD's next project is for the older, first generation water-cooled 996s. 'They're getting on for 15 years old now, so we're making a kit for them; for the 3.4-litre engined cars we have the 3.6

conversion, and for the 3.6-litre cars we have the 3.8 kit.' It's not before time that such kits are available, given the number of damaged engines we keep hearing of; although it wasn't the cylinders or pistons that were faulty it's just as well to have the option of a capacity hike when an overhaul takes place. 'The compression ratio is the same, so it fits without any modification, so you don't need to do anything else on the 996s. For the 964 and 993 air-cooled cars we have our own 3.8 kit made by Mahle, and actually we can't get enough.' There are other cylinder and piston makers in the market, but Willy reckons his customers would rather wait a couple of months for a Mahle kit rather than one they've never heard of. 'We were not expecting that kind of response, you know. We had 100 sets of pistons and cylinders and they were gone in no time. That is still our main business for the air-cooled cars. We make a lot of exhaust systems for the newer cars, but the demand for spare parts for the 964 and 993 gets more and more every year because the cars are increasing in value and people want them running perfectly, because they are not like a Ferrari that sits in the garage, the Porsche owner wants to drive his car, and of course if you drive it you need to maintain it. We even have customers with the 911SC from '76/'77 who drive their cars to work every day.'

You could drive this hot-rod 993 Cabriolet to work every day too, though it is the meanest 993 Cabriolet on the block. If this was a hairdresser's car it would be driven by a hard-nut with a shaved head. Oh, there you go – so it is! 'It's the last of the dinosaurs,' according to Willy, 'because all the cars made after the 993, starting with the 996, are soft – apart from the Turbos and the GT2 and GT3.' At 650bhp, this boxer punches above its weight. It's certainly no softie. **PW**

Bottom left: It's all this man's fault! Willy Brombacher and his twisted imagination is the creator of what is quite probably the world's most powerful 993 Cabriolet!

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