

# Porsche 911SC



*Wielding this Tool of the Ultimate Whisk requires that you take the deep breath of commitment.*

• We are born two ways: to be drivers or to be passengers. Beyond the cosmic import of these two inclinations lie the facts of our lives, the ways we react to the highs and the lows of our lives. Presented with a slate-black Porsche 911SC, a reasonable assumption foresees in us an immediate upswing of good vibrations, some heavy breathing, and rising blips of the old heart rate. For drivers these burgeoning sensations crackle in Vesuvian poppings of rapture. For passengers it's much worse.

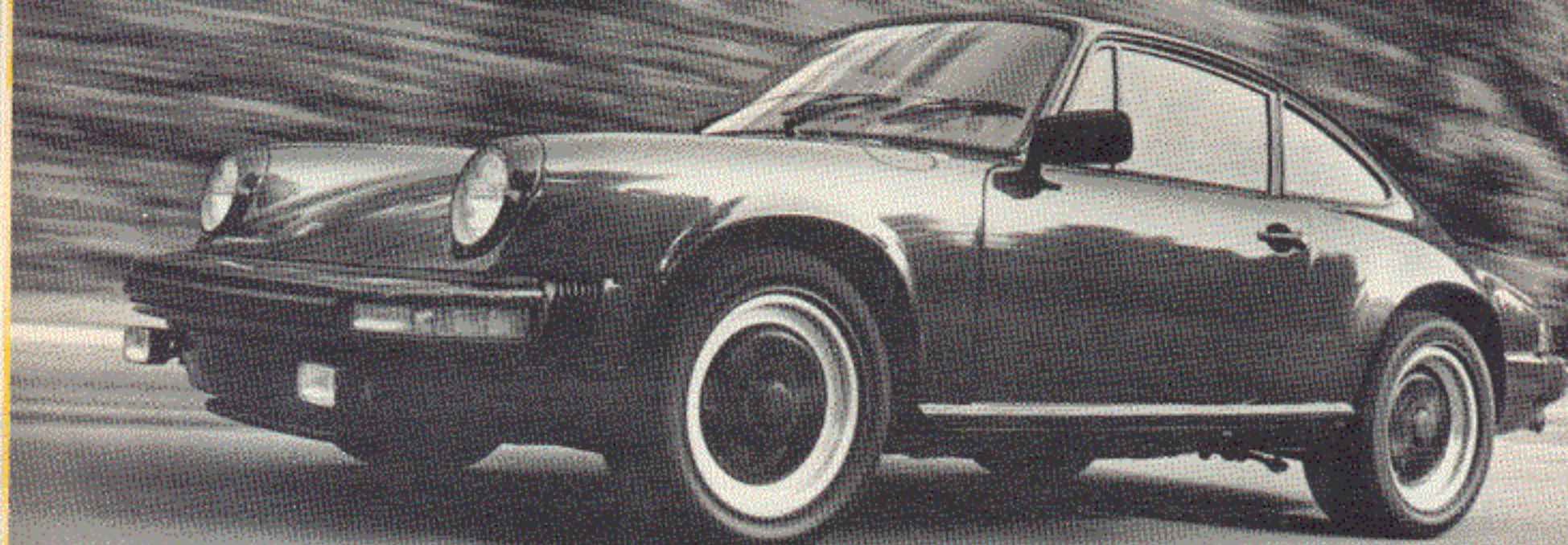
Going along for the ride is less than a

sure-fire way to live up to the passive side of one's nature. Riding shotgun in a raging, spitting, hair-trigger 911SC is just about the most awful and impossible way there is to remain passive. This 911SC, this *Thing*, could draw screams from the pope. Confronted with streaming, onrushing impedimenta, even the most stolid passengers collapse into beyond-the-pale-of-reason seizures of fright. Their eyes pop, their knuckles get pasty, and they put teeth marks in their tongues. "This is like a roller coaster," they whimper. "I hate roller

coasters." But the 911SC is addictive. If the driver knows how to wield this Tool of the Ultimate Whisk, the passenger comes around with an inspired turn of enthusiasm: "I want one, *I want one!*" It bursts forth uncontrollably.

There isn't a soul alive who somehow doesn't poach-out the boundaries of his or her personal performance envelope with insistent regularity. One way or another there are things to be tried, risks to be taken. Everybody likes to take the deep breath of commitment every so often. It begins with things as passive as

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDRE LAROCHE



cringing at *Psycho*, and steps up to rush-hour jaywalking. Then, somewhere about in the middle, come roller coasters, the chance-taker's delight. They don't often derail or spit people out into the stratosphere, but they feel as if they were built for nothing else. Roller-coaster graduates move straight on to full-contact karate, black belts shift over to everybody's favorite game show, "Celebrity Decapitation," and finally the survivor here gets to be Denis Jenkinson and rides with Stirling Moss at 180 mph for a thousand miles through darkest Italy.

Riding in a 911SC with someone who exhibits every intention of going *really* fast is sort of the ultimate, pumped-up pooching-out of the more passive side of our nutty little envelopes. The only bad thing is that you can't get on your knees; you've got to do your best prayers sitting down.

And now the question is, How much longer will Porsche be building these portable pews? Stuttgart has made noises before about the end being in sight for its hoary old coupe (and its ongoing Targa version), but even at today's bloated price, it snags the old faithful and the new converts year after year. For good reason. If one can afford a 911SC, it is a helluva value. If not, it doesn't make any difference. In the two years since we tested the first 911SC, its base price has jumped \$10,000. But what you get for your \$30,000 these days is probably the best rear-engined Porsche ever loaded on a boat. We mention this boat-loading-for-America business because cars for the European

home market are blessed with better (read, lower and firmer and more precise) suspension settings, which make a tremendous difference in the way the cars feel and ultimately respond. Even so, the 1980 911SC is a happier compromise for the American market than the now discontinued 930 Turbo was.

The 911SC mixes strong performance with what we have reason to believe, based on history and typical German thoroughness and quality, should be outstanding reliability. This thing should run until your hair and teeth fall out and your family looks around for someplace to plant you.

The air-cooled flat six *whump*-starts to a noisy idle, fast and healthy, busy with its performance preoccupation. A three-way catalyst and an oxygen sensor in the fuel injection take care of emissions

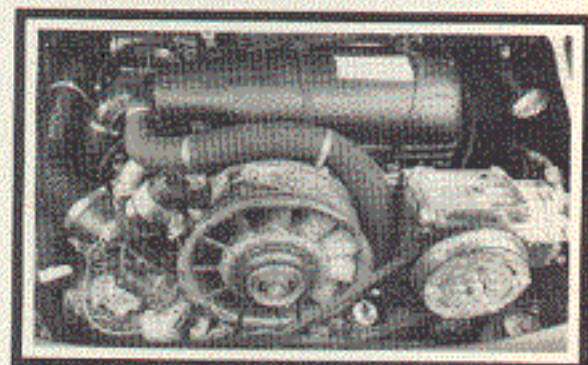
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*The air-cooled flat six  
whump-starts to a noisy idle.*

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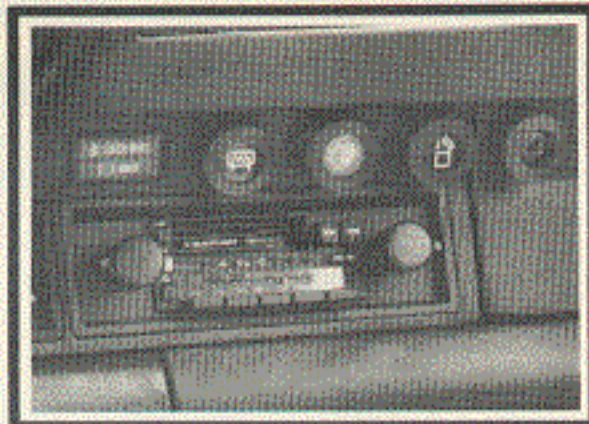
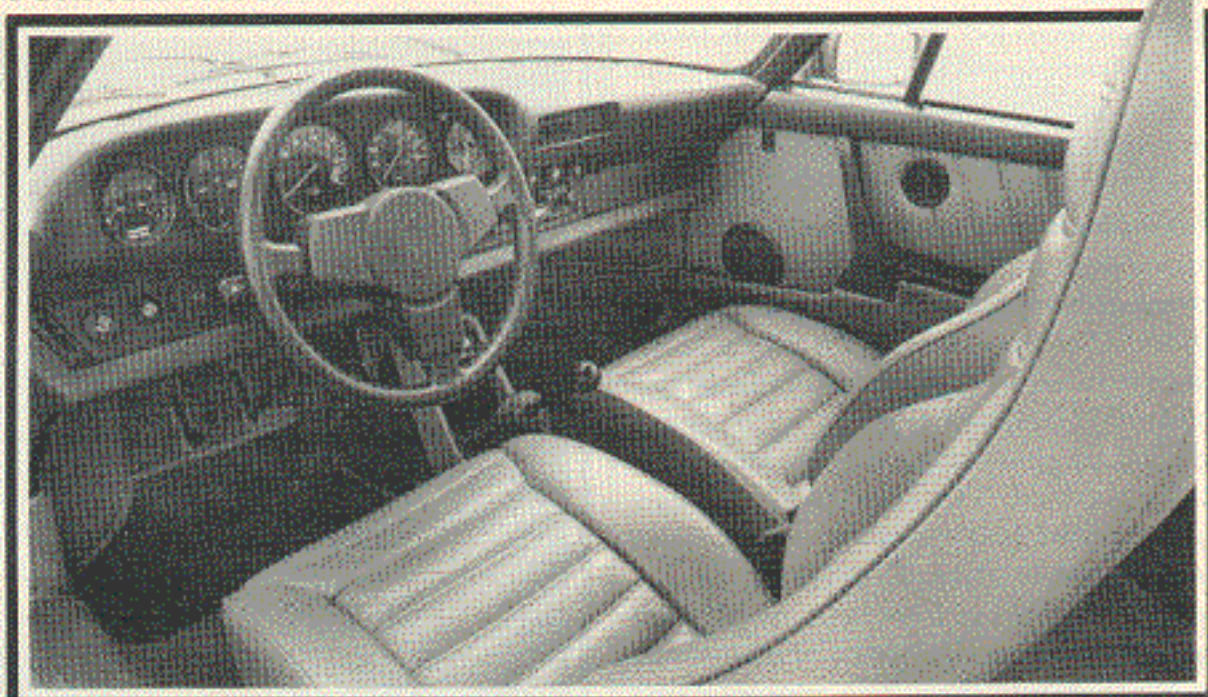
without further add-ons. The resulting drivability and performance are second to none among mass-produced U.S.-available cars this year. This is an engine full of itself, cocky about what it can do. Send it your message and it hollers right back. Zero-to-sixty takes six seconds flat, top speed is 130 mph, and overall mileage, even figuring in plenty of hard beating through the boondocks, runs out at 16 mpg.

For coming into corners we recommend close attention to the First Rule of Ongais, to wit: get your braking done



in a straight line, transition smoothly into the corner as you begin to feed throttle, bringing the car from basic understeer to a neutral distribution of cornering forces—i.e., all four wheels squared up. Just don't indulge in a panicky rethink about slowing down by backing out of the gas. This over-your-head time is when you should dust off the First Rule of Bobby Allison, to wit: floor it and steer like crazy.

We've always known that out behind the rear axles is no place for an engine to be, and Porsche has spent years trying to compensate. Currently—and ultimately?—Porsche has jacked up the car and grafted a number of hi-tech behavioral fixes into its outdated chassis. At this, Porsche has done better than ever before. The suspension calibrations, the wide rear wheels and tires, and the fat Pirelli P7 supertires all contribute to the reformation of the 911SC, but, as with a reformed drunk, the real shortcomings (semi-trailing-arm rear suspension and the clumsy rear weight bias thanks to the tail-hung engine) are still ready to crop up in moments of character weakness. But Porsche has done a masterly job of bringing the 911's behavior into reasonable line.



The Tech. Ed. climbed into the SC and dragged the poor thing off for some skidpad abuse, and even he of the hypercritical persuasion came away impressed with Porsche's progress. There

### *The 911SC is for molesting secret colloquial byways.*

is new and unexpected controllability at the raggedy edge. So we belted down to Ohio and molested its secret colloquial byways, ripping off as much as 600 miles a day in the depths of tightly enmeshed forests and hills.

At last light, we got out and ran a sensory check, and discovered all our faculties to be in good shape, and, except for a serious case of cop-eyes, no signs of personal wear and tear poked out anywhere. Much of the credit must go to the 911SC's ventilated four-wheel disc system, which is a godsend. With the possi-

ble exceptions of the windshield and the steering wheel, there is nothing more useful on the car. The brakes produce overwhelming inversions of speed, transferring your insides about down to knee level under maximum braking. There's next to no nose dive and the pedal is ridiculously easy to modulate, oomping the car down into corners as if a king-sized suction cup has been activated. The suspension absorbs whooping dips with no loss of equanimity, but jumping to daylight over lopsided crests gives those confounded semi-trailing arms too much of a chance to tweak the thing off kilter into a lopsided, darting landing. Steering is direct and quick, if fraught with kickback over bumps, and the five-speed gearbox is undoubtedly pleased with its latest linkage update, which still produces notchy shifts but with much more definite gates than in the past. Porsche never stops fiddling.

In the Porsche tradition, the instruments are thorough and splendidly arrayed. We wish this were true of the heating and ventilation controls, which are grouped in a panel unmarked except for defrost instructions.

One of the reasons the base price has leapt so drastically is a long list of formerly optional standards such as air conditioning, power windows, a center

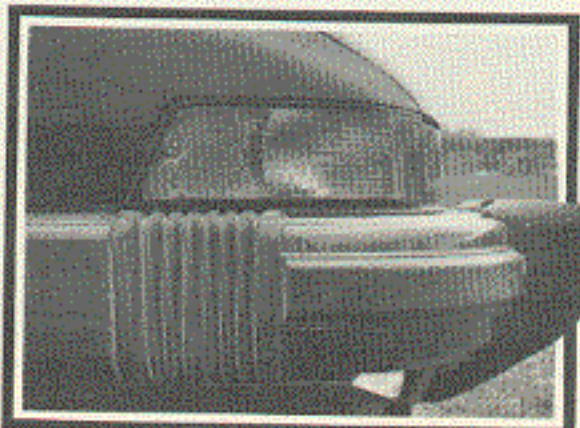
console, black outside trim, an engine-compartment light, and a leather-covered wheel. Our SC also has \$2145 worth of fog lights, rear speakers, right-side electric mirror, sport shocks, forged alloy wheels, and the P7s. A Blaupunkt AM/FM/cassette unit with Dolby for hiss reduction channels its sound cleanly through four speakers, two of which are on the doors below long, handy storage bins neatly integrated into the armrests.

Our only problem with the 911SC, other than maintaining possession of the keys, was with the keys themselves. They are featherweight aluminum, and they bend easily, especially when ignition tumblers are slightly misaligned. Ours were. The keys were bent a little, and one of them hung up in the start position instead of returning to the run position, which is supposed to disengage the starter. As a result the starter toasted itself to a crisp and the ignition shorted out. We have Howard Cooper Volkswagen/Porsche+Audi in Ann Arbor to thank for a super-quick fix that

allowed us to get the car into this issue.

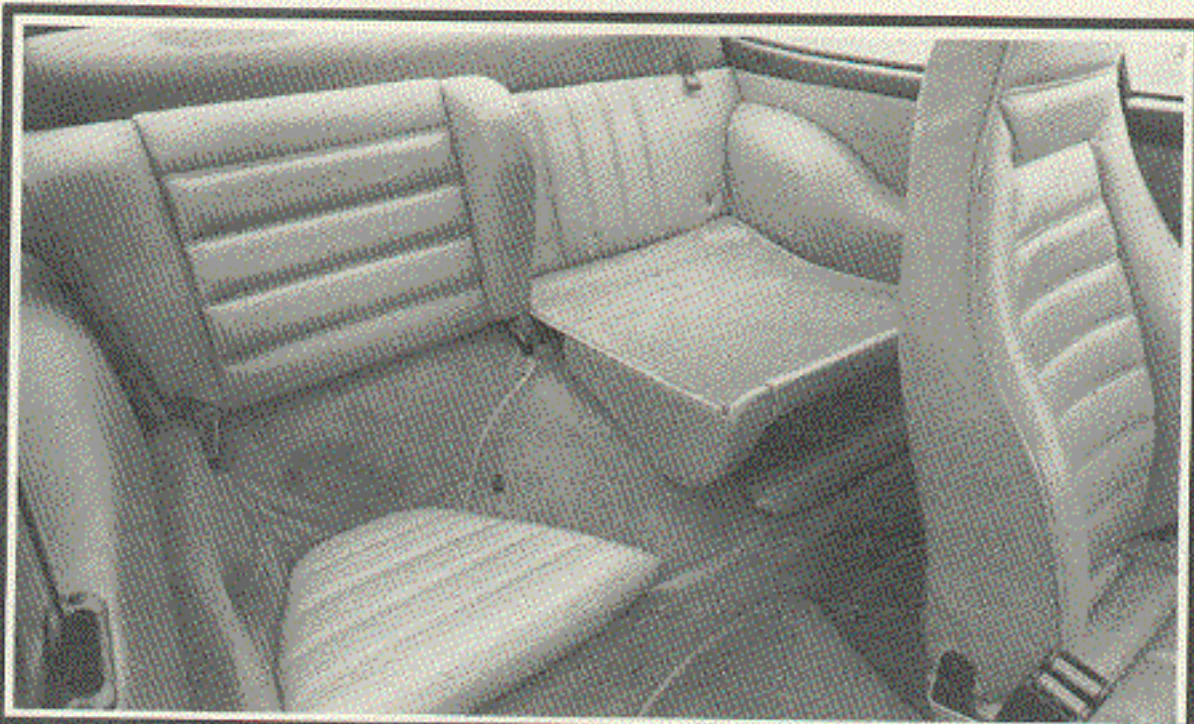
The people-packaging core within the 911SC makes a halfhearted attempt at providing spots for two kids or two cramped adults in back (these seatlets fold down, providing useful luggage space over and above the five-cubic-foot trunk in the nose of the car). But the place where you live and work up front is first-cabin in every respect. Ours was superbly finished (except for a single driplet of glue on the carpet) and tastefully colored. The soothingly shaped and padded seats were covered in fine, ventilated leather. Everything fits so snugly it seems to have been molded together almost to the point of meltdown.

Surrounding these fine appointments is one of the stoutest bodies ever, a clean design that incorporates the best-looking 5-mph bumpers on the market. Lacking the 930's bulbous fenders and whale tail, the SC is less a caricature, more a subtle and righteous-looking notice of intent to commit unspecified illegalities, especially in fast corners.



Very fast corners. It is the roller-coaster syndrome again. It is what the 911SC does. What is so pleasing about the whole proposition is that it also does so many other things so well. As compromises go, the 911SC is right at the top of the most intriguing heap of all, the one that peaks with works of man's imagination that really aren't compromises at all, because they're capable of near-infinite feats of the leaping-tall-buildings variety. Need a lift?

—Larry Griffin



## COUNTERPOINT

• For almost 30 years I've wanted to own whatever rear-engined Porsche has been in production at the time. I guess I've driven at least one example of every Porsche production car ever built, including a 1300 Super, and I've never been disappointed. Now, with this 911SC coupe, my boundless affection begins to wane. Certainly the months and miles I've done in the Porsche 928 have done their bit to erode the love affair, but there's more . . . This Porsche feels *old*, somehow. It feels as if it's finally coming to the end of its allotted life span. I'm no longer willing to put up with the harshness, or the way the front end hunts and nibbles when you power it through a favorite country corner. I'm sure I would have liked it better without the Pirelli P7 tires, and I'm sure that I could still be tempted by a dark-gray Targa, but my 911 appetite isn't as strong now. It didn't help that the Audi 5000 Turbo passed through my hands simultaneously. Even with four doors and an automatic transmission, the Audi manages to do several things better than the Porsche. From now on, the Porsche of my dreams has a V-8 engine in the front.

—David E. Davis, Jr.

The writing, it would seem, is on the wall. And what is written is that the venerable and venerated 911 is in the twilight of its years. I can remember when there were so many 911 variations I couldn't keep them all straight. Now there's just this one. Porsche says there will be a 911 as long as there is a demand for one, but it's difficult to see the car or the demand lasting more than another couple of years. At the most, the 911SC is as good as it can be made. Porsche has massaged, refined, reworked, and improved on it until the car is as near perfection as it can be. And that's why it will go away. Innovation and challenge are very important to Porsche.

The 911 no longer provides either. It has outlived its usefulness, and as attrition takes the die-hard traditionalists, the 911 will finally outlive its demand. I loved driving the SC, and I could live a long and happy life with it. It's still that good, that satisfying. But we're getting a 928 in a few weeks, and I know it will turn my head, and it'll make my knees feel funny, and the hair stand up on the back of my neck. The 911 just doesn't do that to me anymore. The 928 is the *now* Porsche, and that's fine by me.

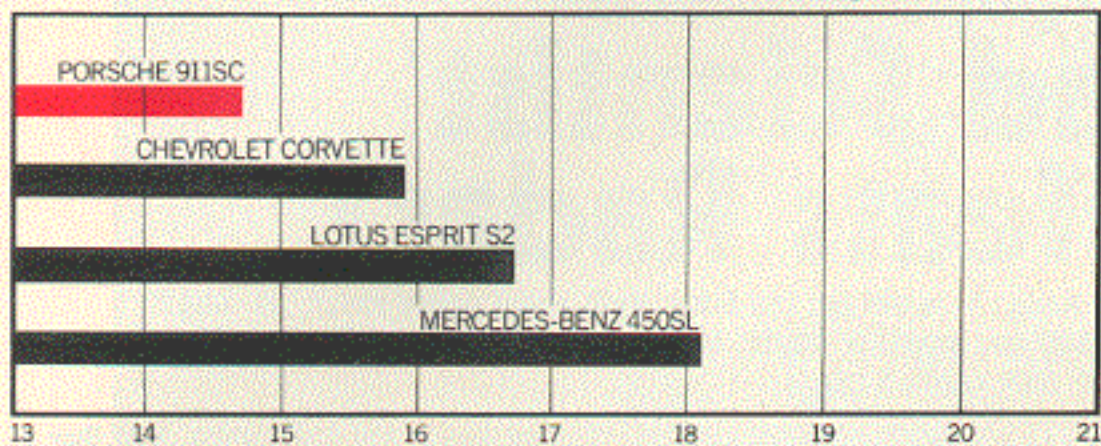
—Mike Knepper

Porsche hereby inherits enviable distinction as the most accelerative car money can buy in these United States. With no help from a turbocharger. There are those that peak out a bit higher, but the Stuttgart Super Beetle gets you there quicker. This demands a certain amount of respect even from those who—like me—decry the obsolescence of rear-engine layouts. You've also got to credit Porsche for the 911's staying power. It holds the record as the oldest car design still in production for America (not counting the Avanti and the Checker). One thing that has changed over the years is the 911's penchant for oversteer. I find it at an all-time low in this 1980 model with the sport group. It stuck and stuck on our skidpad, finally drifting over the limit *front first*. Lifting abruptly off the throttle hardly made it twitch. So the P7s and wider rear wheels are a must. I was also happy with the real-world handling, but I wouldn't touch the sport shocks with a stick. Over broken pavement and Michigan-class expansion strips (the one-inch-high kind), the so-called dampers fitted to our tester went rigid. Two hours on a bad highway gave me a headache. Now I know what they were thinking of when the 911's soft-ride package came out a few years back.

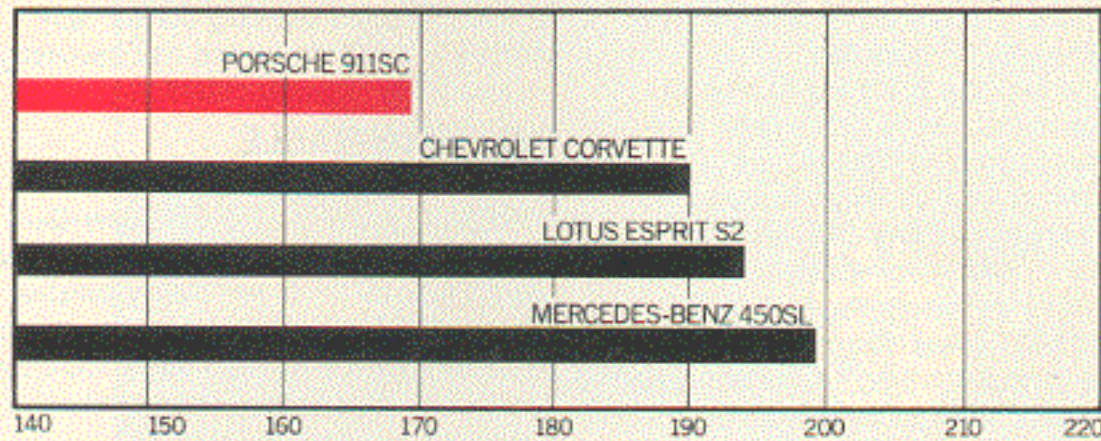
—Don Sherman

# PORSCHE 911SC

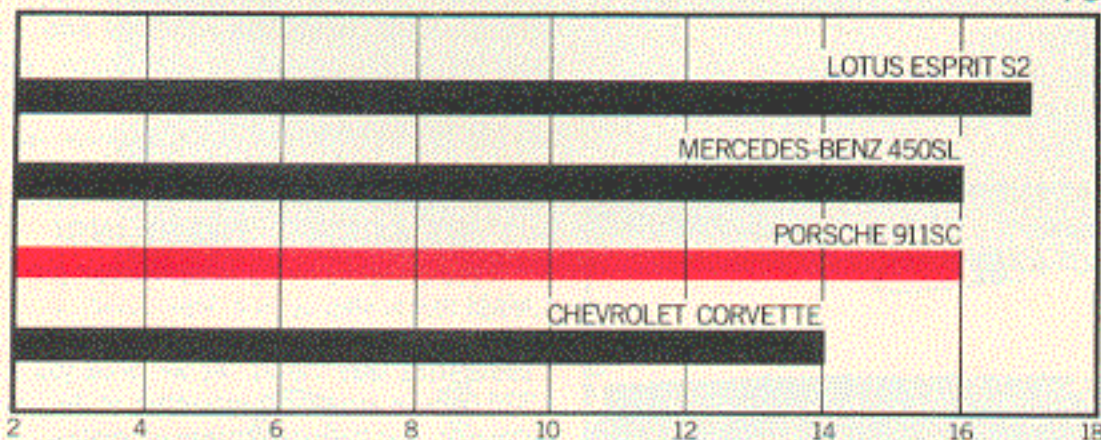
## ACCELERATION standing 1/4 mile, seconds



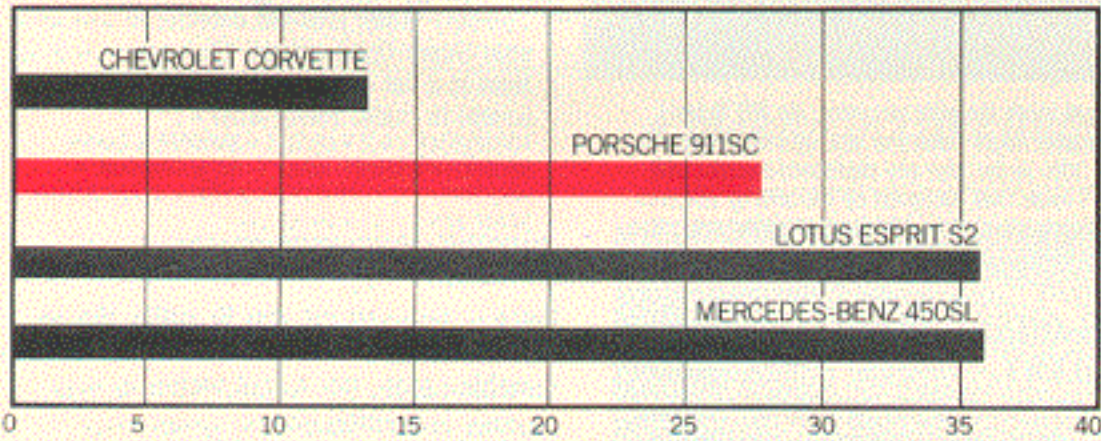
## BRAKING 70-0 mph, feet



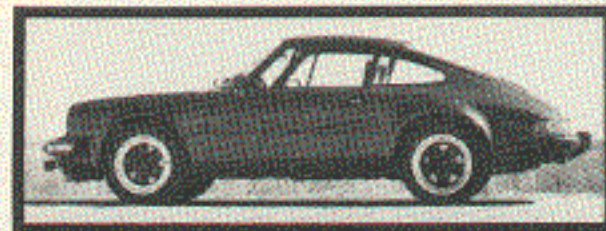
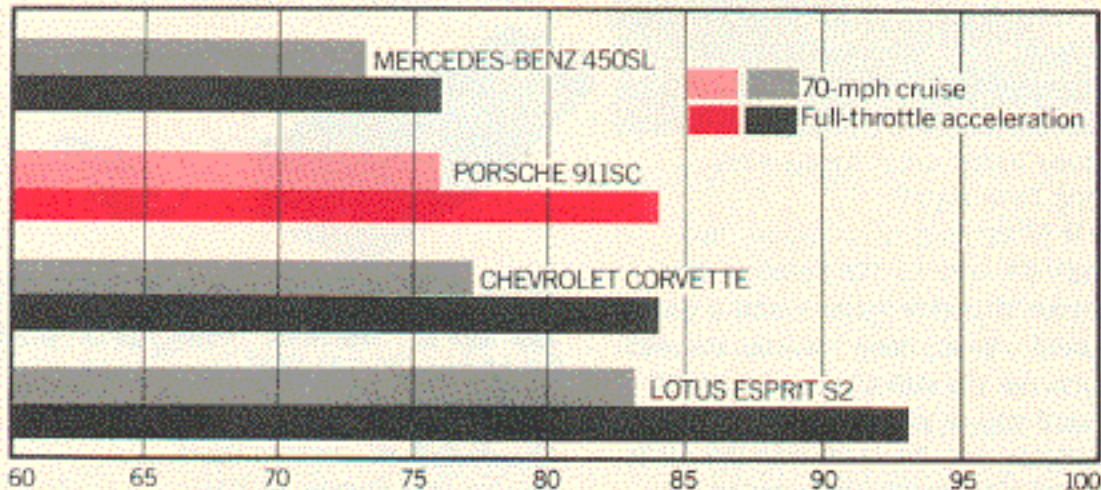
## FUEL ECONOMY EPA estimated mpg



## CURRENT BASE PRICE dollars x 1000



## INTERIOR SOUND LEVEL dBA



PORSCHE 911SC

**Vehicle type:** rear-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 2+2-passenger, 2-door coupe

**Price as tested:** \$30,470

**Options on test car:** base Porsche 911SC, \$27,700; F25 option group, \$2145; metallic paint, \$625.

### ENGINE

Type: flat 6, air-cooled, aluminum block and heads, 8 main bearings  
 Bore x stroke ..... 3.74 x 2.77 in, 95 x 70mm  
 Displacement ..... 183 cu in, 2990cc  
 Compression ratio ..... 9.3:1  
 Carburetion ..... Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection  
 Valve gear ..... chain-driven single overhead cam  
 Power (SAE net) ..... 172 bhp @ 5500 rpm  
 Torque (SAE net) ..... 189 lbs-ft @ 4200 rpm  
 Redline ..... 6300 rpm

### DRIVETRAIN

Transmission ..... 5-speed  
 Final-drive ratio ..... 3.88:1

Gear	Ratio	Mph/1000 rpm	Max. test speed
I	3.18	5.9	37 mph (6300 rpm)
II	1.83	10.3	65 mph (6300 rpm)
III	1.26	14.9	94 mph (6300 rpm)
IV	1.00	18.8	118 mph (6300 rpm)
V	0.82	23.0	130 mph (5650 rpm)

### DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase ..... 89.4 in  
 Track, F/R ..... 53.6/52.8 in  
 Length ..... 168.9 in  
 Width ..... 65.0 in  
 Height ..... 52.0 in  
 Ground clearance ..... 5.6 in  
 Curb weight ..... 2700 lbs  
 Weight distribution, F/R ..... 41.5/58.5%  
 Fuel capacity ..... 21.1 gal  
 Oil capacity ..... 13.7 qt

### SUSPENSION

F: ..... ind, MacPherson strut, torsion bars, anti-sway bar  
 R: ..... ind, semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, anti-sway bar

### STEERING

Type ..... rack-and-pinion  
 Turns lock-to-lock ..... 3.1  
 Turning circle curb-to-curb ..... 33.5 ft

### BRAKES

F: ..... 9.0 x 0.8-in vented disc  
 R: ..... 9.6 x 0.8-in vented disc  
 Power assist ..... vacuum

### WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size ..... F: 6.0 x 16 in; R: 7.0 x 16 in  
 Wheel type ..... forged aluminum  
 Tire make and size ..... Pirelli Cinturato P7,  
 F: 205/55VR-16; R: 225/50VR-16  
 Test inflation pressures, F/R ..... 30/34 psi

### SAE INTERIOR VOLUME

Front seat ..... 46 cu ft  
 Trunk space ..... 5 cu ft

### INTERIOR SOUND LEVEL

Idle ..... 63 dBA  
 Full-throttle acceleration ..... 84 dBA  
 70-mph cruising ..... 76 dBA  
 70-mph coasting ..... 75 dBA

### PERFORMANCE

Zero to	Seconds
30 mph	2.1
40 mph	3.2
50 mph	4.6
60 mph	6.0
70 mph	8.6
80 mph	10.8
90 mph	13.8
100 mph	18.4
Standing 1/4-mile	14.7 sec @ 92 mph
Top speed	130 mph
Braking, 70-0 mph	169 ft
Roadholding, 218-ft dia skidpad	0.80 g
EPA estimated fuel economy	16 mpg