

612-HP Carrera GT



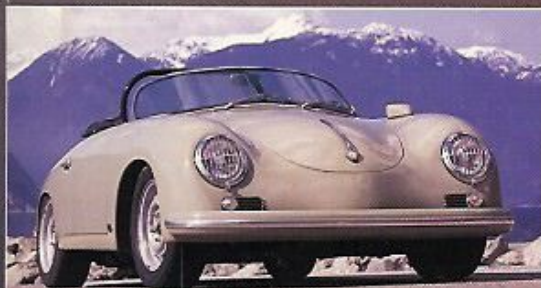
at Weissach!

The Magazine **11** About Porsche excellence

The 959 is Finally
U.S.-LEGAL*



*With 600 hp and
50-State Approval!



BRAND-NEW SPEEDSTERS?

MARKET UPDATE
996 and Boxster



\$4.99 (Canada \$6.99)

SEPTEMBER 2003

ISSUE 122

The One That Got Away

THE FIRST 959 LEGALLY IMPORTED INTO THE U.S. IS FINALLY LEGAL TO DRIVE IN ALL 50 STATES—WITH NO EXCUSES AND NO FUNNY PLATES NEEDED. AND IT'S ONLY THE FIRST OF MORE TO COME...
STORY BY PETE STOUT. PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR AND TONY IRVIN.



In the sleepy California beach town of Santa Cruz is a sight that'll knock the wind out of any Porscheophile: More than a dozen 959s tucked into the two-block complex of old muffler and body shops that make up Canepa Design.

Before you think this is some weedy operation, however, know that Bruce Canepa has certified the first 50-state legal 959 we know of. It's fitting that this 959, #WPOZZZ95ZJS905030, belongs to Otis Chandler and was the first 959 legally imported into the U.S. — or so said

the cover of our October, 1990 issue. Chandler got permission from the Department of Transportation and Environmental Protection Agency to import his 959S for one reason only — museum display. The catch? He had to promise he wouldn't drive it. As in ever.

"It's the ultimate frustration," said Chandler in 1990. "It'll never be street legal. In effect, it's a coffee table piece of art. It's sad, but I'm still happy because I spent over four years trying to get this car." Happily, that was then.

The here and now is vastly improved due to a recent DOT exemption called Show and Display. This provision for rare vehicles or cars with significant historical interest removes the largest roadblock to bringing a 959 into the U.S. — the need to destroy as many as four examples to demonstrate crash safety.

The expected landslide of 959s, however, hasn't happened because Show and Display does not exempt them from meeting EPA emissions standards, which require the 959 to



meet 1988 standards. To do so, it needs the catalyst setup Porsche didn't bother to develop for its 250-ish run of 959s in the late eighties. The problem is that the stock Motronic engine management is not set up to recognize the oxygen sensors required to make catalysts work. Many have tried to get the stock ECU to recognize them, but Canepa decided to start over with Motec engine management — a highly advanced and well-liked system among racers and rodders alike.

The result, along with a number of other improvements, is a claimed 600 horsepower and full approval from the California Air Resources Board. So the landslide officially begins, with ground zero located in a dingy parking lot on the California coast. And, unless you were at Porsche AG when the 959 was new, nothing can prepare you for the sight of so many 959s in one place.

Walking around Canepa Design, it seems like they're tucked into every crevice, too. Six silver 959s are parked

in front of an old autobody shop here, three are dismantled on jack stands across the street there, and another 959 or two are lurking behind modified Chevy Tahoes. Surreal. Then there's the pair we're here to drive today: an all-original 959 Deluxe and Chandler's shockingly red U.S.-legal 959S.

Any thoughts of the 959 as an old car fade quickly. There are details that photos fail to pick out, such as troughs formed by the voids between the rear flares and the quarter windows that

are best appreciated from various heights directly behind the car. The front turn-signal lights and both the front and rear overhangs look dated in pictures, but not in the flesh. The 17-inch wheels are just big enough, filling the fat fenders perfectly with meaty Michelins. But for its nearly square side markers and old-school headlights, the 959 could be a modern car.

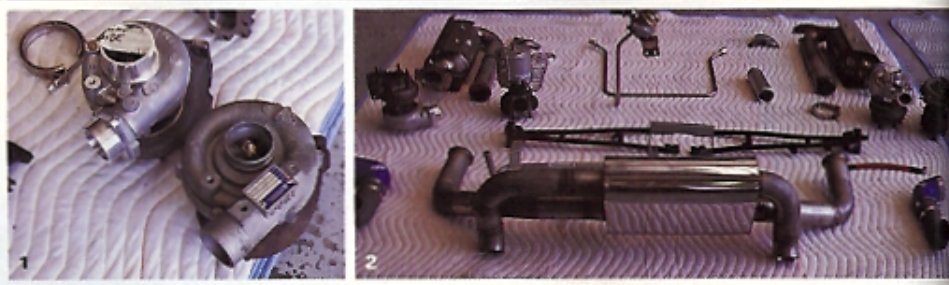
Brainchild of the late R&D chief Helmuth Bott, the 959's list of technology isn't dated, either. The 2849-cc air- and water-cooled flat six uses sequential twin turbos to send the 959 to 60 mph in 3.6 seconds and up to 188-198 mph. Among other things, this Porsche introduced siamesed cylinder head "blocks" instead of individual cylinder heads (next seen on 2001's 996 Turbo). Four camshafts and four valves per cylinder (also seen in 2001) plus titanium connecting rods ensured the 959 engine was at the edge of road-car technology in the eighties — and well ahead of Porsches to come. With an 8.3:1 compression ratio and a maximum of 14.5 psi of boost, the 959 made 450 hp (DIN) at 6500 rpm and 370 lb-ft of torque at 5500 rpm.

Putting that power to the ground was the job of an all-new, six-speed gearbox (not 'til the 1992 968) and Porsche's first production all-wheel-drive system for sports cars (adapted for 1989's 964 Carrera 4). With a multi-plate clutch integrated into the front differential, the 959 eschewed the more common torque-splitting center differential. Riding in an oil-filled chamber, the diff varies torque sent to the front wheels as pressure in the chamber is altered. Four programs for Traction, Dry, Wet, and Ice are available to fine-tune the 959's traction tendencies at the touch of a stalk to the right of the steering wheel. The engineers, however, left the car's computer with an override feature if it thinks it knows better, using engine speed, road speed, and gear selection to calculate its torque-limit settings.

While Porsche's 928 and 944 beat the 959 to the punch with the company's first ABS for production cars, the 959 would trump them with the first 17-inch road wheels on a road-going Porsche (re-introduced for the 1991 964 Turbo). The trick, hollow-spoke alloys featured single, central lug nuts (used next on 2004's Carrera GT) and housed 12.7-inch and 12-inch brake rotors with huge, four-piston calipers. This would be the first application of



PHOTO: TONY IRVIN



3

hollow-spoke technology on a Porsche road wheel (used again on the 1996 993-based Turbo).

The wheels mounted new Dunlop run-flat tires. A low tire-pressure warning system (seen on 1990's 928) took full advantage of the light, hollow-spoke rims to increase air volume and detect cracks in the rim as well as tire failures. The system uses a diaphragm on the wheel's interior calibrated for a specified pressure. A pin in the diaphragm alters its position if tire pressure drops, changing the magnetic field of a stationary sensor mounted just behind the brakes, on the suspension arm.

1) New Garrett ball-bearing turbocharger alongside the original KKK unit.

2) Decidedly low-tech blankets on the shop floor are home to exhaust system parts required to make the 959 pass the strictest emissions standard in the U.S.

3) Not a bad garage considering that a 962 and 935 are hiding to the left, just out of sight. The metallic black 959 is a rare non-silver car. Canepa says he's got the only true black one at home...

4) 959S with a silver 959 Deluxe, the latter sitting on Canepa's titanium-finish wheels.



PHOTO TONY IRVIN

You don't want to damage one of these wheels — as we found out later in the day when Canepa put a wheel off and suffered through the agony of hearing the road's hard shoulder turn into a \$5,700 wheel peeler. What he learned: It's handy to have a parking lot full of 959 parts cars. What we learned: The 959 has ridiculous levels of engineering. You may have seen photos of the 959's \$3,000 lug wrench in some of the original road tests, but it's useless after pulling the plastic center cap out of the wheel. That's because you're confronted by a little black wall of aluminum with a slot. Stick the ignition key into

said slot, turn it, and a lightweight, centerlug wheel lock good for 200+mph falls out. For a car with wheels that only another 959 owner can use...

The suspension system those wheels attach to is *still* more advanced than any other 911 road car's. Ditching torsion bars entirely, the 959 used unequal-length A-arms up front with coil springs and dual shocks with a similar setup in the rear. At each wheel, the shock rate for one damper is automatically adjusted referencing road speed while the other can adjust ride height on the move (as on the 2003 Cayenne). Normal ride height is 5.9

inches but lowers to 4.7 inches once roughly 95 mph is reached. For low-speed maneuvers, the 959's chassis can be raised to 7.1 inches. The system was standard in all 959s, save Sport versions — which also deleted the 959 Deluxe's power steering. Ride height for Sport versions was permanently set at the low, 4.7-inch setting.

Wrapping it all up was a wide-bodied envelope designed to cancel lift at high speed. Drag fell from the then-current Carrera's 0.39 to a still acceptable 0.31, but that was a low priority compared to Porsche's goal of zero lift. Weissach said it accomplished just that, making the 959 the only production car besides Ferrari's Testarossa with no lift at the time. With the doors, hood, and forward rocker panels rendered in aluminum, the rest of the 959's body used Kevlar and fiberglass-reinforced plastic. The "hidden" bumpers were made of polyurethane in 928 fashion while a plastic roof dictated an integral roll cage. The windshield fits flush to a roofline devoid of the traditional 911 rain gutters for a cleaner look and better aero — something planned for the 993 but next seen on 1999's 996 coupe.

The price of all that technology? First, the 959 weighed in at a hefty 3,190 pounds — unheard of for a 911 at that time. When it came to actually producing the 959, there were lengthy delays. Finally, the price was astronomical: as little as \$250,000 for Euro cars to the \$320,000 Chandler paid for his U.S. 959 Sport when it arrived at LAX. Worse, it's rumored that Porsche lost as much as \$250,000 on every 959 — a model it developed for a racing category that disappeared before Weissach could exploit it!

Today, Canepa wants \$425,000 for the privilege of owning a U.S.-legal 959. What do you get for 425 large? The first ingredient is a Euro 959 with 3,000 kilometers or less on its odometer. Each car is detailed to concours levels, meaning any body or cosmetic work needed to bring the car back to new-car nice is promised. All of the 959s we saw had lumpy doors as a result of poorly designed mirror braces welded to the aluminum doorskins at the factory. And all will be fixed, promises Canepa.

Next up, the wheels are remachined to remove the Dunlop run-flat beadlock feature. The wheels are then fitted with a mold to bond a new, aluminum composite bead onto them before being machined again. Once the pro-



cess is complete, new Michelin Pilot Sports are installed in the same size up front (235/45R17) with wider tires in the rear (275/35R17). All wheels are refinished in Canepa Design's favored Dull Titanium surfacing unless owners specify another color.

Meanwhile, all mechanicals are serviced and updated — with a maintenance-and-conversion parts list that spans three pages. The cam box seals are replaced while the oil pump gets rebuilt with a factory upgrade. The water pump is also rebuilt with new seals while all fluids are drained and refilled. The electrical system gets a boost from an alternator upgrade and the spark plugs are renewed as well. The fuel injectors are pulled and checked then balanced for flow — possible because each 959 came with 12 and Canepa upgrades six of them.

The complete exhaust system is discarded save for the headers, cross-over pipe, and turbo mounts. Even the headers get modified, however, with new flanges to make room for the catalyts. The turbo mounts get a slight change, too. Next to go is the entire Motronic engine wiring harness, to be replaced with a Motec M800 unit. The new ECU bolts onto a custom plate under the passenger seat along with a data-logging device and a control box for a 993 air-injection pump and air-diverter valve.

The exhaust is replaced with a completely new system designed to work with twin catalytic converters for a 993 Turbo and a pair of ball-bearing Garrett turbochargers, modified to eliminate their integral wastegates. Instead, the system uses one of the 959's original twin wastegates, moving it to the left rear corner of the engine

compartment and replacing its spring with a 1.0-bar unit from Powerhaus. The air pump was added to help burn unspent gases and returns them to the left intake runner. Finally, a B&B muffler designed for the 959 is installed.

Inside, cars that need it are getting new leather and/or carpeting. Every car (save Chandler's) gets a more modern factory steering wheel and new floor mats. Canepa throws in a custom car cover for each car as well as a full alignment. The 959 Sport suspension is an option, though Canepa couldn't estimate its cost because he was still waiting for a price list from Porsche at the time of this writing.

Behind the Wheel

If you're like me, you've been lusting after the 959 for the better part of two decades. And, for someone weaned on all things Porsche in 914s and early 911s, stepping into any 959 is an unexpected sensation. Getting behind the wheel is utterly so. My first time came during our 100th issue's five-way Turbo test with Danny Sullivan at Sears Point Raceway. The surprise then is the same as today: The 959 is a bit of a softie. And even more so over real roads.

The shocker is the fact that it goes all wallowy over bumps at freeway speeds. It's enough that, with some lock dialed in around a fast sweeper, the thing will try to change lanes if the surface gets lumpy. Could this really have been state-of-the-art only 15 years ago? I'm wondering aloud about the condition of this car's suspension but Canepa says they're all that way.

INSPECTING THE SERIAL NUMBERS of the ten 959s at Canepa Design for U.S. certification proves highly interesting. It's clear that 959s were not assembled at Weissach in the same sequence that body builder Bauer made them, and that car numbers 19 and 20 as well as 42 and 43 have returned to close proximity, 15 years later and a world away. One 959 (#900019) is an early car while another (#900225) came late in the run of Euro 959s, only six of which were Sport models. Chandler's car is supposedly the 29th and last of the U.S. 959 Sports, all of which were built after production of Euro 959s. Three more 959s were built from spare parts in the early nineties.

Chassis#	Bauer Body#	Color	Model and Specification
WPOZZ95ZHS900019	5390054	Metallic Black	959 Deluxe (European)
WPOZZ95ZHS900020	5390008	Silver	959 Deluxe (European)
WPOZZ95ZHS900024	5390093	Silver	959 Deluxe (European)
WPOZZ95ZHS900042	5390021	Silver	959 Deluxe (European)
WPOZZ95ZHS900043	5390026	Silver	959 Deluxe (European)
WPOZZ95ZHS900051	5390087	Silver	959 Deluxe (European)
WPOZZ95ZHS900055	5390031	Silver	959 Deluxe (European)
WPOZZ95ZHS900165	5390058	Silver	959 Deluxe (European)
WPOZZ95ZHS900225	5390234	Silver	959 Deluxe (European)
WPOZZ95ZHS905030	5390256	Guards Red	959 Sport (U.S. Edition)

1) Rarely seen picture of the holes for the hollow spokes in 959 wheel. Circular indentation is for low-pressure monitor.

2) When roadside shoulders impersonate can openers, alloy wheels aren't happy.

3) Perhaps the most coveted sticker of all—the one that says CARB approves.

4) 959S interior smacks of purpose with a factory roll cage plus stereo and A/C delete. The 959S sport seats, with their voids for the racing-style seat belts, are trick and among the best we've sampled.

5) U.S.-legal engine with side shrouds removed so you can see some of Canepa's modifications, such as the 993 air-injection pump easily spotted on left intake runner, connected by the small piece of blue hose.

It's almost as soft as an early 911 at U.S. ride height. In other words, it's a pretty plush ride. No matter the condition of the suspension system, however, the engine feels like it's in fine fettle. That said, it lacks low-down torque. That's little surprise with 8.3:1 compression and just 2.8 liters of life force, but it's shocking that I was told as a wee lad that this engine was "lag-free" in the day. Er, nope. South of 3000-4000 rpm, it feels dead in most gears.

The other shocker is the gearbox itself: After shifting happily for several minutes, I realize I've been using "G" (for *Gelände*, or Terrain) as first gear instead of the one marked as first. And it's felt right to do so. Canepa confirms this later, because he says it *is* first gear. Porsche labeled it *Gelände*, he believes, because there was no TÜV

approval for six-speed gearboxes at the time of the 959's introduction. Like Doug Didrick's 540-hp 959 I drove at Sears, the most impressive thing about this 959 is its brake feel—which is superb. But unlike that 959, this one feels bog slow—as though a 993 or 996 Twin would devastate it.

So outside of feelsome brakes, it's all a bit anti-climactic, I'm afraid to report. That's probably down in part to the fact that this all-original 959 has been sitting for too long. But there's an oldness here that seems deeper than that. Even knowing it all may be a bit scripted, I'm not expecting great things from the U.S.-legal car. Especially as we've brought a six-speed, X50-pack Turbo along to keep 600-hp Claiming Canepa honest. Perhaps it's time to turn a page and see if I'm wrong...



NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORIES
2704 DIVISADERO STREET
SUNNYVALE, CA 94086
(415) 254-7320

MANUFACTURED BY: PORSCHE
MODEL: 959 S
DISPLACEMENT: 2.85L
DATE OF MAKE: 06/87
EQUIPMENT: AIR INJECTION SYSTEM

TWC, HO2S, RCS, PCV,
CATALISTER, AIR INJECTION

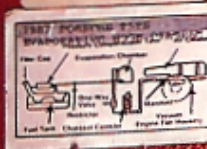
ALL TESTS PERFORMED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE
REGULATIONS

SALES PRICE: \$50,450

EX-FACTORY OPTION: \$0.31

WARRANTY: N/A

ONE MONTH TRIAL COMPLETE (7/23/02)
THE VEHICLE HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO COMPLIANCE WITH
CALIFORNIA EMISSIONS CONTROL
REGULATIONS APPLICABLE TO THE DATE OF MANUFACTURE
DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE TO THE DATE OF MANUFACTURE
CONTACT US AT: 800-833-2529



A photograph of two sports cars driving on a winding asphalt road through a hilly, wooded landscape. In the foreground, a red Porsche 911 Turbo X50 is seen from a rear three-quarter view, driving away from the camera. Its license plate reads '27067 B'. In the distance, a yellow Canepa 959S is also driving away, its license plate reading '941'. The road has double yellow lines and a white edge line. The background shows a steep hillside with sparse vegetation and trees under a clear blue sky.

Fast Forward

PORSCHE'S CURRENT TURBO X50 IS THE FIRST 911 TO OFFER AWD AND MATCH THE 959's (DIN) 450 HORSEPOWER. SO HOW DOES THE X50 STACK UP AGAINST CANEPA DESIGN'S 959S? STORY BY PETE STOUT. PHOTOS BY TONY IRVIN.

First off, this is an unfair fight. The 2003 Turbo X50 has more than 15 extra years of Weissach development at its disposal, what with PSM, monster torque, a stiffer chassis, a longer wheelbase, bigger tires, and more. Then there's the fact that the 959 we just drove was a bit, well, *soft*. So perhaps you, like me, think the 996 has got this fight bagged already.

Trouble is, it's the 959 Sport that's got the advantage. Five miles in, its claimed 600 hp and modern, wider tires are making it clear that a cook's been in this kitchen. The other ace up this car's sleeve is the fact that it's a 959S, ditching wallowy air suspension and luxury bits in favor of a sport-tuned suspension system and a claimed curb weight of 2,917 pounds — wet.



It should be noted that Porsche's claim might be a bit optimistic. *Auto, Motor & Sport* magazine found the true weight of the lighter 959 Sport to be 3,452 pounds with a full tank — which makes us shudder to think what the 959 Deluxe might weigh. Whatever that figure may be, the 959 Sport still has a significant advantage out of the box due to its deletion of the normal 959's ride height-adjustable suspension, stereo, air-conditioning, central locking, and right-hand door mirror. All of the 959 Sports got lighter, cloth-covered sport seats that are manually adjusted. U.S. Sports got four-point seatbelts, the electric window-lifts deleted in the European Sports, and a leather-covered secondary roll cage.

And because of these bits, the 959 is already beginning to vanquish the Speed Yellow 996-based Turbo we've

brought along. There's simply a specialness to the 959 that the newer car can't touch. After opening the aluminum door and sitting down, it's hard to argue that Porsche has improved on these eighties' sport seats. They're superbly comfortable while holding you with Vice-Grip-like efficiency. These seats are as no others, combining the high headrests and simple styling of 911 seats from the seventies and eighties with carefully crafted holes above your back for the factory racing seatbelts. They also put the 959 seating variants to at least three — the Deluxe leather buckets, these cloth Sport versions, and leather-covered 935 seats as seen on page 30 of *Excellence* #4 (July/August, 1987).

Belting up and twisting the key, this 959 already feels more immediate than the Euro car we just got out of. And it

is. Where that car felt flat-footed down low, this one pulls hard for the redline. Any worries that the B&B exhaust might sound a little aftermarket are ruled out by a purposeful note coming from the twin pipes — obviously muffled a bit by the Garrett turbochargers.

Speaking of the Garrett units, they spool much, much more quickly than the stock turbos did in the first car we sampled. Acceleration is up to what you'd expect from one of the Porsche Turbo Greats, pulling hard in every gear, from 65 mph on up to 140 or so. And fast it is — very fast — without sacrificing flexibility. That can be attributed to proper turbo sizing and the Motec engine management system, which is flawless in operation.

Does Chandler's 959 feel 600-hp fast? We'll get to that in a minute, but right now we're reeling over the differ-



ence between the adjustable suspension on the standard 959 we just drove and this car's conventional setup. The extra grip might not be a surprise given the Sport's lowered ride height, fatter modern tires, and revised spring-and-shock rates. But the improved ride quality sure is. The wallow is gone, replaced with an uncanny ability to process bumps at speed. It's certainly firmer, but — unless you like your Porsches to handle lumps in the Cadillac tradition — this is the better system. In fact, it's so much better that we wouldn't consider the Deluxe suspension unless a perfectly fettled setup convinced us otherwise.

The chassis tuning is amazing, with turn-in sweet enough to bring the 993 Carrera RS to mind — a car widely acclaimed as the best-handling air-cooled 911 of them all. A month in one

so-suspended Carrera (*Excellence* September, 2001) had me take up permanent residence on a nearby mountain, coming down the twisty roads only for food. And, sadly, work. This 959's chassis feels every bit as sweet, predictable, and light on its feet.

Which is not something you can say for the 996 Turbo upon returning to its driver's seat. While the 959 Sport may or may not be lighter than the X50, the later car feels much heavier — numb even. The current 996 Turbo is a stunning car, but its weight is evident in all that it does. Even the lighter, simplified 996 GT2 fails in this category, feeling direct and honest — but never light. The 3,400-pound X50 feels complex when the 959 feels simple, over-assisted when the Sport feels alive in your hands, and slightly distant when the 959 is right there with you.

Mind you, the 996 is still among the greatest sports cars ever conceived — it's just that this particular 959 is *that* good. And, in this case, the X50 package's extra 35 hp may actually be hurting the 996's case. How's that? While our man David Colman raves about his X50, I'm not sure it's all that great for real-world back roads. That's because it trades the standard Turbo's devastating flexibility for on-ramp bragging rights.

Exit a corner and feed in throttle in the X50 and you'll wait until the revised turbos are ready to cough up boost. And when they do, it's boooOOST that you get — often rocketing you into the next turn when you'd rather be lifting to brake. Get to know the X50 and you might drive around that by getting into the gas earlier, while you're still coming around the bend. But that's a sketchy enterprise on public roads.

The modern Porsche will probably show superior results on paper every time, but the 959 is so damn alluring anyway...



As for accelerative prowess, we invited Canepa — with late notice, we must admit — to a race-track showdown. But he couldn't make it. Pitted against the X50 neck-and-neck in an informal test, the 959's nose gains hard on the 996's tail under hard acceleration up to 90 mph. I see its prow dive hard under braking, but Canepa might have got the jump on shift points. After swapping positions at a dead stop, the 959 has a tough time putting more than a car-length on our X50. And we're carrying a 200-pound passenger. So it's too close to call without a formal test, but our guess is that the 2.8-liter 959 couldn't make its claimed 600 hp obvious at anything less than 100 mph.

In braking, the 959 separates itself from the modern car in the same fashion it does everywhere else: Feel. The 959's got a rock-hard pedal that man-

ages to provide great feedback and easy modulation. The slightly bigger 996 brakes have better ABS and will undoubtedly stop the car quicker — with pedal feel that more drivers are accustomed to. And that's indicative of the results of the rest of our face-off.

The modern Turbo will probably show superior results on paper every time, but the 959 is so damn alluring anyway. At its introduction, Porsche racer Gunter Steckkönig told *Road & Track* he thought a fast lap for a 959 at Nürburgring Nordschleife's 14.2-mile circuit would be 8 minutes, 30 seconds. Porsche's current time for a 420-hp, Euro-spec 996 Turbo around the same track is 7:56. It's likely the X50 would shave a couple of seconds off that time. More humbling for the 959 is the realization that a 2003 Carrera coupe can turn in an 8:24.

Spend time driving a 959, however, and all that begins to fade away. It has something to do with what makes a sports car *feel* great, which is easier to define when you go back to the older cars. Names like Carrera RS 2.7 and Carrera Club Sport are unforgettable. Now, you can add 959S. The GT2 and GT3 go a long way toward recapturing the magic of these Porsches past. And, for their part, the current 911 and Boxster are superb sports cars, both faster *and* more usable than older Porsches. But the 959 Sport firmly makes its case as one of the Greats.

It all adds up to the first Porsche I've driven that I might rather have than a house — or two or three depending on location... Not that the newly established Mrs. Stout would agree. She might rightly ask how, in today's world, a \$425,000, 15+-year-old Porsche makes any sense at all. Especially when the fast, furious, and seriously rare 911 GT2 can be had with a full warranty for well under \$200,000. And the GT3, as she knows, is probably an even better drive for half the price of the GT2 — and less than a quarter of what Canepa wants for a U.S. 959.

Then there's the not-so-small matter of the similarly priced new Carrera GT, which finally wrests the title of most exotic production Porsche away from the 959. The fact that Canepa wants roughly \$35,000 less than the cost of a brand-new C-GT makes his 959 a tough sell — especially as only one of these Porsches has a warranty and can be serviced at your local dealer. Hint: It's not the one at Canepa's.

There is also the not-insignificant fact that 959 values in Europe are a lot less than what Canepa charges for an admittedly extensive upgrade-and-legalization process. That's because European Porschephiles long ago realized that the 993 and 996 Turbos provide all of the 959's performance without the need to turn the car back into Zuffenhausen for service and parts...that sometimes don't exist.

No, a \$425,000 959 doesn't make any sense at all. Until you drive it. Then, like most dream cars, you can't battle its pull with mere logic. Its cabin is the one long loved by the air-cooled faithful. The frenched rain gutters are all too sexy. A six-foot wide rump features what may be Porsche's best wing. An owner's manual-sized front trunk matters not because of technology bristling below.

We could go on, but we suspect you don't need to. He'll sell every one. ■