



PORSCHE 928

Ring out the old, ring in the new



WHAT IS A Porsche 928? It's driving farther and farther down your favorite twisty road for the sheer exhilaration of driving. It's braking for a corner you always brake for and then asking yourself afterward: Why did I slow down?

It's a V-8 engine with the sort of tach-twisting throttle response rarely experienced in these days of low emissions, low compression and low performance. It's using wide-open throttle for no other reason than to surround yourself with the mellow guttural roar of a fuel-injected, 4.5-liter, single-overhead cam V-8. It's the smooth surge of power that can result in blaring sirens and flashing red lights unless you watch the speedometer (and rearview mirror) closely.

It's a feeling of total command: an excellent driving position, comfortable individual seats with just the right body-gripping contours, an expansive view of the road up front and the world all around. It's the feeling that even if you were blindfolded you'd know exactly where each important control is located.

It's the precision of rack-and-pinion steering with speed-sensitive assist that's so unobtrusive you're never consciously aware that the steering is assisted. It's the awe and confidence-inspiring grip of 225/50VR-16 Pirelli P7 radials. It's a feeling of balance and security that urges you to drive faster and faster—and discovering each time when you're sure you've reached the limit that the car can be pushed even harder.

It's finding yourself in the middle of a fast decreasing-radius turn on an unfamiliar road with metal-bending rock walls on either side and hearing the tires take on that characteristic juddering squeal as they fight for grip at the limit of adhesion. And that heart pounding, adrenaline pumping, throat tightening, derriere puckering sensation you experience as the turn gets tighter and tighter and the tail starts to slide. And that feeling of complete euphoria as you snick the front wheels into mild opposite lock and exit in complete control, saying to yourself, I made it, and knowing deep inside that the car was probably 70 percent responsible for the save. And it's reflecting on the incident later and realizing that if you'd been in the same situation in virtually any other car, right now somebody would probably be peeling you and that car off those very unforgiving rock walls.

It's a Toyota Celica driver who goes seven miles out of his way to follow you into your driveway and who admits he'd have driven 70 miles to get a better look at your car. It's being followed by vans, gawked at by Volvo drivers, eyed by 18-wheelers and pursued by Porsche 924s and 911s that make U-turns and run red lights to get another glimpse of this newest Porsche.

What else is a Porsche 928? It's hard cold facts and a scrutiny of details and a battery of acceleration, braking, noise and handling tests. Does the 928 disappoint in these areas? Judge for yourself.



The styling is . . . well . . . the words that first come to mind are different, rounded, controversial, love it/hate it (choose one). Porsche's Chief Stylist, Tony Lapine, is an American, so we'd be the last to cry "foul" if you likened the shape to such American image cars as the Chevrolet Corvette and the Pontiac Firebird Trans-Am. Nor would you be wrong if you placed your money on the Datsun 280Z and the Ferrari Daytona.

Two of the most controversial design elements are the flat exposed headlights and the short stubby, rear end. Despite what you may think, the headlight treatment is no fluke. Porsche says they're uncovered because most owners of cars with concealed headlights forget to keep them clean. That's a logical answer when you consider that most German designs are logical and practical to the nth degree. But how do you explain the 924's headlights and the headlight washers Porsche has fitted to the 928 to cover that contingency? Unless, of course, Porsche believes the typical owner will forget he has this convenience at his fingertips. Porsche also says the uncovered lamps accent that expansive hood. Probably true and also probably to keep the 928 from being mistaken for a 924.

One staffer described the rear end this way: "If it was the year 2001 I could almost believe the rear was the front with some new type headlight treatment and a single wiper for the windshield." Another said he had the sensation of being stared at when viewing the car from about 10 ft away at a rear three-quarter angle. The shape of the rear is, to be sure, aggressive and thus quite in keeping with the behavior of the typical Porsche driver.

Taken as a whole, the 928 is, as Tony Lapine says, "A car that should grow on the public and become more appealing with age."

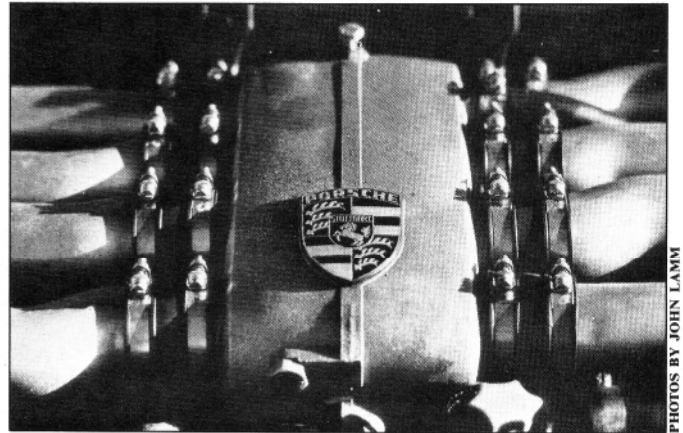
The 928 is the most comfortable Porsche ever built. The driving position and seating comfort rate with the world's finest and the controls, with only a few minor exceptions, are properly placed and close at hand. For instance, the shorter drivers on our staff thought the gearshift lever was positioned a little too far rearward. But there was unanimous praise for the ingenious steering-column height adjustment. The instrument pod containing the central round speedometer and tachometer plus smaller round dials for auxiliary gauges and critical warning lights moves with the column. So there's no way for these gauges to be blocked from view when the wheel is moved up or down. Neat.

Other minor controls are grouped on either side of the steering wheel as either round push buttons or rotary switches. And, surprise, the driver-actuated hydraulic control for aiming the

headlights to compensate for changes in car loading and ride height made it past the feds.

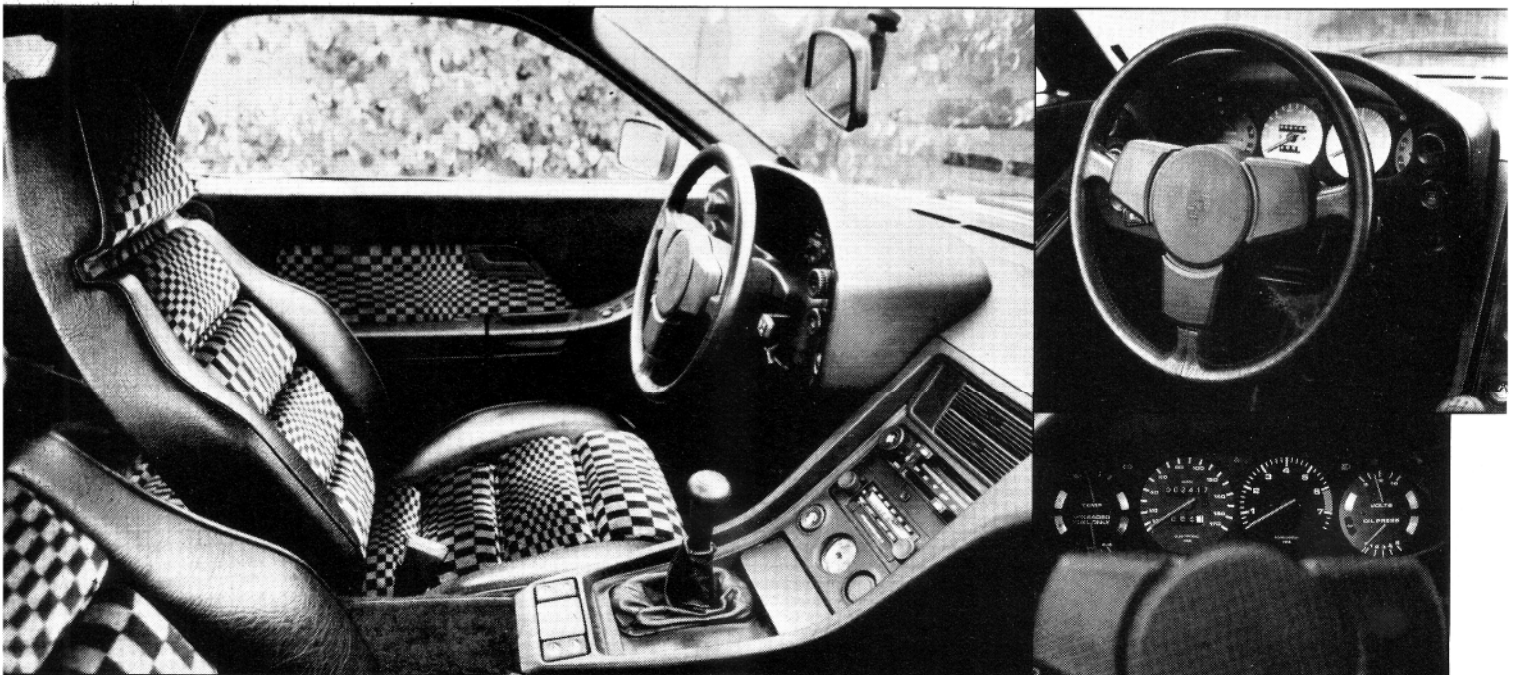
The primary gauges are supplemented by a central warning system that monitors the most important operating functions of the car. A warning light located in the center of the instrument cluster comes on automatically to report a defect in the car. At the same time, another indicator light tells the driver whether a critical component (oil pressure, oil level, brake fluid level, brake failure, coolant temperature, coolant level) or an important component (brake pad wear, fuel level, windshield washer fluid level, stop lights, taillights, parking lights) has failed. For non-critical failures, a reset button on the indicator board allows the driver to turn off the central warning light after a defect has been reported.

Column controls are used for major functions, the left stalk for directionals and high/low beams and the two on the right side for windshield wipers/washers and the standard cruise control. Surprised that the 928 has cruise control? Don't be. The 911SC



PHOTOS BY JOHN LAMM

offers it as an option and we have to agree when Porsche explains, "Nowadays comfort is just as important as sportiness." That statement also explains standard features such as air conditioning, an electrically adjustable and heated outside mirror (the one on the right side of our test car is a \$90 option), a central door locking system, electric window lifts and an impressive Blaupunkt AM/FM/cassette sound system with electric retract-





ing antenna and separate controls for left/right and front/rear speaker balance.

The comprehensive heater/vent/air conditioning system is the best of any Porsche but in the vent mode it has one flaw. The two central adjustable dash-level vents duct air only on the air conditioning setting and most drivers complained that the adjustable vents integrated into the door panel armrests couldn't be angled far enough to blow sufficient air low on the body. The heater, like the 911's, will practically fry eggs and burn toast. And how Porsche manages to make the heater smell the same as it does in its air-cooled cars is a perplexing question.

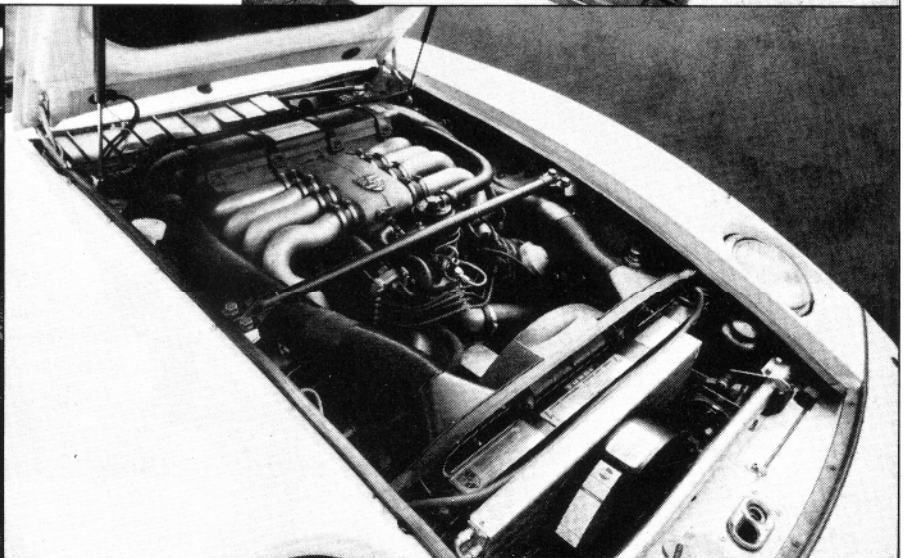
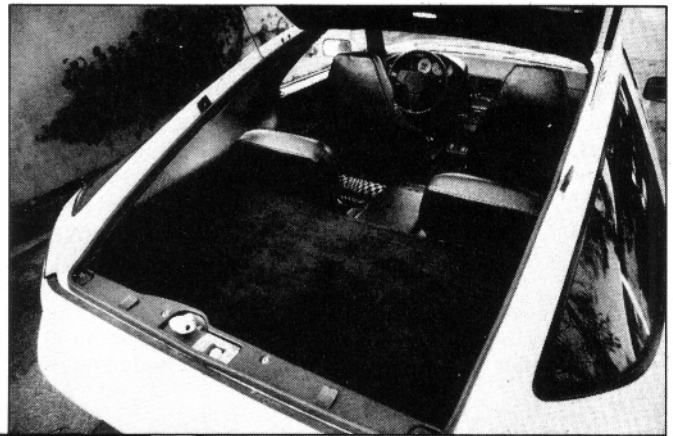
If you remember that the 928 is a 2+2, you won't be disappointed with the rear seating. It's occasional at best with barely adequate head room for a person 5 ft 8 in. tall. And that same 5 ft 8 incher has to sit in those deeply contoured seats with his knees splayed on either side of the front seat when the driver's seat is comfortably adjusted for a person of the same height. But to help compensate for lack of space, Porsche provides rear seats with appreciated amenities including grab handles, an ashtray and lighter, a shallow, locking central console, a map light and sun visors that rotate 180 degrees to shade the leading edge of the rear window. The visors can also be positioned as blinds in front of the eyes of squeamish passengers. When these seats

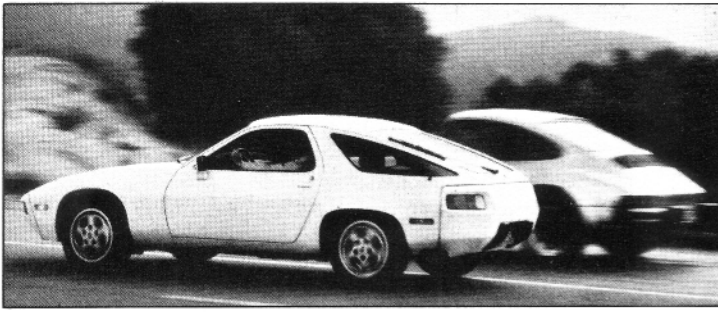
aren't occupied, the backs can be folded flat to increase the luggage capacity from 6.3 to 20.5 cu ft.

Full credit must go to Porsche for designing as much room as they did into the rear compartment. Like the 911, the 928 is an impressively roomy car for its compact size. High marks also for the lightweight aluminum doors which are easy to open and close despite their length.

Rumors circulated during the 928's gestation period that this newest Porsche's sohc 4.5-liter V-8 was a Mercedes-Benz powerplant proved totally false. (For technical details see June 1977 R&T.) In U.S. smog trim, this compact, watercooled, aluminum 8-cylinder produces 219 bhp at 5250 rpm and generates 254 lb-ft of torque at 3600. It's equipped with Bosch K-Jetronic injection that's fed with fuel from two surprisingly noisy pumps. Distribution of the fuel/air mixture is via a cast-aluminum spider-like manifold mounted between the cylinder banks. Call it heresy if you wish, but the engine sounds and feels like a smoother and quieter small-block Chevrolet; and with throttle response that belies its 8.5:1 compression ratio. Around 3500 rpm the engine takes on a mild rough growling note that continues to about 5000. Then the sound smooths out again and the V-8 revs without strain to its 6000-rpm redline. Cold starting and warmup in our rather mild coastal California climate were exemplary.

Porsches are expected to go fast. And the 3410-lb (curb weight) 928 is quick, reaching 60 mph in 7.0 sec, covering the quarter mile in 15.6 sec at 93.0 mph and topping out at six score and 18 mph. But what's even more impressive, particularly to someone used to the somewhat peaky response of the 911's 6-cylinder, is the V-8's flexibility. Let the revs fall to 1000 rpm in 5th gear, step on the throttle and the 928 picks up speed, admittedly slowly, without the slightest protest. There's just no substitute for cubic inches and the low-speed torque of a V-8 engine . . . unless it's an engine with even more cylinders. →



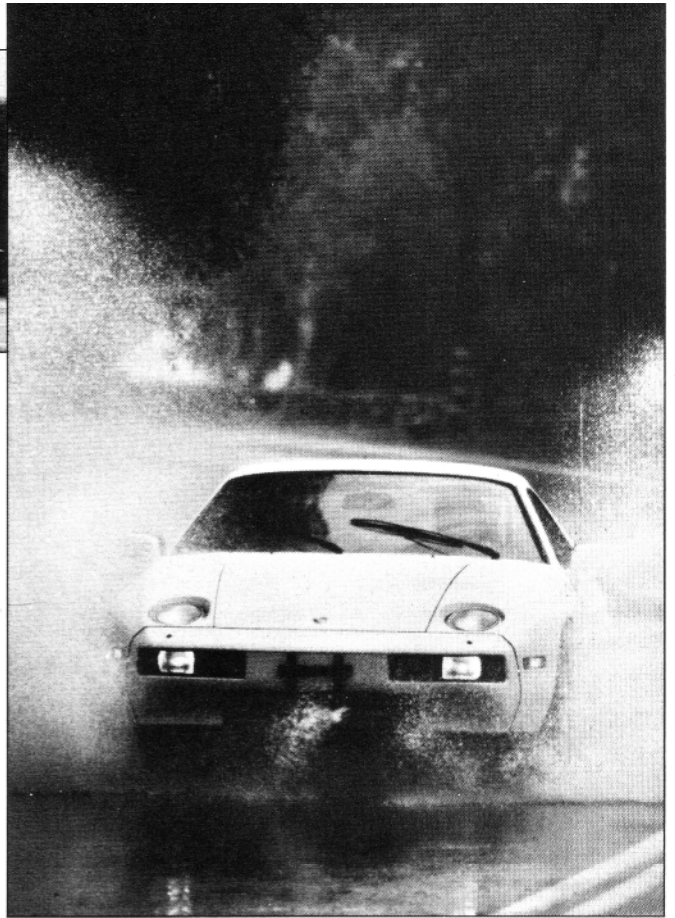


Of course, the typical 928 driver won't be caught dead lugging his engine in this fashion. He'll be taking full advantage of the five speeds at his disposal. The shift pattern, with reverse ahead of 1st gear, is not our favorite. We prefer having reverse out of the way, over to the right below 5th. The 928's gearbox represents a reversal of current Porsche practice (the first 911 5-speeds also had reverse in line with 1st) and most of our staffers said they'd prefer a positive reverse lockout, not just spring tension to prevent catching reverse by mistake. Despite the long distance between the shifter mechanism and the rear gearbox, the shift linkage is precise and accurate but not as crisp feeling as the best front engine/front gearbox designs. As usual, the Porsche synchronizer action is excellent, except for a little balkiness when the gearbox is cold. Those drivers who desire the convenience of clutchless shifting can order a 3-speed automatic transmission in place of the 5-speed manual with no increase in price.


For most driving conditions the combination of vented discs and fat Pirelli P7s yielded impressive braking. The one sour note was the moderate rear locking and slewing encountered during our 80-0 mph panic stops. Considerable pedal modulation was required, but even so, these stops averaged a short 248 ft.

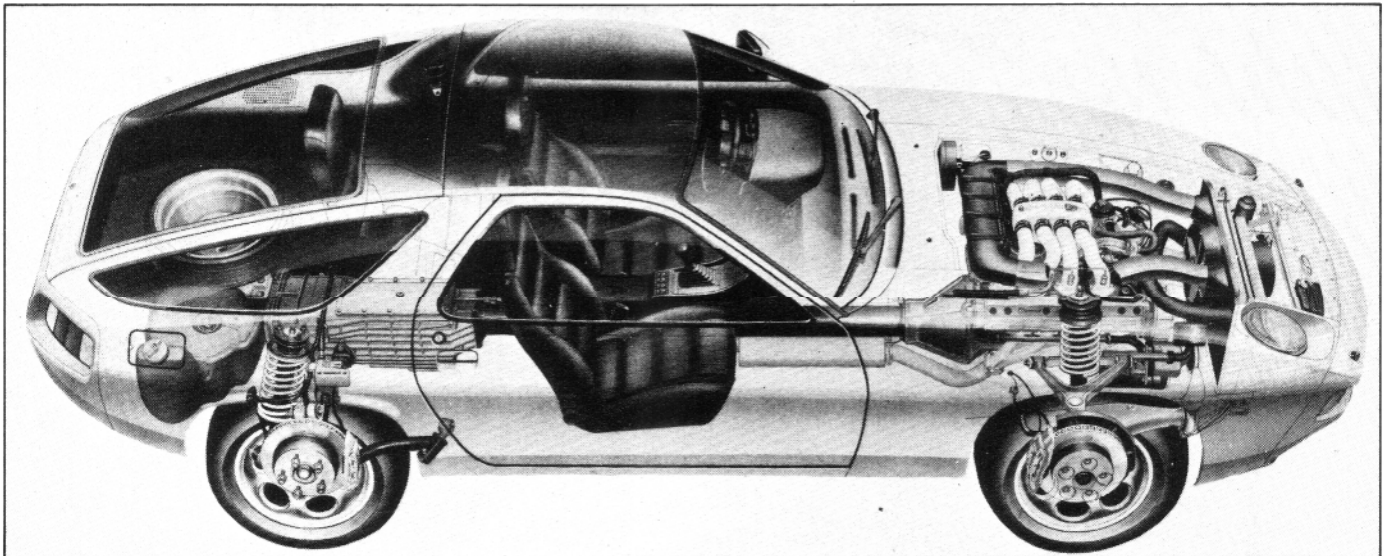
No previous Porsche has had the finely balanced handling characteristics exhibited by the 928, the near 50/50 weight distribution resulting in race car-like neutral response. Yes, it will oversteer if the driver so commands, but anyone who gets into trouble driving this car should be stripped of his driver's license, issued a pair of Adidas and banished to a class for remedial joggers.

We wouldn't be surprised if you took one look at those low-section P7s pumped up to 36 psi and said the 928 must ride like a truck. And you'd be wrong. True, those tires are harsh over sharp inputs such as lane-divider dots and tar strips and they're also noisy on all but the smoothest asphalt surfaces, but otherwise the ride is wonderfully supple and well controlled. The softness of the suspension on our California freeways had some drivers expecting a floaty, wallowy ride on fast, twisty undulating roads.



Nothing could be farther from reality. The 928's suspension soaks up dips, bumps and every other pavement irregularity in stride with never an unwanted change in direction. Most impressive. And it bears repeating: The steering is superb, with road feel feedback and precise control few other systems, assisted or not, can match.

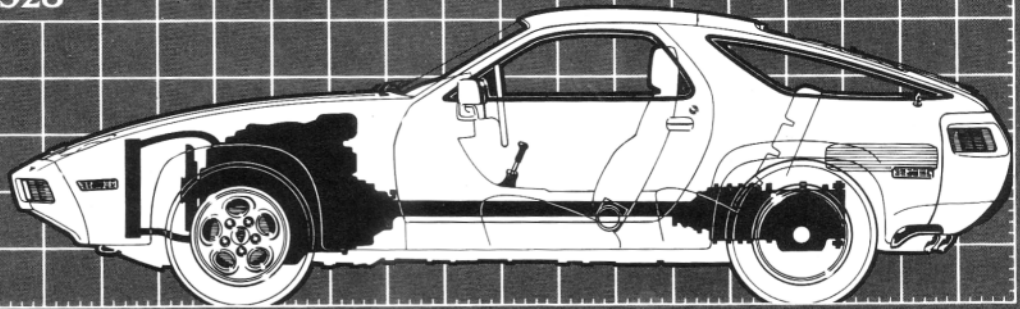
If you've gotten the impression we love the 928, you're right. Its combination of comfort, sportiness and civility (it's the quietest Porsche we've ever tested) rank it with the world's great GTs. In describing the 911, R&T has said, "There's no other sports car like it. And if you want one, you pay the price or do without." The same can be said of the 928. At \$26,000 it can hardly be considered a bargain, but clever engineering doesn't come cheaply and few automotive design teams are more clever than the one residing in Zuffenhausen, West Germany. 





ROAD TEST

PORSCHE 928



SCALE: 10" DIVISIONS

PRICE

List price, all POE\$26,000
 Price as tested, west coast...\$26,400
 Price as tested includes: standard equipment (air cond, AM/FM stereo/cassette, forged alloy wheels & Pirelli P7s), elect. adj right side mirror (\$90), dealer prep (est \$200), Calif. emissions (\$110)

IMPORTER

Porsche-Audi Div, VW of America
 818 Sylvan Ave
 Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 07632

GENERAL

Curb weight, lb 3410
 Test weight 3510
 Weight distribution (with driver), front/rear, % 51/49
 Wheelbase, in. 98.3
 Track, front/rear 60.8/59.6
 Length 175.7
 Width 72.3
 Height 51.6
 Ground clearance 4.7
 Overhang, front/rear 39.7/37.7
 Usable trunk space, cu ft...6.3+14.2
 Fuel capacity, U.S. gal. 22.4

ENGINE

Type sohc V-8
 Bore x stroke, mm 95.0 x 78.9
 Equivalent in. 3.74 x 3.11
 Displacement, cc/cu in. 4474/273
 Compression ratio 8.5:1
 Bhp @ rpm, net 219 @ 5250
 Equivalent mph 145
 Torque @ rpm, lb-ft .. 254 @ 3600
 Equivalent mph 99
 Fuel injection Bosch K-Jetronic
 Fuel requirement ..unleaded, 91-oct
 Exhaust-emission control equipment: catalytic converter, exhaust-gas recirculation, air injection

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission 5-sp manual
 Gear ratios: 5th (1.00) 2.75:1
 4th (1.34) 3.69:1
 3rd (1.75) 4.81:1
 2nd (2.47) 6.79:1
 1st (3.60) 9.90:1
 Final drive ratio 2.75:1

ACCOMMODATION

Seating capacity, persons ... 2 + 2
 Seat width, f/r, in. 2 x 20.0/2 x 15.0
 Head room, f/r 36.5/32.0
 Seat back adjustment, deg 70

CHASSIS & BODY

Layout front engine/rear drive
 Body/frame: unit steel with aluminum doors, hood, front fenders
 Brake system: vented discs; 11.1-in. front, 11.4 in.- rear, vacuum assisted
 Swept area, sq in. 440
 Wheels forged alloy, 16 x 7J
 Tires Pirelli P7, 225/50VR-16
 Steering type: rack & pinion, power assisted
 Overall ratio 17.8:1
 Turns, lock-to-lock 3.1
 Turning circle, ft 31.5
 Front suspension: upper A-arms, lower trailing arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar
 Rear suspension: upper transverse links, lower trailing arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar

CALCULATED DATA

Lb/bhp (test weight) 16.2
 Mph/1000 rpm (5th gear) 27.3
 Engine revs/mi (60 mph) 2200
 Piston travel, ft/mi 1140
 R&T steering index 0.98
 Brake swept area, sq in./ton .. 251

INSTRUMENTATION

Instruments: 170-mph speedo, 7000-rpm tach, 999,999 odometer, 999.9 trip odo, oil press., coolant temp, voltmeter, fuel level, clock
 Warning lights: central warning system (see text), hand brake, ignition, hazard, seatbelts, high beam, directionals

MAINTENANCE

Service intervals, mi:
 Oil change 7500
 Filter change 15,000
 Tuneup 15,000
 Warranty, mo/mi 12/20,000

RELIABILITY

From R&T Owner Surveys the average number of problem areas for all models surveyed is 12. An average of 7 of these problem areas is considered serious enough to constitute reliability areas that could keep the car off the road. As owners of earlier-model Porsches reported 11 problem areas and 4 reliability areas we expect the overall reliability of the 928 to be better than average.

ROAD TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

Time to distance, sec:
 0-100 ft 3.3
 0-500 ft 8.7
 0-1320 ft (¼ mi) 15.6
 Speed at end of ¼ mi, mph 93.0
 Time to speed, sec:
 0-30 mph 2.5
 0-40 mph 3.7
 0-60 mph 7.0
 0-80 mph 11.5
 0-100 mph 18.5
 0-110 mph 25.8

SPEEDS IN GEARS

5th gear (5000 rpm) 138
 4th (6000) 121
 3rd (6000) 91
 2nd (6000) 67
 1st (6000) 47

FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving, mpg 16.0
 Cruising range, mi (1-gal. res) ... 342

HANDLING

Speed on 100-ft radius, mph ... 34.8
 Lateral acceleration, g 0.811
 Speed thru 700-ft slalom, mph ... 59.7

BRAKES

Minimum stopping distances, ft:
 From 60 mph 138
 From 80 mph 248
 Control in panic stop good
 Pedal effort for 0.5g stop, lb 18
 Fade: percent increase in pedal effort to maintain 0.5g deceleration in 6 stops from 60 mph nil
 Parking: hold 30% grade? yes
 Overall brake rating very good

INTERIOR NOISE

All noise readings in dBA:
 Idle in neutral 66
 Maximum, 1st gear 83
 Constant 30 mph 68
 50 mph 71
 70 mph 73
 90 mph 78

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph indicated is actually ... 29.5
 50 mph 50.5
 60 mph 60.0
 70 mph 70.0
 80 mph 82.0
 Odometer, 10.0 mi 9.9

ACCELERATION

