

The Alternative Line

by Joe Holzer for CNY-PCA Redline Report Copyright 2012 <http://www.holzerent.com>

Same Old. Same. Old?

First and foremost; this is a tribute to Skip Testut. Having personally held the reins (reigns? ;-)) of Editor for the Redline, I know how much WORK went into preparing each and every issue over the YEARS that he provided those services to we CNY Porsche Faithful. At NO time during his tenure did HE personally own a Porsche. His reasons may or may not conflict with each of you dear readers' beliefs; ALL automotive choices involve tradeoffs, and many of those have less to do with automobiles than ancillary facts surrounding automobiles. For example, if your family unit consists of more than two people, a Boxster or Carrera GT is definitely not even POSSIBLE for you, unless you ship one of the kids via FedEx or something. And beyond four (at least legally ;-)), NO Porsche is possible even as the Audi Q7, built on EXACTLY the same design as the Cayenne, is designed to seat seven, like a Dodge Caravan or Chevy Suburban. So why not a stretched Cayenne? Or a Panamera wagon, also called an Estate or Avant "on the continent"?

I am all too aware that there were some grumblings about non-Porsche stuff in this newsletter. And I suspect that may have been at least contributory to Skip's departure. One need not be Sherlock Holmes to figure something was amiss given the sudden announcement without another editor waiting in the wings. That Chris Whaley and Wayne Kunkle have paired to keep the newsletter going even reinforces that suspicion. You need only read back to some of MY comments to see that Exclusive-Or interpretations of what OUR newsletter should include are at best inappropriate, and at worst deprive us of some of the wisdom which leads to our appreciation of what we DO have in Porsches. I can only hope that the rest of you dear readers will similarly feel we lost a valuable contributor, and all the more demonstrative of his commitment to US by his efforts in a thankless job, not least of which was chasing ME down to get articles like this. When you see him, I hope you will thank him personally and wish him well. Or at least offer your condolences on having to put up with me ;-)

Many of you who have read my birdcage liners in the past know that I am a fan of a show on BBC called "Top Gear". I feel it is the funniest thing on TV anywhere, with the added benefit that it is a serious CAR LOVER program. What you might not know is that a) it has been "duplicated" with the original's consent at a few venues around the world, and b) that there are other car shows out there. In the inimitable words of the T-shirt which proclaims "Sure Porsche Built Cars After 1965", my response is like that which followed; "Who The Hell Cares?" For those who cannot decipher that, we are talking purists for swing axles and four cylinder air cooled inverted bathtubs, aka 356. But on the TV front, I have recently seen some examples of the "take-offs" for Top Gear, as well as another Brit favorite for "petrolheads"; Fifth Gear, whose name has certainly been obsoleted by the 991 Seven Speed manual. Thankfully you can find them all at a name which won't be obsoleted anytime soon; "finalgear.com" which has torrents of the full episodes of most of those other shows sorted like a library.

My purpose here is to flesh out some of those programs for those who have not partaken so far. And I promise to tie that back to Porsche somehow before the end of this cat litter liner for those who insist that non-Porsche stuff is inappropriate here. My one comment to that is to observe that such purity never seemed to provide decent copy for use therein, so put up or shut up. Anyway...

Fifth Gear is more focused on the cars themselves, while Top Gear (the original) focuses on the antics of three personalities and their relations with cars, along with some funny and sometimes outrageously politically incorrect statements there from. Hey, if like me you are enamored of anachronistic automobiles with air cooled engines hung out past the rear axle which SHOULDN'T be drivable, yet are the benchmark by which EVERY OTHER CAR is measured, then making jokes which offend should not be too abnormal. TG (Top Gear) US is simply a poor copy (IMHO) of the original with emphasis on NASCAR-like qualities over mountain road and terrain driving qualities, which are those espoused by the two British shows. Neither is "right" nor "wrong" – they each emphasize a certain perspective which they believe their target audience will support. The TG Australia tried to bridge the two, but that looks to have become a commercial failure, which might suggest something to those of you with a little more introspective blood.

Mostly missing from those other shows, though, seems to me to be the outrageous personalities, and their willingness to BE outrageous, as in the original TG. Making a “sponsor” label for the side of a racecar, which when the door is opened to delete a few letters becomes a rude obscenity, is a classic example of what I mean. Another is a presentation by its “prime” individual, Jeremy Clarkson, in an unrelated program; his “Top 100 Cars”. Some examples there are his declaring the VW Beetle as number 100, only because his “mum” owned five which suggested that he should never have liked cars, with number 98 being the Porsche 911, which he promptly crashes into a shed and drops onto a camper caravan to show his distaste for both. Then, he shows why he ranked a Honda S2000 and Mazda Miata above a BMW coupe which pre-dated the Z3 and had doors which dropped into the sills, by showing which was most likely to show off a young girl’s underpants. The BMW lost. The good news for Porsche fans is the fact that, having declared earlier that the Ferrari 355 was the “best car ever”, it has been supplanted even by him, an espoused Porsche hater, by the best car you can buy today – the 997 Turbo.

I guess in summary I would point out that most of what you and I read from anyone is at best a spin – their perspective from their viewpoint, rarely acknowledged as such, but usually projected as absolute truth. Just think about the mud slinging of the past two years in the US political arena, and what percentage of ANY of it which YOU believe is reflective of FACT in ANY WAY.

So, if you can START with an understanding that Jeremy is a prig with a heavy bias against Porsche and almost blind to the unreliability of Brit cars like Jaguar, the E-Type being the only car he rated higher than the 997 Turbo, then you can laugh at HIS spins, both figuratively and literally. And the addition of a guy who never says ANYTHING, and whose face is never shown, “The Stig”, a creative masterpiece for broadcasting genius, is simply icing on an already superb cake.

Whether you like what I write, or use it only to start your fireplace, you should consider YOUR benefit in having people who have passion about something who are not trying to legislatively force you to do what THEY want. You who have read me for awhile know I never could rationalize the rule demanding we ALL buy explosive dashboards because many people were too stupid to put on the five dollar seatbelts which had been mandated twenty years earlier. Similarly my feeling about wasting MY time by demanding that I adhere to an arbitrary speed enforcement at 15% below the engineered speed we all paid for, ostensibly in the name of “safety”, even as the SAFEST road in the world had NO SPEED LIMIT, and the fact of its existence was motivation for its auto industry to produce vehicles recognized the world over as the pinnacle of their respective markets.

So I will volunteer that it is enjoyable to watch the variety of shows, and the way each approaches the same cars, giving me a different slant on each. When viewed collectively, they are VERY informative, especially to those willing to consider the alternative viewpoints. And as an absolute “gearhead”, like most of the authors you will ever see in this newsletter, as well as a Porsche fan, I can even say I learned a lot reading about the prior lives of our friends when they owned accursed rides like the Ramblers we so recently learned about. THEY are what made me appreciate what a masterpiece the 991 will be. There is NO WAY that I will ever own one unless I hit lucky on a lottery or something. But it is still aspirational for me. And OUR enthusiasm is what sells such cars to people whose wallets DO have the ability to write such checks, and whose owners really do recognize the value THEY derive from reading what we with lesser wealth, perhaps, but far more automotive wisdom can provide them. WE need to support those alternative views and let them have credence if we expect to have our opinions about Porsches not seem like the support given the oppressive dictator in a totalitarian regime. TRUTH will never threaten a company like Porsche; it is what made them great in the first place.

But that’s my opinion and I could be wrong.

