

# Safe

**M**aybe I'm having a mid-life crisis or something, but in this report I must confess to a simple modification to my 964 Carrera 4 that does nothing more than make the car noisier.

It was all the fault of fellow 964 owner John Miles (who provided the owner's view for our buyers' guide in the March 2002 issue). Basically, he had drilled holes in his car's airbox in order to create more induction noise. And a quick blast in his car convinced me that this is a good thing to do. At steady revs you can't hear any difference, but floor the throttle and you get a satisfying induction roar akin to that created by a row of twin-choke Weber carburetors.

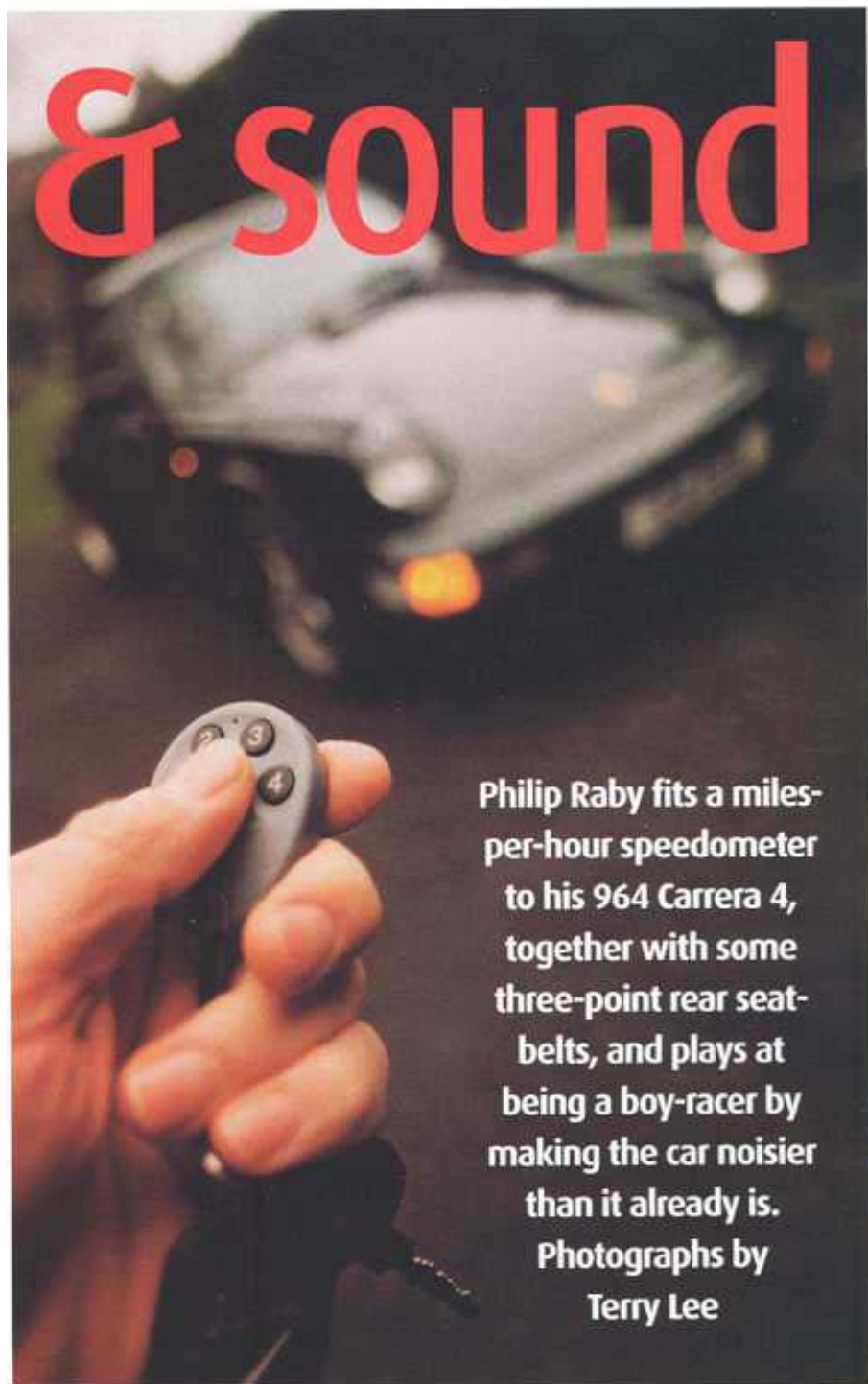
The airbox cover clips off in a matter of seconds, and I then set to work with an electric drill and a 40mm hole-cutter. The idea is to remove as much of the outer face of the cover as possible without unduly affecting its rigidity (which is required to hold the air filter in place). On John's recommendation I also drilled a couple of small holes in the lower edge of the cover to let any water drain out. Finally, I sanded off the rough edges created by the cutter, not wanting loose bits of plastic being sucked into the engine.

Ten minutes later the cover was back on and I was ready for a test-drive. My 911 already sounded pretty good, thanks to its stainless-steel sports exhaust system, but now it sounds even better at high revs, yet at the same time remains civilised for long-distance cruising.

When I brought the 911 over from Germany last year (see 'C' story, March 2002 issue, pages 80–85) it was, of course, equipped with a speedometer calibrated in kilometres. This was all very well, but my mental arithmetic isn't what it should be, and I soon tired of multiplying the read-out by 0.62 (OK then, I knocked a third off) to check if I was within the speed limit.

A quick ring around Porsche dismantlers confirmed that 964 speedometers are like gold dust; the first company I spoke to wanted £150 plus VAT. I continued my quest and spoke to a helpful lady at PH Sportscars (01332 799298). She asked me the mileage of my car, and I told her about 74,000. She put me on hold and came back to say they had a suitable speedo with 74,500 miles on the clock, for £110. Perfect!

The new speedometer arrived a couple of days later, and took only minutes to fit. The 911's rather antiquated instruments offer a big advantage over the more modern dials in, say, a 944 or Boxster, in that each one simply pulls out of its aperture in the dashboard. I used a large,



**Philip Raby fits a miles-per-hour speedometer to his 964 Carrera 4, together with some three-point rear seat-belts, and plays at being a boy-racer by making the car noisier than it already is. Photographs by Terry Lee**

*Cobra remote control (above) requires user to enter a four-figure PIN before the doors can be unlocked and the alarm and immobiliser disarmed. This ensures that a thief can't make off with the car simply by obtaining the key and remote control. It's such a simple idea you wonder why no-one has thought of it before*

flat-bladed screwdriver (with cloth behind it to protect the dash surface) to ease the speedo out so that I could then pull it free by hand.

There's a single multi-pin plug on the back of the unit that pulled straight off, ready to be plugged into the new speedometer, which then just pushed into its hole without fuss. Finally, I took a photograph of the two units side by side as a visual record of the mileages.

Because my 964 is an early (ie 1989) model it was originally fitted with two-point, lap-type seat-belts in the back. I wasn't happy with these, and

was keen to fit the later and more secure three-point inertia-reel belts instead.

This would mean obtaining a later-type rear parcel shelf with apertures for the retractable belts. I also needed the belts themselves. Again PH Sportscars came up with the goods: a shelf and two complete seat-belt assemblies for £100, which seemed very reasonable, especially compared with the speedometer. I guess it's all just a question of supply and demand.

The parcel shelf (which is rather a misnomer, because you wouldn't want to put anything on it)



*New speedometer simply pushes into the dash aperture and is very simple to fit, particularly when compared to doing the same job in, say, a 944 or Boxster*



*The airbox clips off and lifts out easily (top). Drilling large holes in the outer surface (above) increases induction roar and takes a matter of minutes (see text)*



*Loudspeaker covers prise off to reveal mounting screws. Speakers were then transferred to the new parcel shelf*



popped down to my local car-accessory shop.

I explained to the assistant what I was after, and he looked at the sample bolt and then at me. 'Is this for a seat-belt?' he asked in an ominous tone. 'Indeed so,' I replied formally, concerned that some obscure EU regulation forbade the sale of such items. 'Come this way, then,' he said, leading me to the back of the shop. There he reached up to a shelf and solemnly pulled down a box. He opened it reverently, and there was a hiss of air and the faint sound of angels singing (Exaggerate? Me? Never!). 'These are special bolts that have to pass safety tests,' the man whispered, as a faint glow from the box lit up his face. In fact, not only did he have regulation bolts, but also suitably certified locking washers.

Suitable-length bolts were gingerly picked out, together with washers, and the box returned to its place. The cost of all this drama was high, though, since each 30mm bolt was priced at £1.50, plus 10p per star washer. The shop assistant ceremoniously wrapped up my purchases, passed them over to me and bade me farewell with a contented smile on his face (which was either because he'd made a customer happy, or a handsome profit on the sale).

Before the inertia-reel units could be fitted, I had to carefully cut away the soundproofing so that they could sit firmly against the metal bodywork. Once this was done each unit bolted into



*The parcel shelf is retained by four screws (above). Once these are removed – and the speaker wires disconnected – the panel can be lifted out quite easily*

*Raby bought a replacement parcel shelf (left; note apertures for the seat-belts), together with a pair of three-point belts*



*Rubber soundproofing had to be cut away to allow the inertia-reel units to be fitted – threaded mounting holes were underneath*



*Brand-new, approved seat-belt mounting bolts and washers were used (see text)*

place, and I could then fit the new parcel shelf, after threading the seat-belts through their apertures. Then all that was left to do was attach the lower ends of the seat-belts, using the same mounting points as the old lap belts. The seat-belt clasps on the transmission tunnel didn't need to be changed because they're the same for both two- and three-point belts.

Although I'd originally insured the 911 on a limited-mileage classic-car policy, I was very aware that I'd struggle to keep to the 6000-mile annual limit. So I changed to an unlimited-mileage policy from RH Specialist Car Division, a small company that specialises in classic and high-performance cars, and which I found gives a refreshingly friendly and personal service. This cost me £653 with a £150 excess, which is around £200 more than my previous classic policy. Interestingly, the same company offered me a limited-mileage policy for just £323. RH Specialist Car Division is on 01277 206911.

One requirement that most insurers insist on is a Thatcham-approved alarm and immobiliser.

The car still had its original alarm with its neat flashing LEDs on the door-lock buttons, but something more sophisticated was required.

I opted for a Cobra aXess 7518 system which attracted me because of its unique PIN code system. Most alarm systems are useless if a would-be thief gets hold of your keys; he could then simply disable the alarm using the remote control. The Cobra system gets around this by requiring a secret (and customisable) four-digit number to be entered into the key fob before the system can be disarmed. Furthermore, the electronic code that's actually transmitted changes each time you use the remote, foiling scanners.

The alarm is set off when a door, the bonnet or the engine cover is opened, and includes ultrasonic sensors which pick up any movement inside the car. The immobiliser (which cuts in automatically if the car is left unlocked for more than 60 seconds) disables the fuel and ignition systems, thus rendering the engine unstartable. The original Porsche alarm remains operative, so I still have the flashing-LED door locks, plus



*Three-point belts bolted firmly into place to complete the job (above and below)*



an additional LED on the centre console.

Yes, it's a little inconvenient to have to enter the PIN each time I want to unlock the car, but this is balanced by the fact that I now have remote central-locking and, of course, there's the peace of mind of having the extra security.

By an unfortunate coincidence, soon after having the system fitted I was out with a friend in his Jeep Grand Cherokee and telling him about my new alarm. A week later, said friend e-mailed me to say that two youths had stolen his keys and made off with the Jeep. A coded remote control would have avoided this loss. Not long after that, I mentioned the system to another friend, and that night thieves broke into his house while he and his family slept, and made off with both his Audi TT and VW Passat. I've now vowed to keep my mouth shut!

The Cobra aXess 7518 costs £299 including fitting and VAT. For more information, and to find your nearest stockist, call the UK distributor, Vestatec, on 01932 772400; fax: 0115 912 6767; e-mail: info@vestatec.co.uk, or go to [www.vestatec.co.uk](http://www.vestatec.co.uk).



*New belts are safer for small children, for whom the rear seats are an ideal size*

These small tasks aside, the 964 has been trouble-free, and I've simply been enjoying it. It's a very different car to my previous 911SC. The overall impression is of a more modern and civilised vehicle, but at the expense of the immediacy of the SC; it feels somehow less involving. There's undoubtedly more power, but you feel a little removed from it, and the handling, steering and response don't quite have the directness of the older car. That said, I certainly prefer the 964, and have plans to tweak both the power and the handling. More on this later.

Other plans include fitting an up-to-date stereo with RDS and a CD player (the car still has the original system), sorting out a couple of minor blemishes on the bodywork, refinishing the light-alloy wheels, and fitting a pair of teardrop door mirrors. If anyone has any of the latter going spare, then please let me know! ■