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Power Rangers

An unlikely subject for the tuning houses maybe, but beneath the body kit Speedart has a tweak every Panamera Diesel owner will crave.

Story: Stuart Gallagher Photography: David Smith



Like it or not the Panamera is here to stay and Porsche can't build enough of its four-door saloon. Europe, one of Porsche's largest markets, may not be the strongest sales region for the Nike wearing executive, but the markets in the Middle and Far East can't get enough of them, and North America is equally enthusiastic for the four-seater Porsche. It also means it's ripe for a trip to one of the Porsche specialists for fettling, as these two examples from Speedart demonstrate perfectly.

First things first, the Panamera has come in for much criticism for the way it looks. It starts with a promising GT-esque face, low and sleek, and a bonnet line that suggests a rude cylinder count with many Stuttgart thoroughbreds stabled within. Up to the B-pillar the low roofline hints at a coupé profile and svelte looks. Then it all goes a bit questionable. Plump, blobby and plain ugly are some of the politer descriptions. This scribe tends to agree about the rear styling, but overall likes the way the Panamera looks. Each to his, or her, own.

What this means is that the stylists working for the tuners are working through their graphite pencils at quite a pace in order to come up with a styling package that works for the whole car. That sleek nose isn't a problem, with Speedart's PS9-Aerokit providing a front chin spoiler to accentuate the big Porsche's rear view mirror-filling frontal area. It sucks the front of the car closer to the Tarmac and, with a contrasting colour marking the break between the front bumper and additional spoiler, the frontal area retains some definition. The same aero kit also



includes a pair of side skirts that add a much needed contour to the Panamera's marathon side profile much like the side sills of the factory GTS and Turbo S do. And then we get to the back.

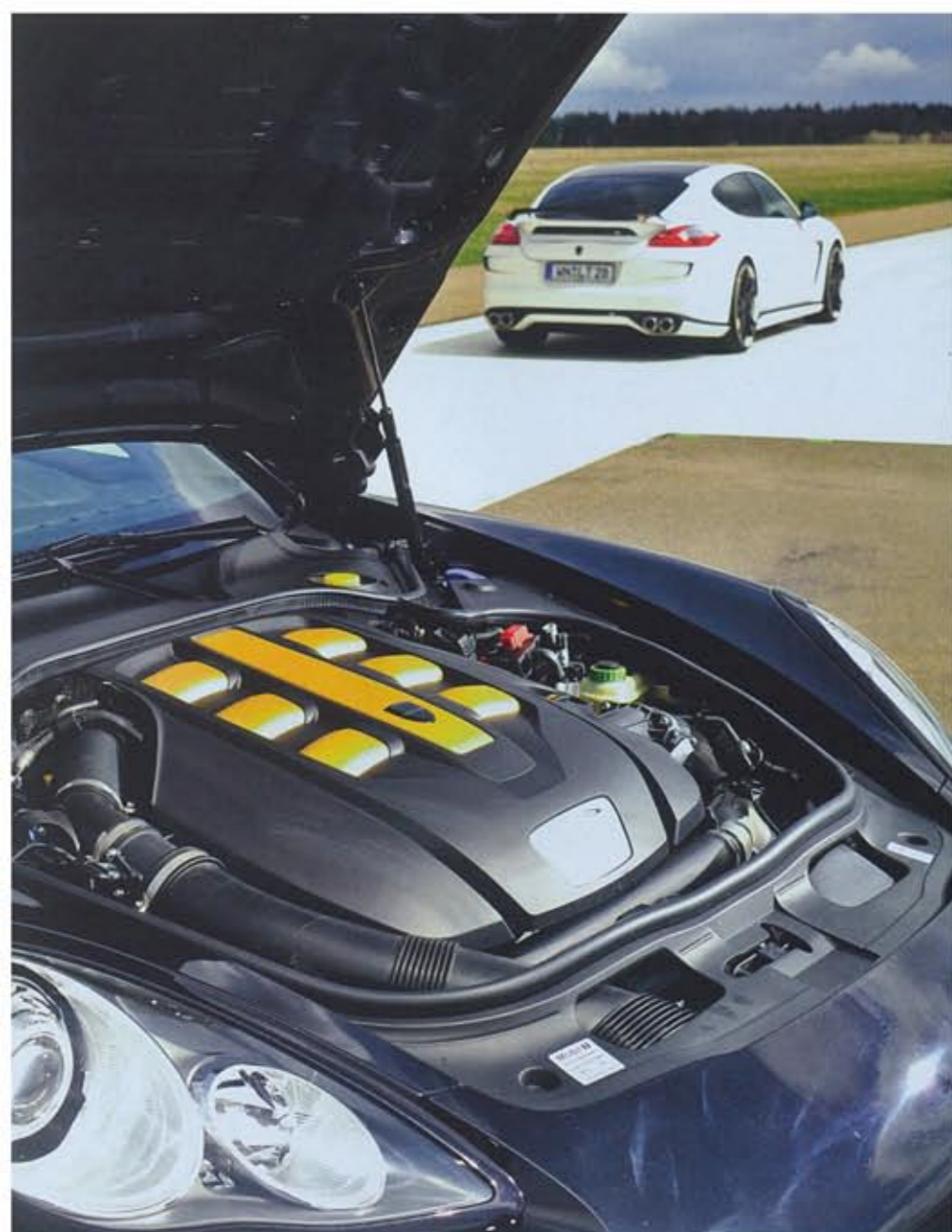
Having no rear deck to work with doesn't help. Neither does the sloping rear window that runs almost directly into the high rear bumper line. There's no natural break in the design which makes any addition look just that: an add-on, an afterthought. To combat this Bjorn Streininger, Speedart's leading man, has decided that less is most definitely more. The fixed rear

wing has two elements, a small ducktail-style upturn on the leading edge of the bootlid with a higher, fixed wing that rises up to just over the base of the rear window and sits on two small supports. It's subtle and works with the rear diffuser that wraps around the exhaust tailpipes.

The PS9-Aerokit works best, in our opinion on the Basalt black Panamera, although this possibly has more to do with Porsche's beast always looking better in a darker shade. White is just a little too much for a near five-metre long car. And don't they say black is slimming?

Naturally there are a choice of alloy wheel designs available. The black car wears a set of five-spoke one-piece FS Competition rims measuring 9 and 10 inches wide and 22 inches in diameter, and require a pair of 265/30 tyres for the front and 305/25s for the rear. The white car goes a little more extreme, with 9.5- and 11-inch wide LSC three-piece forged wheels. Again, they are 22 inches in diameter and require the same sizes tyres.

The colour coding on both cars is also part of the service Speedart offers. They may look like small details, but the wing mirror



Interior upgrades are only restricted by the imagination. Five-spoke wheels are FSC-Radsatz, the multi-spoke LSC-forged items

housings, the vents at the back of the front wings and discrete touches around the Panamera's body give it some added jewellery and provide some sparkle.

The personalisation continues inside with retrimming consisting of a simple colour change for the stitching to bespoke finishes to the seats, steering wheel, door trims... just about every surface you can think of. If you've always headed along the black leather, aluminium inserts route you may be pleasantly surprised at what's possible with the Panamera's cabin.

Styling aside, it's what has been done to both of these Panamera's black boxes that is spiking our interest. The white car is a 3.6 V6 petrol

engine model, the black a 3.0 diesel. Both have had an ECU remap to liberate some extra performance from their VW Group engines. The petrol six sees its peak figures climb from 300hp and 295lb ft of torque to 320hp and 309lb ft. Not the biggest increases you'll come across, but then the Panamera's entry-level motor is more about delivering refinement rather than lap times. Included in the €5,990 price is a stainless steel exhaust system complete with a quartet of 100mm tailpipes that provides a suitable aural soundtrack, almost V8-like in its harmonic delivery.

On the road the performance gains are hard to judge, but the throttle response is sharper and the


blare from the exhaust certainly lets you know you've let this baby Panamera off the leash, no matter how lightly. The rest is pure Panamera with the standard seven-speed PDK unit untouched and untroubled by the tweakery. Grip, never a Panamera weak point is unbreakable unless the airfield is the size of a small part of Oxfordshire and emptier than a politician's promise.

It's a different matter with the diesel engine Pan Speedart has played with. The ECU remap equates to 50hp increase, now 300hp and a 60lb ft boost in torque to 465lb ft. Unlike with the petrol model, the diesel upgrade (€1980 + VAT) doesn't include a sports exhaust, which is an additional €2090 + VAT.

With the Pan D the Porsche tuners and independent remapping specialists have a potential cash cow (or should that be pig?) on their hands. The last decade has seen a meteoric rise in the diesel engine chipping business. Audi, BMW and Mercedes drivers have been enjoying a mid-range surge in their middle management exec-saloon's performance thanks to a remap downloaded and installed with almost iTunes app levels of ease. More power, a chunk more torque and, in some cases, a better return on fuel economy are part of the deal. And the boss will never know and neither will the lease company... hopefully.

The gains Speedart has managed to achieve are just the start as the turbo's internals and the engine's





*What lag the
standard engine
can't hide is all but gone*

injectors are still the factory items, but nevertheless the increased surge is most welcome. Hooked up to the standard eight-speed Tiptronic auto, as fitted to the Cayenne (the PDK doesn't work with the diesel engine just yet), the PS9-300D is quicker than its name suggests, with the engine coming on boost sooner and lower in the rev range, before building to a mid-range that's seriously strong as the revs rise through the peak torque band. Being a diesel it's all out of puff come 4500rpm but another slick up-change and the process is repeated. Compared to the standard Diesel, the PS9-300D polishes that car's soft edges, sharpening them to a more precise point. What lag the standard engine can't hide is all but gone and there's power all the way through as the tach's needle runs up to the red paint. It may lag behind a Panamera S in the horsepower stakes, but with around an additional 100lb ft of torque to

play with the on-road performance of the eight-cylinder petrol and the six-cylinder derv burner are closer than you'd imagine. Probably a little to close for the S's comfort, in fact.

A car's design and look is always a subjective issue, one man's Monet is another man's unmade bed left in the Tate Modern, and adding a styling kit to the Panamera's bulky body will not sit comfortably with some. For others the opportunity to add an individual element to their big Porsche is one they will not pass up on, and variety is the spice of life after all. Of greater interest is the engine upgrades, specifically those for the diesel engine car, and just as drivers of other diesel engine cars have been enjoying the performance potential of their unshackled derv burners, so too can Panamera owners ◊