

STEERING EASY

Power steering for your early Porsche? Dutch company EZ Electric Power Steering has developed a range of conversions to fit all manner of classics. We head to Holland to sample it for ourselves...

Words: Johnny Tipler Photos: Antony Fraser



Power steering transforms the 3.2 Carrera test car, making it easy to point into a corner and hold it there. Level of assistance is speed-dependent

Being rear-engined, the 911 has a light front end and doesn't suffer from overly heavy steering. However, when its suspension is tuned with a more sporting attitude, maybe with wider tyres as well, the steering gets heavier, and it was in response to this that EZ Electric Power Steering (pronounced Eee-Zee, by the way) developed an electric power-steering kit for classic 911s seven years ago.

'If a 911 is set up for fast driving with maximum castor,' says Roger Reijngoud, CEO of EZ, 'on full lock you can actually see the front wing rising, and when you centre the steering, it goes down again. So, the more castor, the better the straight line stability, but the heavier the steering becomes in corners, because the steering always wants to go straight.'

Adding more castor doesn't affect tyre wear, and though the steering does become heavier in the turns, it's no longer an issue with the power steering kit. 'If you put more castor on in combination with the power steering kit,

the steering wheel always wants to push back, so you get even more feel and feedback! The system uses an electric motor which is controlled by a 'black box' that determines the level of assistance depending on road speed. And it's the work of moments to adjust the electronics so the 'feel' is lighter or, alternatively, offers more resistance.

Pre-1974 911s have a speedometer cable, and that's where EZ fit a sensor that provides the speed signal which their system uses to determine how much assistance is needed, so that the faster the car goes, the less assistance is applied.

So whereabouts in the 911 do the EPAS components live? In the smuggler's box! EZ usually aim to fit the electronic module behind the dashboard, but there's not enough room in the 911 so, in left-hand drive cars, they insert it in the so-called 'smuggler's box', which can be found to the right-hand side under the front lid in all pre-PAS 911s – the box originally housed the Webasto petrol heater and was home to the blower and evaporator box of

Roger Reijngoud (right) and EZ Electric Power Steering have done much to make the classic car a much more useable proposition for everyday motoring. His company also makes a range of high-quality classically-styled steering wheels



POWER STEERING FOR CLASSICS



the factory-option Behr air con system from 1970. The smuggler's box was originally designed into the 901 shell as a more central location for the battery, but fortuitously it now provides a home for EZ to stash their electronics.

To demonstrate the effectiveness of the system Roger provided us with a Carrera 3.2 which has been fitted with the EPAS set-up. The standard 3.2 is by no means the lightest 911 in the steering stakes, so this newfound lightness is perhaps equally redolent of a '60s 911 with its follow-the-contours fingertip sensitivity, though with more precision. Best of both worlds by the sound of it.

And whether you agree depends on how wedded you are to the arm-wrestle of the standard 3.2. The 911 kit will cost you €1,530 (+ VAT), or €2,150 (+ VAT) fully fitted, and EZ have several international agencies competent to carry out the conversion.

It makes very light work of the twisty bits, with pin-sharp turn-in, and as I flick from curve to curve I'm thinking what a fine innovation this is. It actually helps you come off a

corner a little bit quicker because it is so delicately wrought.

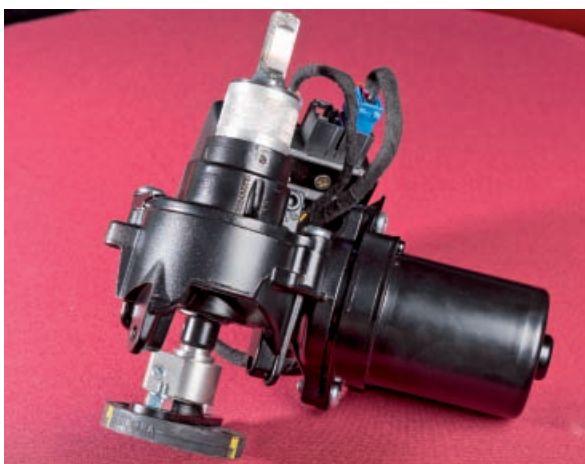
But what's important is that you do feel a bit of resistance against your wrist-work, and that's down to the amount of castor that EZ has set the car up with. And as I perform a three-point turn after each pass of the camera, never has full lock-to-lock been so easy to achieve. It's not what I was expecting of a Carrera 3.2, and I would find it very easy to live with my steering being like this.

It doesn't lose the tactile qualities associated with non-assisted steering, and my earlier scepticism is dispelled to the extent that I think it genuinely qualifies as an improvement. Having the assistance on the 'heavy' setting doesn't really make any significant difference, so 'medium' is where you'd get optimum driving feel, as well as useful assistance in a parking or reversing situation. It might be advantageous in a rallying context, too. Seems to us like the perfect upgrade for a wide-tyred 911 that sees regular use! CP

The EZ power steering unit is compact and either sits under the dash, or in the case of a LHD 911, in the 'smuggler's box' in the front luggage area. The steering can be set up for differing levels of assistance

CONTACT:

Roger Reijngoud
EZ Electric Power Steering
Energieweg 21A
4143 HK Leerdam
Nederland
Tel: 0031 345 633 551
sales@ezpowersteering.nl
<http://www.ezpowersteering.nl>



On RHD cars, the 'smuggler's' box is much smaller, so EZ locates the kit on the second steering column shaft. The 'black box' contains the electronics which control the level of servo-assistance