

Manthey 997 GT3

# Manthey MAGIC

You've heard of Monkey magic? Well, here's the Porsche tuning equivalent, Manthey magic, on the hard-to-better 997 GT3

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Photographed by Dave Woodall



## Manthey 997 GT3

For most folk, the 997 GT3 – Porsche's trackday king – is the ultimate performance and circuit car and a modern-day performance-car hero. Sure, it might come with adaptive damping, air-conditioning and traction control as standard, as per a 'normal' Carrera. And, as with other 911's, to that you can add sat-nav, a sunroof, adjustable leather sports seats, cruise control and other softcore add-ons. But there's no escaping the fact that the 997 GT3 is hand-built by Porsche Motorsport, has a outstanding chassis, makes 415bhp at a heady 7600rpm (with maximum revs at 8400rpm), offers a top speed of 193mph, comes shod with semi-slick Michelin Pilot Cup or Pirelli Corsa tyres, has a half rollcage and is all wrapped up in a stunning, low inertia, uber-stiff, beautifully muscular shell. It is, in short, a hardcore driving weapon; the pinnacle of Porsche's road car packages (along with the lightweight GT3 RS). Nothing short of an all-singing, all-dancing, race-spec RSR offers the same sort of race-bred pedigree, but the GT3 is road-legal. It's the ultimate fast-road and trackday special.

Or is it? Maybe, as with most cars, there is room for improvement? Well, Manthey Motors certainly thinks so. And *Total 911* is at the Nürburgring in Germany to see if what they offer as a tuning package for the 997 GT3 is up to the titanic task of improving on perfection.

But, before we get into the nitty gritty of the Manthey GT3, for those of you in the dark, I'll shed a little light on just what Manthey actually is.

Manthey's brand is separated in two: Manthey Motors (road tuning division) and Manthey Racing; the latter has been winner of the epic Nürburgring 24-hour race – the past two years running – against 220 fearsome factory and non-factory talented teams and race aces. Undeniably, Manthey Racing is feared and respected in equal measure throughout the motorsport world – deservedly so – and especially at its local circuit, the breathtaking 12.9-miles of the Nordschleife, or 'Green Hell', as it's known.

And when I say local, I really do mean local, as Manthey's base is situated literally in the shadow of the

infamous Green Hell's Dottinger-Hohe straight. Imposing is one way to describe it (rather like the circuit/geography surrounding it). Impressive is another that's equally apt; rather like the company's racing record.

The immaculate site is on the Meuspath Technology Park, two minutes from the Grüne Holle circuit entrance and at the heart of a thriving, motorsport-led, council-backed business zone. It opened its doors in 1999, and Manthey Racing was one of the first major customers to make it home in 2000 (in partnership with Gallarde).

Manthey's facility here is on an 11,000 square foot site, incorporating impressive showroom and offices, workshop (with dyno cell, alignment area, engine/gearbox build room, in-house welding zone, stockrooms and floor-ramps galore), and a separate unit for housing customer cars – road and race – in storage, for use on the Nürburgring/Nordschleife and beyond.

All 20 of the dedicated staff are ex-Porsche, trained to uphold the standards that have become synonymous with the Stuttgart brand. And this talented army of men works on both Manthey brand Porsches; be it a full-on RSR race/rally car for Manthey Racing, or a fast road and track car for Manthey Motors.

Business owner, Olaf Manthey, was born in Bonn in 1955. After a career in machine building (and later as a military pilot), Olaf got into racing relatively late, in 1974, initially as a hobby, racing a Simca. His racing talent was obvious from the first chequered flag, and he soon picked

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up factory drives for Ford and then as an official Rover works driver. This led to further success as a DTM driver with Mercedes, as his experience grew to match his raw racing ability.

Endurance racing, that most demanding and demented of motorsports, became Olaf's forte, especially on his backyard track, the Nordschleife, and especially in his own-built car, the legendary, black 190E Evo 'D-Car' Mercedes, with a win record to die for – 26 races, 22 wins! Says it all really.

As Manthey's PR man, Jan Erren says: "I only know one driver who could drift the entire length of the Nordschleife and still win the race, with huge crowd support – Olaf. He's so fast and flamboyant." A German Colin McRae of the racing world if you will...

Jan adds: "Who is better suited to increase the performance and the personality of your Porsche, than a team which has won races at the very top of the motorsport tree? The experience we have gleaned from winning races has helped us to develop not just other winning race cars, but fantastic, characterful and much improved road and track car packages, too; crucially without changing the standard virtues of a Porsche."

Manthey Motors' performance packs offer all-encompassing enhancements; improving upon the work done by Porsche engineers, expertly modifying using inertia reduction techniques gleaned from racing, and state of the art engineering equipment and expertise. Reliability and durability, as you would find in a standard Porsche, run throughout the core of every, extensively in-house tested (by Olaf & others) package.

"Porsche makes the best sports cars in the world," says Olaf. "All we do is make them better."

And Manthey's latest pet project – the MM-GT3 (based on the 997 GT3) – is a perfect example of its race-road business mantra; full of inertia reduction and race-bred focus, making the already hardcore GT3 into something a little bit special.

The MM-GT3 is an all-encompassing enhancement package, mostly centred on weight (therefore, inertia) reduction. To begin with, the standard exhaust system

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(itself a work of art, as it was developed off the back of GT3 Cup racers) is replaced with a bespoke stainless-steel set-up, developed in-house by Manthey's R&D engineers. As well as liberating a tad more torque (12Nm), making an even more sonorous noise and improving on the already razor-sharp throttle response from the 3.6-litre dry-sumped, short stroke boxer six, this system saves a massive 23kg of weight – instantly making a conventional GT3 the same weight as Porsche's own lightweight RS special!

Further weight reduction (15kg unsprung and turning, mutating to 90-100kg when the wheel is rotating) is achieved with the fitment of Manthey's MM2 19-inch magnesium rims, which of course, being rotational mass, equate to an enormous reduction in inertia and a tidy increase in mechanical grip and feedback. They also happen to look rather nice, especially shod in the GT3's uber-low profile Michelin Pilot Cup Sport track day tyres (235/35x19 front and 305/30x19 rear). And further weight is lost with the addition of aluminium centrelock dummies.

Next on Manthey's target list to enhance the GT3's ability is suspension. The PASM (Porsche Active Suspension Management) is replaced in favour of Manthey's own three-way adjustable sports suspension coilover kit, developed in-house and manufactured to MM specification by Nürburgring suspension experts, KW



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Suspension. And, in addition to the switch to coilovers, Manthey also replaces the top mounts with lightweight, high-strength, adjustable strut tops, allowing maximum camber and castor flexibility, optimised with a bespoke MM wheel alignment. This allows Manthey to set the GT3 up for perfect road and circuit use, using all of its hard-fought race know-how.

As with its Cayman S package (MM-968), released late 2007, Manthey also chooses to replace the standard limited-slip differential with the one it uses in its Cup cars, offering up to 60 percent locking capacity, further aiding the GT3's incredible rear-end traction. And (again similar to the Cayman S conversion) Manthey fits a short-shift kit to the gearbox, manufactured from aluminium, which offers a 22 percent reduction in throw, making for even more focused, faster changes. Next, brake lines are replaced with Steelflex braided units, for added durability and pedal feel, which are further enhanced with Manthey's own (fade-resistant) sport pads.

Finally, although the 997 GT3 is the first road car Porsche has produced with 0:0 (front:rear) lift figures (thanks to a brilliant OE downforce Aero package offering perfect stability a high-speed and low drag coefficient – 0.29, lower than the RS), Manthey felt its race-

proven front spoiler lip, fixing to the bottom of the front bumper would add further handling and aerodynamic prowess to the GT3, so has fitted this lightweight, track-focused item to the MM-GT3 package. Like so many of Manthey's modifications, it's subtle, but very effective.

Not fitted to this MM-GT3 demonstrator (yet, but it's in the pipeline) are further weight-saving measures, which (like many of the other parts on this package) will be available to other 997s. These include carbonfibre door cards, which save 20kg (the same amount as the air-conditioning option adds) and, as you'd expect, look fabulous. And, for those wishing to really make their GT3 more race car like, Manthey is also offering side and rear window replacements in lightweight Makrolon, shaving a few more kilograms (while still achieving TUV approval, as per the rest of the package).

Furthermore, the Manthey R&D team is working on a Titanium exhaust system, which will save a further 10kg over the 23kg saved with the stainless steel MM item.

Finally, for those of you obsessed with more power, Manthey is currently finishing development of its four-litre engine conversion (currently in test in the new-for-2008 RSR). These boys just never stop developing...

"This conversion is really for GT3 owners who wish to

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get the absolute most from their track time, or Clubsport competitors," explains Jan. "It makes the GT3 much sharper and even more focused. We believe there is no real reason to buy a 997 GT3 RS, when you can easily get the standard GT3 to be as lightweight and circuit-biased, with a few of the right enhancements, without taking away its drivability or usability."

Sadly, as you can see from the pictures, March at the 'Ring can mean heavy snowfall and icy temperatures, which are far from ideal testing conditions for a Manthey-enhanced GT3 on semi-slicks. Even moving it about for these images meant wheelspin and oversteer in the first

three gears, on part throttle. Hardly full-chat testing...

So, we will have to let you know how the MM-GT3 goes at Manthey's Nordschleife trackday later in the year. But, if experience has taught me anything, it's that folk who win the 24-hour race here two years running know their Porsches inside out, and this well-conceived, immaculately-presented MM-GT3 package is sure to be mighty effective; adding a bit of Manthey Magic to an already outstandingly focused driver's car. Roll on some dry test conditions... **911**

### Contact

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