

## RUNNING REPORTS



**Above, left to right: How to get the most from your clutch. After 27-years and nearly 100,000-miles, the friction material was starting to separate. This is why it's expensive to replace the clutch on a 944 - all this has to come off. Inevitably, with the torque tube off, it was sensible to change the bearings**

like to drive now? Well I have to say I couldn't wait to find out. It was, after all, going to be like a new car in many respects, with so much of the drivetrain having undergone work.

Best, then, to take one thing at a time. David picked me up from Gloucester station and so this was my first time behind the wheel. Start the engine and those engine mounts are doing their job. Even at idle they really keep the engine smooth. This is what I've been trying to replicate ever since I swapped to O/E mounts with my first ever 944 13-years ago. There is no substitute. Next, the clutch felt light and with the pedal depressed there was no bearing chatter. Excellent. On the move it's now light and bites way down the travel. Job done and, added to that, there's no spurious rattles from the torque tube bearings. Double job done. Oh, and

that short-shift gives a lovely mechanical feel to the change.

On the road now back to Augment's workshop. The suspension is firmer, but not harshly so. In fact it's a transformation because now the dampers are actually controlling the springs and torsion bars. There's less body roll and the front end, with re-set camber, really wants to point into a corner. On most surfaces the suspension is perfectly compliant with only harsh broken Tarmac or worn out surfaces creating a resonance through the body, but that is a common 944 issue, possibly accentuated by stiffer damping. Whatever, the pluses far outweigh the negatives and now the 944 wants to be driven into a corner and that certainly wasn't the case before.

So the engine? Well, first impression is it's super smooth and it really pulls.

The standard engine is all mid-range and torque, and so is this, but now it will rev strongly and smoothly too. The power band is effectively much wider, starting low and finishing high at 6500rpm. Third is now a very effective gear for the twisty stuff, fourth and fifth have an added flexibility, and with the improved handling and road holding from the upgraded suspension, you can really position and lean on it in the bends and use the power to mess around with the balance. And of course on skinny 195 profile, 15in tyres it likes to move around too.

So all good? Yes, in the main. The engine and suspension are the stars. The clutch, torque tube bearings, engine mounts etc are effectively like going back to factory settings. Certainly the car is very satisfying to drive, whether it's on the twisties or on the motorway, where the

engine feels particularly strong in fifth.

Don't ask how much it all cost please. It's rarely that so much work is carried out at the same time, and you would expect the 944 to be absolutely perfect by now. Well, it's certainly close. It certainly looks as presentable as ever and Augment haven't finished with it yet. We need to get on the rollers to get a definitive power figure. I whisked the car away to get it to the *g11&PW* Picnic, so we were unable to absolutely finish the job. There is a slight idle issue, and the world's most irritating buzz from the gear lever at certain revs, which is a perennial 944 problem as they get older. Oh, and that rear hatch is still creaking despite new catches, latches and everything else (anyone know of an effective cure?). But if it was finished, what would there be to do, and what would I have to write about?

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