

911 GT3: Favourite toy within extended limits

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05/11/2015 Expressly recommended for imitation – A ride in the Porsche 911 GT3 around the track at the Leipzig factory with racer Michelle Gatting.

Suzuka S, Sunset Bend and Loews. Victoria Turn, Curve di Lesmo, Caracciola Carousel and back to the start. If the mere mention of these legendary chicanes from Monza, Monte Carlo and the Nürburgring get your blood racing, then Leipzig is the place for you. And for us. We've got an appointment. With Michelle Gatting. Tall. Blond. And, at just 21 years of age, the youngest pro racer in the Porsche Carrera Cup.

The morning is foggy and cool. Just looking at the India Red Porsche GT3 positioned in front of the course's signal lights gives a jolt of warmth. Not to mention the thought of soon occupying the passenger seat while female racer Michelle Gatting takes on that track. With confident steps and an

impish smile on her lips, the young woman in white racing overalls heads over toward her favourite toy. She opens the driver side door and glides into the seat.

Michelle Gatting buckles up, turns the key in the ignition, activates the button with the dual exhaust symbol on the centre console, releases the brake pedal and asks: “Slow or fast?” Oh! Fast, please. One, maybe two blinks later, we're out on the course. “It's a little slippery today,” she notes after the first curve to the right. “When the track is wet, things get difficult. You can't overestimate yourself, especially not in the GT3,” Michelle says. This coming from a woman who at the tender age of 13 celebrated her first championship on the Danish go-kart circuit.

Pilot with devotion

But there's a fair dose of respect in her voice: “The GT3 is practically a race car. If you monkey around with it, it'll make an even bigger monkey out of you.” The words have barely passed her lips and already the infernal sound pouring from the dual exhaust, a sound that penetrates through every fiber of the body, seems to react to her words on the first long straightaway. The thrust on this little brother to the Cup-ready 911 presses us back into the seats – man and machine become one.

The six-cylinder Boxer engine screams up to 9,000 rpm, producing 475 hp (911 GT3: Combined fuel consumption: 12,4 l/100 km; CO2 emissions: 289 g/km) from 3.8 l of displacement. “It is after all a Porsche,” our pro driver says with a smile. “There will always be a massive difference between a Porsche and other cars. Especially on the GT3.” The Danish driver's knowledge of her racing materials is not in question – she successfully passed a selection process at the FIA Institute Academy. No European posted a faster time on the test track than Michelle.

The street-legal competition car blazes forward. It accelerates from 0 to 100 km/h in just 3.5 seconds. 7.9 seconds later the needle clears 200. It doesn't top out until 315 km/h. An acceleration that is felt in the internal organs first. The pro racer still has more than enough air in her lungs to describe the quality of the Leipzig track. “It's a terrific test centre, with several different tracks all together in one place. And everything here is simply Porsche. When I come here, my heart transforms into a Porsche logo.”

The FIA-certified oval track was designed by Hermann Tilke, a constructor of race courses from Malaysia to Bahrain who actually received yet another commission last year: the recreation of a legendary piece of the fabled Nürburgring, in its original dimensions, in Leipzig. The Caracciola Carousel – a 450-metre long banking turn on the North Loop of the Green Hell.

Also on site: the “Handling Course,” which resembles a country road. Here, not the speed is in the foreground, but especially the skills of the driver. The course offers 2.2 kilometres of realistic rural driving. To test out the braking performance on a wet driving surface, there is also a 150-metre long dynamic surface with a wetting system.

The third new element comes in the form of a 120-metre circumference circle. Here drivers learn about

the forces that arise during a turn, and how to handle those passages properly. The Saxon metropolis has so many different focuses on offer for a passionate driver. For our dynamic Dane, the expansion of the facility means mainly one thing: “If you're a Porsche freak, you've got to come here. There are also a lot of competent people in Leipzig you can learn from.” A typical Gatting quote. Although she's already made a name for herself in a rough-andtumble motorsports world more typically dominated by men, she remains grounded and humble. She frequently mentions the support of her parents and the family of her boyfriend, without whom a career in racing would be unthinkable.

Elegant as a pianist

In the meanwhile, Michelle has absolute mastery over the GT3. She works the shifting switches on the steering wheel with the deftness and grace of a pianist. She maneuvers through the left/right combo Suzaka S heading toward Sunset Bend, a right-hand corner that demands a bold shift from second into fourth gear and propels the GT3 with the unmistakable view along the longest straightaway of the course toward the Loews curve.

A righthand turn with a slight rise; the connection between the fastest and the slowest sections of the course. While braking ahead of the early crest, she has to drop speed consistently and shift three times cleanly. Her gaze is firmly on the pavement, since all of her control elements are within arm's reach.

The perfect performance through the Victoria Turn comes courtesy of the magnificently harmonized interplay between the rear-axle steering, standard 7-gear Porsche double clutch transmission and the short gear transmission ratios for which the GT3 is known. And don't forget about the rear track that is 31 mm wider and wheelbase that is 100 mm longer than its predecessor. Taken as a whole: flawless lateral dynamics and maximum on-road stability.

Thanks to Porsche Torque Vectoring Plus and the skill of this race-proven driver, the GT3 powers precisely on all four wheels through the turn. No question: The GT3 owns our heart. No if, ands or buts. And Michelle? Her whole heart belongs to Porsche too. Of course!

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