

Luftgekühlt the Fourth – San Pedro Hosts a Gathering



On Sunday, May 7, the epicenter of the Porsche world was squarely in San Pedro. The Los Angeles dock town next to the Long Beach ports was invaded by hundreds of Porsche enthusiasts united by a common appreciation of the air-cooled Porsche in all of its various forms at the fourth edition of Luftgekühlt.

A close-up photograph of the front of a dark green Porsche. The main focus is a large, oval-shaped headlight covered in a chrome mesh grille. Below it is a smaller, round fog light with an orange lens. The car's body is wet with water droplets, and the background is slightly blurred, showing a building and some trees.

g of a Few Porsche Friends

by Kevin Ehrlich

Luftgekühlt is the brainchild of Porsche factory driver Patrick Long and designer Howie Idelson. The terminology is German for “air cooled” which limits participation to Porsches manufactured from inception through 1998, when production of the 993 ceased. Think of the event as a modestly curated air cooled cars and coffee.



The third edition, held in April 2016 at a furniture design and manufacturing facility in Vernon, was impressive. Dozens of owners brought their cars for show and hundreds more turned the parking lots into a car show of its own. (See story in the 2Q 2016 issue of The Southwest Star [here](#).) As impressive as Luftgekühlt 3 was, Luftgekühlt 4 eclipsed it on every level.

Leading up to the show, indications surfaced on social media to give a sense of the magnitude. Owners gave peeks of efforts to finish projects or polish up their rides. Spectators chatted about attending and meeting others there with some coming from well beyond the Los Angeles area. The event gave an excuse for the Porsche faithful to hit the road, so posts emerged showing various cars en route – some from as far away as New York.





As spectators walked and drove in, rain drops fell and black clouds threatened. There was something ironic about an event that excludes any water-cooled Porsches opening its gates amidst raindrops. The wet weather lifted as a rainbow painted against black clouds gave promise that sunshine was on its way.

The spectator parking lots were stuffed with hundreds of Porsches. Within the fences of the formal event area, hundreds more were on display. Early 356 models clustered together, the 911 range was roughly clustered by era, and the 993 variations huddled together. Three very early 356A coupes set on a concrete sidewalk pedestal nose to tail. Desert and safari cars, some just back from racing in Mexico, were also on display.



The rain drops and industrial setting made for quite a setting as photographers and children looked for puddles, but for different reasons. Inside the main warehouse, however, was a selection of some of the most significant Porsche cars in history.

Chandeliers hung above individual cars with large artistic backdrops giving additional emphasis to some. Not a rope or barrier could be found anywhere, which is remarkable in light of the value represented in the rooms. Cars were arranged with plenty of space between them so spectators circulated easily through the hall without tripping over each other or the cars.

The 1979 LeMans winning Porsche 935 sat across from a pair of Porsche 917 models – a 917K in Gulf blue and orange and a 917/30 Can-Am car in blue and yellow Sunoco colors driven by Mark Donahue. Any of those three, let alone the three together, would be sufficient to headline almost any other car event or museum display anywhere in the world.





The very first Porsche that took a class win at LeMans in 1951 presided on an elevated pedestal under its own chandelier. It had an active vintage racing career before being restored to its LeMans configuration for its owner by Rod Emory in 2015 in time for display at the Rennsport Reunion V at Laguna Seca. The restoration was fully completed in 2016 and shown at the Pebble Beach concours. The black 46 number on a white circle against a bare silver color was striking and the aerodynamic wheel covers give an indication of the top speed priority at LeMans. This 356 is arguably where the story starts of Porsche motorsports success at LeMans and other racetracks around the world.

Scattered elsewhere were other goodies including a line-up of 5 white R and RS version cars. A rare 1967 911R headed the lineup with a 1973 Carrera RS, a 1974 Carrera RS 3.0, a 1992 964 Carrera RS and a 1995 or 1996 993 Carrera RS. The presentation was simple, but the column of white R and RS history was striking.



The ability of Patrick and Howie to make calls and convince owners to bring cars of such a high caliber is testament to the compelling nature of their vision (and the generosity of their friends).

A full description of all the cars in attendance is absolutely infeasible but it was enough to overload the mental circuits of even the most ardent Porsche purist. A degree of guilt creeps in as it is impossible to fully grasp or do justice to each car. But few events provide the chance to talk to the person that originally built, owned or drove the race car in period or did the restoration or owned the car since new.

Walking around and talking to owners, the central truth emerged that each and every

car has a story. No cars were new or built recently, so all have traveled a literal and figurative path to get to this point. Some have stories of racing glory. Some are barn finds where a car was rescued from obscurity. Some have stories of a million miles driven. Some have paperwork from the original owner that picked up a red 356 while posted at a US military base in Stuttgart and drove it through Europe and into Russia before bringing it home and keeping it until death only recently ended the unbroken chain of ownership.

It is not an overstatement to say the Luftgekühlt has quickly cemented itself as a significant and mandatory event on the Porsche scene. The irony is that it was originally conceived only as a chance for Patrick and Howie to get together with a few like-minded Porsche friends. What they found, however, is that there are a lot of like-minded Porsche fans that quickly have become friends.

