

944 Interior Restoration

Just the words "interior restoration" send most DIY'ers running when it comes to your classic Porsche. It seems to be considered an overwhelmingly daunting task that most do not have the courage to undertake. Well I'm here to tell you that it's not as terrifying as it sounds, but also not a task to

be underestimated. It requires a great deal of patience, attention to detail, and enduring grit.

Five years ago, I purchased my black 1986 Porsche 944 Turbo with the black over linen interior. There was a small tear in the passenger seat, wear on the driver seat's bolster, a hole in the center console lid and cracks riddled the dash. Other than that, it was still clean and usable. After about three years of use, however, the edges of the linen vinyl had become brown, the leather

seats developed more tears and wear, and the carpet had begun to molt like it had mange. I decided that it was time to restore my interior... but where was I to start?

As a novice in the world of interior restoration, the first thing I did was research everything I could find on restoring classic Porsches. Quality was of great concern to me and I was not going to settle for anything less than OEM. I found many websites that offered the seat upholstery kits in vinyl and leather, but none compared to the quality and experience offered from Classic 9 Leather (none compared to the price either). Now that I found my product, I had to decide on a color scheme and the linen was definitely out for me. It was too difficult to keep clean and even more difficult to find replacement pieces. I knew that I didn't want to veer too far from the classic scheme, but I still wanted an updated look. I also had to think about carpet and trim pieces and black seemed to be the most conveniently available color for these items (and cheapest).





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You can scour through eBay and find almost anything you need for the interior in black. For inspiration, I began looking at modern Porsche interiors and came across the new Carrera Turbo S with the black over Carrera red leather and red stitching. I've always had a soft spot for red and black interiors and decided to go for it.

Over the next six months or so, I began acquiring everything I needed for the interior. I bought the leather kits from Classic 9 (<http://www.classic9leathershop.com/>) for the upper dash, lower dash, glove box, center console, console lid, and e-brake, and had them re-cover the steering wheel, shifter, and door pulls. I chose not to do the steering wheel out of laziness and the owner of Classic 9 insisted on recovering the shift knob himself as the fitment can some-





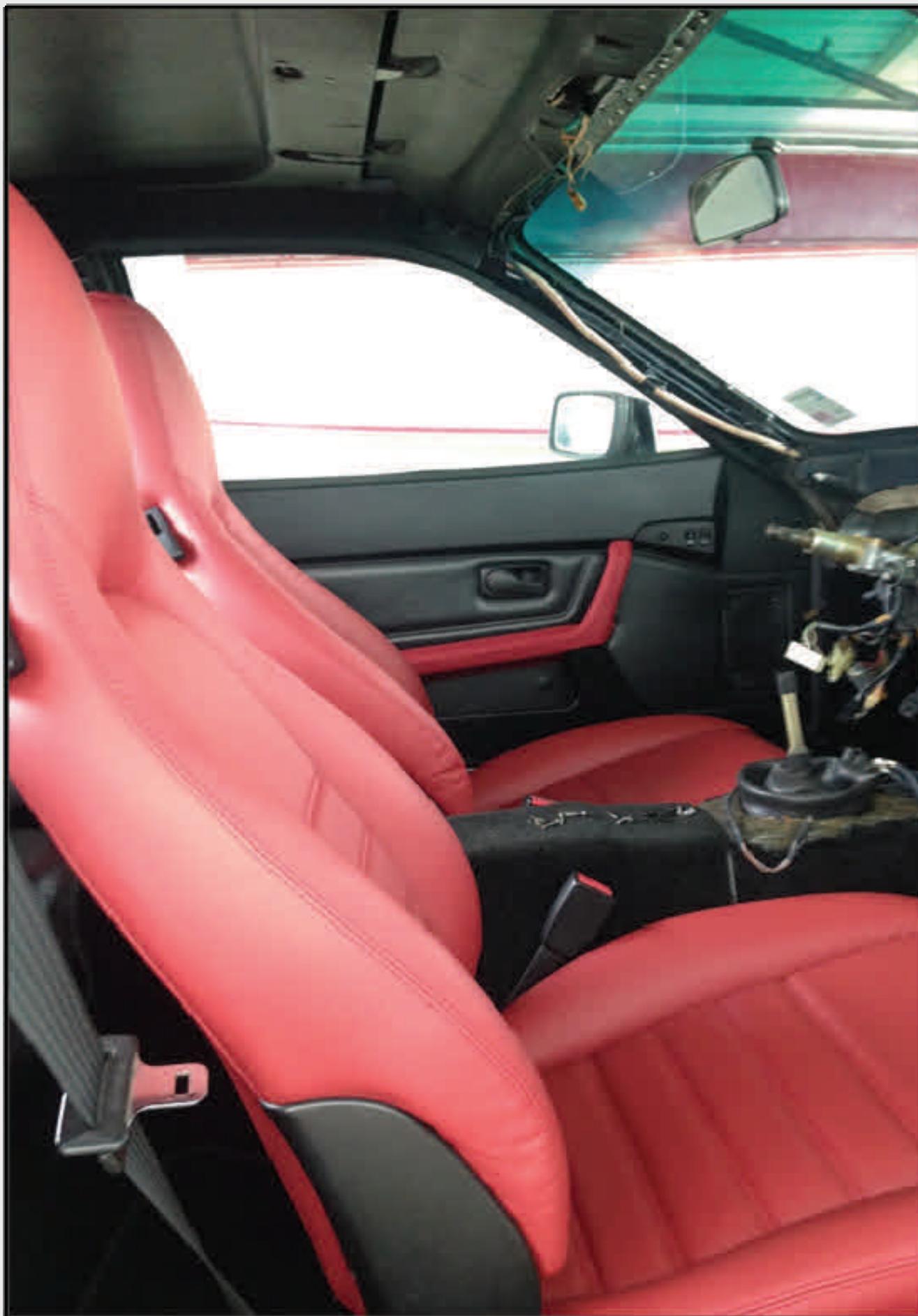
times be difficult. The door pulls were the same price either way so I figured I would just save myself the trouble. I chose not to get the door panels and back seat in leather due to my budget, but I intend on working them in at a later date. I found the carpet, rear seat, and door panels on eBay/Lart's Parts, but it wasn't easy finding all the pieces I needed in the condition I required. I ended up buying over two sets of carpet to piece together a nice set and sold the rest on eBay.

For tools and equipment, I bought 100 X-Acto blades (used about 30-40 as they don't last long with the leather), a can of DAP Weldwood contact cement, a small bottle of the same contact cement with an applicator (boy did that come in handy), at least 15 cheap brushes of different sizes, a can of fiberglass filler, a can of body filler, necessary Bondo spreaders, lots of sand paper (80 grit to 220 grit), sanding pads, hog ring pliers



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with hog rings, a roll of small gage steel wire, pneumatic staple gun, manual outward clinching staple gun (a pneumatic one is preferred, however they cost about \$250 as compared to \$50 for manual), staples for both guns, lots of upholstery foam (1", 1/2", and 1/8" Closed Cell 2A Volara foam for the dash), a steamer, a heat gun, and a spray gun for the cement that I never used. You will also need a Dremel and bits for sanding and cutting metal/bondo/fiberglass. I spent about 4,000 USD total, but it can be done on a much tighter budget if you don't opt for leather everything.

I began with the passenger seat, carefully

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disassembling it, photographing every hog ring and staple that I removed. The passenger seat re-covering went quite smoothly. Since it isn't used as much, the foam was still in decent condition and the leather fit tight and well. One major tip is not to be afraid of the leather. You can pull it, stretch it, and work it to fit how you want. There were a few wrinkles in the leather when I finished, but the heat gun smoothed them right out. I watched a video on YouTube of how to work the wrinkles out of leather with a heat gun and it was very simple. The driver seat was a little more difficult as the foam was worn more and the leather wasn't fitting right. Again, I went to the internet looking for tips and tricks and found that a steamer will help revitalize old foam. Unfortunately, it wasn't enough for the seat so I put a sheet of foam down on the bottom and stuffed extra foam behind the upper bolsters. This worked out well and I was able to use to heat gun to clean up any extra wrinkles.

After I finished the seats, I gutted the old interior, removing the rear seats, door panels, and carpet (leaving as much sound proofing as possible). Another tip I learned is that the heat gun works well for softening adhesive, making it easy





to remove carpet and old adhesive. I left the rear quarter panels in since I was keeping them and had no reason to remove them. I then installed the carpet, door panels, rear seat, and freshly recovered front seats. I also installed new Lloyd floor mats and Rennline pedal covers.

The next step and sure to be the most daunting was the dash board and center console. I began with the center console lid cover. I pre-fitted the cover then removed it and applied the contact cement to both the back of the cover and the old lid. Note that I did remove the old vinyl from the lid but it isn't necessary if there are no cracks or tears in it. I did not remove the vinyl from any other pieces. I lined up the seam with the edges and let it sit to dry. The cement does not dry right away and you have some time to adjust the leather to fit properly. I then flipped it over and glued the edges down. The same procedure was followed for the glove box lid. For the lid, you will want to trim as much excess leather as possible on the back side or it will not align properly with the dash (this took a few tries to get right).



Next, I removed the metal trim on the back of the dash and the defroster distribution piece from under the dash. I then used the Dremel to

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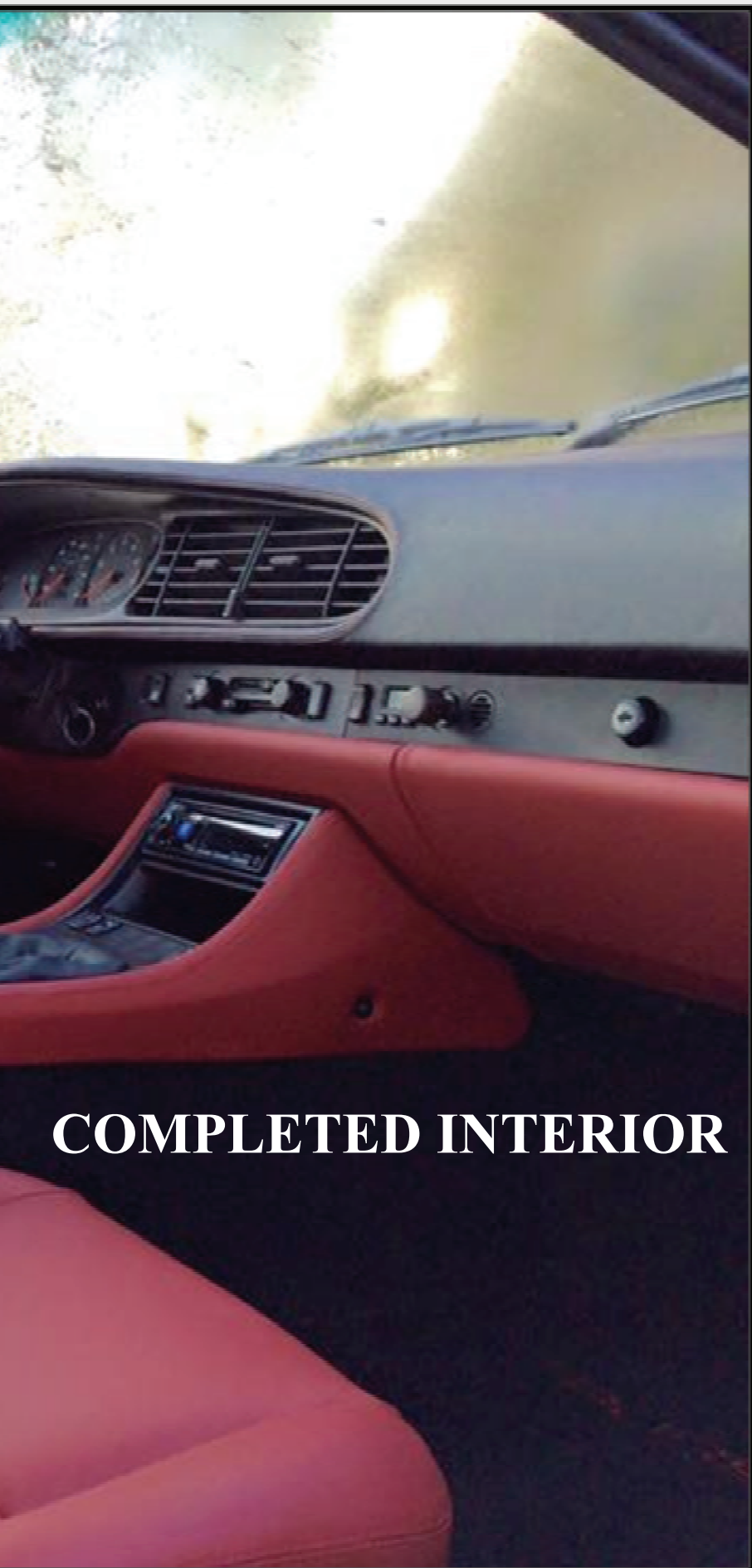
bevel all of the dash cracks and cut the vinyl and foam off of the console where it was peeling up. I filled all the cracks of the dash and missing sections of the console with fiberglass body filler and sanded them smooth. This was by far the most difficult part of this job. I made the mistake of beveling the cracks down to the metal under the foam. This meant that the fiberglass filler was hard at the level of the dash top but the dash was soft foam and every time I applied pressure to sand it smooth, the dash would compress, leaving the fiberglass filled cracks lower than the dash top. It took a lot of patience and even at the end it wasn't perfect. Luckily the 1/8" foam covered up the minor mistakes, so yes, you don't have to be perfect as the foam grants you a bit of leeway. I then cut out the defroster vent openings and wrapped it in leather along with the center console.

For these items, I always started gluing at the seams and worked out. The leather took quite a bit of stretching and massaging to fit everything right and once you get the hang of how the cement dries, it gets a lot easier. Don't worry if you get stretch marks in the leather as a heat gun will get them out as long as it's not too severe and it shouldn't be for this job. The defroster trim piece came with some nuts and washers, but I recommend you either use Loctite or lock washers as well because the last thing you want is for one of the nuts to back off and fall into whatever abyss is below (heater/AC assembly). I used typical marine/auto weather stripping to seal the defroster distribution piece under the dash when I reinstalled it. Also, take this time to inspect the foam around the heater/AC assembly as it may need replacing. Major things to note during this process is to be patient, learn how the cement dries, and keep a sharp X-Acto.

Now one would think reassembly to be a cinch, but it also takes a bit of time and patience as well. Whether you removed the old vinyl or not, the leather is considerably thicker and that means that your trim pieces will need a little extra effort to get back into place, but do not force them and watch where they come in contact with the leather as they will scratch the leather. Be very careful. Also, do not torque the passenger side trim piece or it will damage your clock (I had to order a replacement LCD screen).

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The glove box lid may not line up correctly either, so you will have to trim the leather behind the lid as pointed out previously. Another tip is to trim the vinyl between the dash and the leather where the glove box mounts to the dash. Overall, this was not a very difficult job; it just required a lot of patience and attention to detail. Even with that, I became a victim to hindsight more times than I would have liked. In the end it was a fantastic learning experience with fantastic results.

