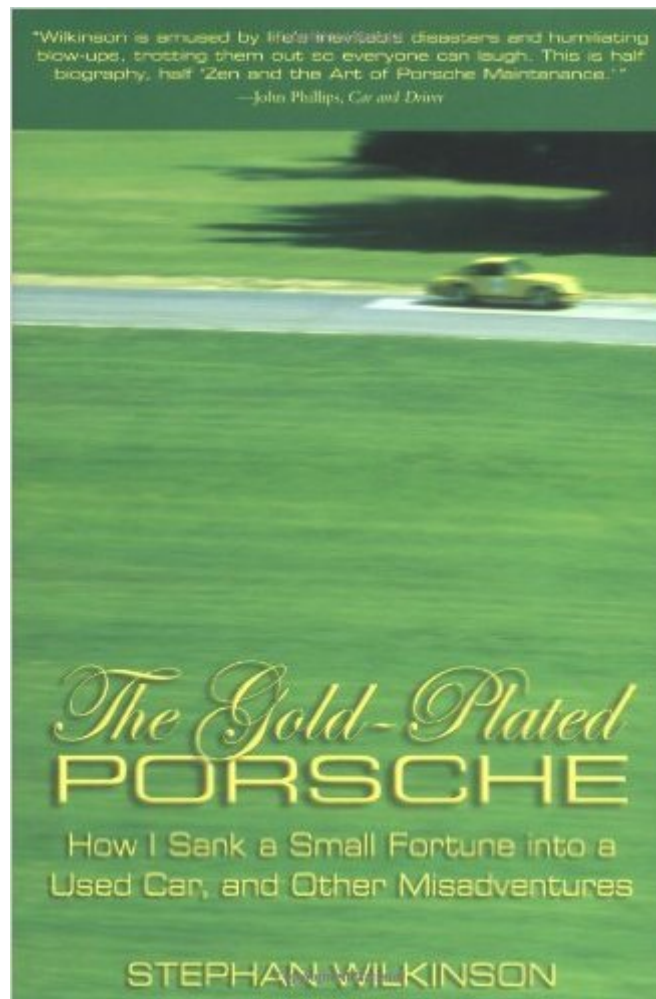


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The Gold-Plated Porsche: How I Sank A Small Fortune Into A Used Car, And Other Misadventures



Synopsis

Just as life is often described as a road one takes through the aging process, Wilkinson's experience rebuilding a Porsche is the exit ramp that leads straight into his garage to a world of wires, leather trimmings, and memory pit stops with each turn of the 911 manuscript. Quirky, cool, entertaining, and opinionated, Wilkinson's rebuilding project leads to inspired digressions on his life. Learning about the inner workings of a car is also a lesson in tracing the thought-streams of the human mind. While rebuilding his car, Wilkinson waxes eloquent on the history of Porsche, American engineering and culture, personal status, his unfulfilling stint as editor of *Car and Driver*, his love of flying and all things mechanical, not to mention the integrity of wedding dress silk when it's woven amidst engine pistons. According to Wilkinson, "Most of the work that my Porsche required, I was confident I could do myself. Turning nuts and bolts, replacing pieces and parts, disassembling and reassembling, rewiring and renovating were within my basic-competence envelope. Anybody who can overhaul a lawnmower knows how a car engine works. Anybody who can drive a vacuum cleaner or polish shoes can redo a car interior. Anybody who can read a home-wiring diagram can at least begin to fiddle with a car's electrical system." He makes it all sound so easy. Yet, the expensive misadventures he had while rebuilding the German masterpiece were like mirrors of a life experience; the eventual purr of the redone motor felt like a long-awaited jaunt upon a road temporarily closed, and the traveling sure was sweet.

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Customer Reviews

...but I will point out that John Phillips, in *Car and Driver*, wrote, "Stephan Wilkinson, a C/D Editor in the mid '70s and a current contributor, spends \$10,500 to buy a trashed '83 Porsche 911SC. then he invests \$59,500 in parts and two years of his time, all of it played out in the confines of a barn behind his house. He emerges with a Porsche worth about \$20,000, a car he and daughter Brook share on 'track days' near Wilkinson's home in New York's Hudson Highlands. A labor of love on two counts. Although Wilkinson replaced, refurbished or restored every nut and bolt, he describes the process sparingly, recalling as many fiascos as successes. Restaining the car's leather seats. Twin-plugging the cylinder heads. Polishing the engine fan with jeweler's rouge only to watch it corrode again immediately. He created an engine producing 290 horsepower and then had to cut a hole in the hedge to take a maiden test drive. But this isn't a book about Porsche restoration. It's about Wilkinson's colorful life. A former editor of *Flying Magazine*, he describes assembling a single-engine airplane from Alaska spruce. He recalls stripping the seats out of publisher Bill Ziff's personal plane to fly to Canada and haul back a Ducati motorcycle lashed to the aircraft's floor. He remembers flying a loaner Cessna over Wounded Knee in South Dakota and subsequently being questioned by the FBI. He recalls summers working aboard a 10,000-ton freighter, with merchant seamen nicknaming him 'Harvard,' a nod to his alma mater. He describes his gory experiences as a volunteer ambulance driver. And he confesses to an embarrassingly slow lap at Lime Rock, where he once forgot to release a race car's parking brake.

Stephan Wilkinson was the editor for *Aviation* and *Car and Driver*. A Harvard graduate, he has spent a lifetime working various projects, including a year at sea, built his own airplane in the garage at home, tested various high-end automobiles for review, and restoring his own collection of fast cars. Part biography, part Zen and the art of Porsche maintenance, this tongue and cheek memoir is a sure thing for many laughs. Stephan's wife decides he needs a new project and he decides to restore a 1983 SC... a car worth at best, \$20,000 in perfect condition. He finds the model he wants in a run down, "as is" exotic car garage in New York City and pays \$11,000. Over the next two years and \$50,000 in parts later, he had his perfected Porsche. The reader is along for the ride and the enjoyable and humorous look into the culture of the Porsche fanatics and the history of the legendary series of cars. I am one of those people who finds tightening doorknobs with a screwdriver a major feat of technological achievement. Also, I have never, and probably will never, drive or own a Porsche of any variety. I really enjoyed reading this book, however, as another amateur tackles the famously complex engine of the Porsche. I admire people who seek perfection as much as the author. The point is, this book is a very enjoyable read even for those who don't have a passionate

interest in high-end cars and engines. From his ancient wooden barn in upstate New York, Stephan rebuilds and restores his masterpiece. Before the end he takes us back to his many colorful adventures through his numerous jobs and travels. Here is one of my favorite passages from the book after the arrival of his Porsche: "What in God's name had I signed up for?"

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