

New Guy in RMR, Basic Diagnostic Question For 944

Posted by Bishop415 - 23 Oct 2013 08:58

Hey guys,

I've been lurking on this and other 944 related sites for a few years now, anxiously awaiting an opportunity to get involved in 944 Spec. I spotted my chance and jumped a couple of weeks ago when a guy in the Denver suburbs posted a Craigslist ad for a running and driving 1987 944 for \$600.00. The car is in pretty rough shape cosmetically; the interior looks like a hobo has been living in it, and outside it's got six or seven coats of flaking rattle-can black over the factory maroon paint and a dented rear fender. The engine compartment is very clean and appears to be factory complete.

The p.o. said that his wife had been using the car as a daily driver and that it had been doing fine until it started blowing smoke on her way home from work. They parked it on the street and claim to have let it sit for several weeks before I came along to claim it. She told me that she saw smoke coming from the area between the rear of the engine and the passenger compartment. Also, they claim it has a recent timing chain and water pump.

The car fires right up on one turn, but I have only run it as much as was necessary to get it on a dolly and then into my garage for fear of doing unnecessary damage to the engine. I only saw it smoke from the tailpipe after it had been running for about three minutes, and I haven't seen any smoke from under the hood.

I'm excited to start tearing this thing apart, but I would really like to take it out for a drive before rendering it inoperable for several months so that I have some idea what I'm dealing with before I begin. What would you guys suggest I check first to remedy this engine trouble? My first inclination is that it's got a blown head gasket, but this is my first time dealing with a Porsche, so I'm looking for clues from the experts.

Thanks a lot for any help,

John Dillon

RMR 944 Spec Hopeful

Re: New Guy in RMR, Basic Diagnostic Question For 944

Posted by 944Racer72 - 23 Oct 2013 09:13

Check for evidence of water in the oil like frothy brown muck on the dipstick or water on the bottom of the oil fill cap. How does the coolant look?

These cars aren't particularly known for blowing head gaskets but it could happen.

Was the smoke billowy white or a different color? Smell?

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Re: New Guy in RMR, Basic Diagnostic Question For 944

Posted by norman#99 - 23 Oct 2013 09:32

You have the right idea on not doing more damage by running the motor any more than you really have to. To push these old motors on the track, you **MUST** replace the rod bearings, to get to the h/p cap in most cases you need to freshen up the head which is most likely your smoking problem. These things aren't that big of deal to do unless you run it till you lose a rod bearing or something worse, then you just go out and buy another motor and do the above procedure with that one. One of the best builders in the country lives near you. Dave Dirks, so contact him.

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Re: New Guy in RMR, Basic Diagnostic Question For 944

Posted by Bishop415 - 23 Oct 2013 15:30

Thanks for the advice, guys. I had some time this afternoon to take a closer look at things.

There doesn't appear to be water mixing into the oil. The coolant level is very low, but the engine oil looks pretty fresh, which was easy to determine since there's about a half-quart of it in a puddle on my garage floor. It looks like it's coming from the pan gasket, but I would need to get this thing higher off the ground to be sure.

There isn't actually much smoke at all coming from the tailpipe. The exhaust smells very rich, but there are no billowy clouds. The smoke is coming from the exhaust manifold, around the area of the exhaust port for the #4 cylinder. It's taking a few minutes to appear because it's caused by fluid (not sure which kind yet) burning off of the surface of the manifold after it heats up. Also, the power steering fluid reservoir is leaking like a sieve, not that that matters, since I'm just going yank it out of there.

So I guess it looks like my engine hoist is going to get to test drive this thing before I do.

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Re: New Guy in RMR, Basic Diagnostic Question For 944

Posted by Sterling Doc - 23 Oct 2013 17:29

Welcome!

I'd agree it's asking for trouble to take a 25+ year street motor on the track without doing some degree of race prep.

When it comes to motors, "cry once" - get the motor done right the first time, and you won't throw away \$1,000 weekends later chasing motor issues, or scraping the car off the wall after it spun in it's own oil. Then go have fun, w/o worry!

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Re: New Guy in RMR, Basic Diagnostic Question For 944

Posted by Bishop415 - 23 Oct 2013 17:42

Oh yeah, the plan all along has been to pull the engine and rebuild it, I was just hoping to run it up the highway for a few miles first.

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