

THE BOXSTER AS THE THIRD WAY

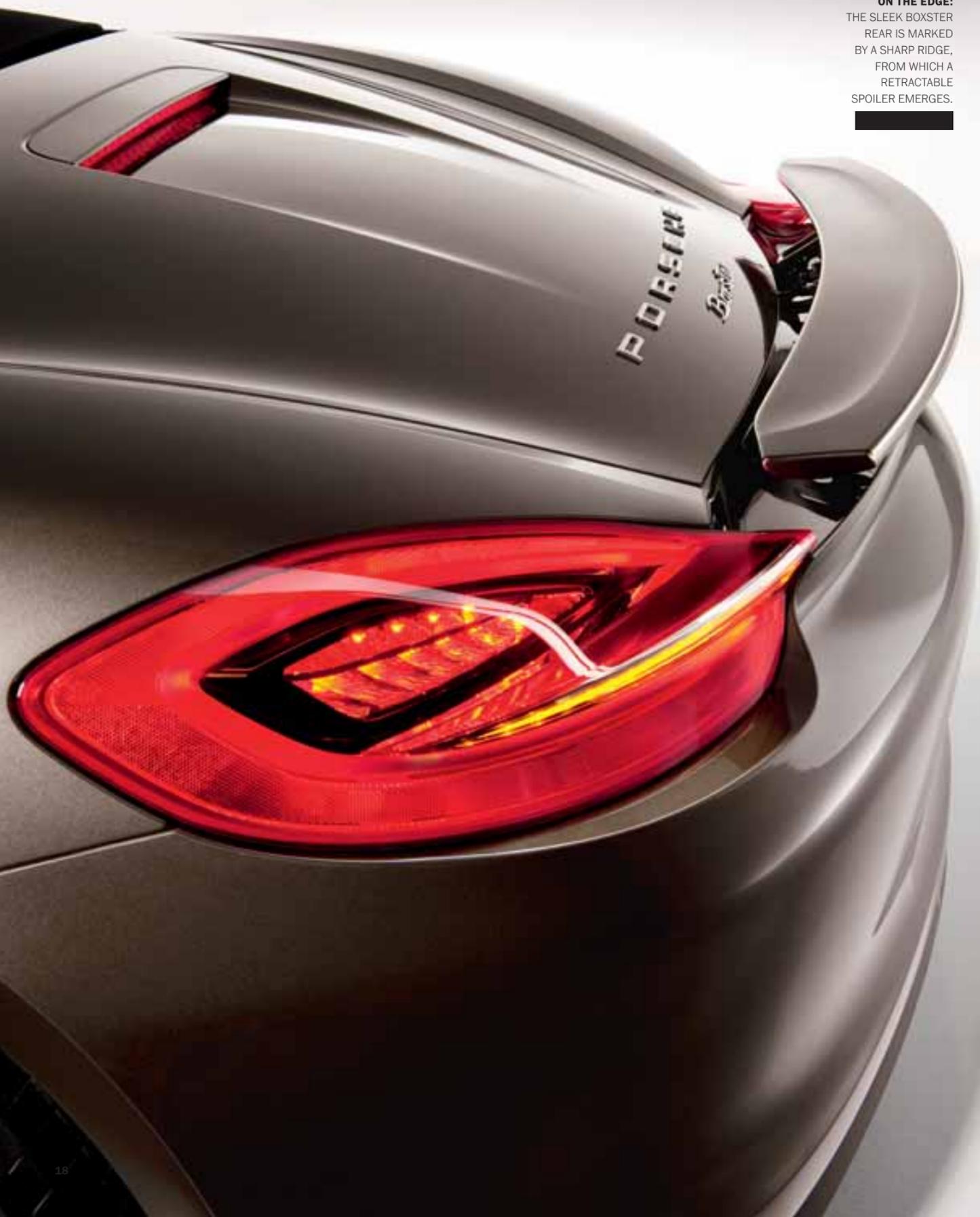
By Till Daun
Photos by Rafael Krötz

Hans-Jürgen Wöhler is known at Porsche as "Mr. Boxster." At the first photo shoot, the head of the Boxster series shares the secrets of the new Boxster and explains why it is more than an evolution. Comparisons with its predecessor are a fruitless exercise.



ALLOW ME TO
INTRODUCE ...
SERIES HEAD HANS-
JÜRGEN WÖHLER AND
THE NEW BOXSTER IN
THE PHOTO STUDIO.





ON THE EDGE:
THE SLEEK BOXSTER
REAR IS MARKED
BY A SHARP RIDGE,
FROM WHICH A
RETRACTABLE
SPOILER EMERGES.



*"One hundred percent Boxster.
Yet the car we've designed is nothing short
of a completely new car."*



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The silhouette appears for just an instant: flowing front hood, flat windshield, and a muscular rear. In the twilight of the enormous photo studio, a sleek sports car crouches in the distance, camouflaged by a forest of flash tripods and the vine-like strands of cables. A short, electric hum comes to a crescendo before the modeling lights of the studio flash system light up. Warm light floods the high-ceilinged room, illuminating the huge reflectors and the whitewashed background. The mood is one of intense concentration; those present speak in muted tones: "Rotate the flash from the right a bit toward the back; I have no reflection on the paint of the door. Otherwise it's good now."

At the other end of the hall, Boxster series head Hans-Jürgen Wöhler is reluctantly subjecting himself to a rather unaccustomed treatment—with closed eyes, the engineer awaits the final touches of makeup. After all, he does not want to shine like his new baby. With a final brush of powder on his nose, the stylist releases him into the clutches of the photo team. The series head strolls into the spotlight and quips: "Well, how do I look?" A chuckle is heard from behind the camera, but then Wöhler is plied with pointed directions as he stands next to the Boxster. The Hamburg native naturally seeks contact with the car. His car!

TAKE YOUR SEAT:
THE GEARSHIFT
LEVER IS POSITIONED
FOR EASY ACCESS
IN THE RISING
CENTER CONSOLE.

“We started on the 981—that’s what we call the new Boxster internally—about four years ago. Four intense years, and now we’re almost there: soon the first customers will drive the new Boxster. That’s a great feeling. Wow!” Hans-Jürgen Wöhler presents the sports car with a calm, concentrated expression. Here is a man who is proud of what he has achieved. Then the clicking of the camera shutter fades beneath the snapping sound of the flash system. The scene is indelibly inscribed in the minds of the onlookers amidst the day-bright light of the flash—a man and his work, a sports car that appears familiar and yet has become so unaccountably different.

Later we sit with Wöhler in the conversation corner. “The fundamental Boxster idea remains unchanged, and you see that in the design right away—it’s one hundred percent Boxster. But the car we’ve designed is nothing short of an entirely new car—and that, too, is a fact that exudes from

LIGHTWEIGHT:
HIGH-STRENGTH
STEELS AND
ALUMINUM COMPO-
NENTS COMBINE TO
FORM AN ALUMINUM
HYBRID BODYSHELL.

every line of the new Boxster. If you just take a glance at the car, you say, That’s a Boxster. The proportions, the lines, the whole spirit of it. And yet at some point you notice that everything has changed: it’s more muscular, more dynamic.”



To see for ourselves, we look over to the Boxster, around which the photo equipment is being packed up. The front appears somewhat more bullish than one is accustomed to from the first generations. The side intakes in the doors lend the roadster a new flair, yet nevertheless manage to seem familiar. Wöhler waits with a bemused grin until the moment of realization: Carrera GT! “That’s right,” says Wöhler, “our inspiration stems from the mid-engine superstar. Together with the engineers, I literally fought to get these doors made. They simply look great; they give the Boxster this incredible dynamism. More important, we

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were able to realize dual air intakes.” Wöhler is happy to elaborate: “Before, the engine took air in on one side only, and on the other side it got cooling air. Now air comes in through both openings in front of the rear wheels. Having a lot of air means more power—and the voluminous sound it makes is great too.”



Over by the car, the last of the cable reels is making its exit, and we use this opportunity to take a closer look at the Boxster. “Here we have a standard model with a 195 kW (265 hp), 2.7-liter engine and manual six-speed transmission,” says Wöhler. “Please, take a seat ...” The clarity and sparseness so typical of the Boxster are immediately apparent. Nevertheless, the 981 seems more modern and, thanks to a few well-placed accents, even a bit more refined than its

GROWTH:
THE INTERIOR
IS ONLY ABOUT
10 MILLIMETERS
(0.4 INCHES) BIGGER,
BUT SUBJECTIVELY
YOU FEEL EACH AND
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predecessor. The rising center console brings the gearshift lever up to a position just centimeters from the driver’s right hand and creates the sensation of having an extremely low and sporty position, but without feeling cramped. The interior feels spacious despite its cockpit-like feel.

“That was a big priority for us. The interior is only about 10 millimeters [0.4 inches] bigger, but subjectively you feel each and every one of them. One major difference in regard to its predecessor is in the substantially larger adjustment range of the seats and the further-forward placement of the pedals. If I move the seat all the way back, I can barely reach the pedals ...” The 6-foot, 2-inch-tall Wöhler settles in behind the wheel and backs up his assertion with a good-humored demonstration. Then his right hand moves decisively toward a button, and instantly the soft top hums into motion. “Nine seconds,” says Wöhler quickly, “nine seconds to open

*In profile:
Side intakes in the doors lend
the roadster a new flair.*



or close, and it even works while driving at speeds of up to 50 km/h [31 mph].” As he says the last word, the elegantly cut roof closes with a suction-type sound. Wöhler steps out of the car and closes the door with evident care.

From a few meters away, we take another look at the Boxster. The sleek, exhilarating beauty of the car seems simple. So what is it that makes the new version a completely new design? Porsche’s “Mr. Boxster” spreads his arms and says, “Sixty millimeters [2.4 inches] more wheelbase. We wanted the car to have considerably more potential in terms of driving dynamics, and the key to achieving that is a longer wheelbase. The wheelbase determines driving stability, and when it is longer, that is, when the car has a more stable base, you can design the handling to be much more agile without having a squirrely or even dangerous car on your hands. Meanwhile you also get much better driving comfort.”

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And that is just an introduction. Wöhler opens Porsche’s bag of tricks for a quick peek. The redesigned Boxster is based on a bodyshell that not only has a 60-millimeter-longer (2.4-inch-longer) wheelbase but also is itself a masterpiece of intelligent lightweight construction. High-strength steels and aluminum parts from extrusion profiles or cast elements combine to form what is known as an aluminum hybrid bodyshell that is roughly 55 kilograms (121 pounds) lighter

“The roof takes just nine seconds to open or close, and it even works while driving at speeds of up to 50 km/h [31 mph].”

than its predecessor’s body and yet boasts 40 percent higher torsional stiffness. Wöhler: “We wanted to open a new dimension. After all, the entire suspension is attached to the bodyshell—the stiffer it is, the more options we have for adjusting the suspension.”

So is it as simple as that? A new bodyshell, a redesigned chassis with perfectly honed axle kinematics, highly sensitive shock and damping elements, and PASM with sensitive control. The result is a roadster that is not only significantly sportier than its predecessor, but also even more comfortable and refined. The new electromechanical power steering is activated only when needed, which means that on straightaways it uses no energy for permanently running steering oil pumps, while the incredibly sensitive electronic control generates even more driving dynamics potential. Wöhler explains, “Think of the minutest steering recommendations, barely perceptible, that you can transmit to the driver’s hands like a whisper: for Walter Röhrl that would be the icing on the cake in terms of responsiveness, and for the casual sports-car driver a welcome bit of assistance to support his or her natural intuition at the wheel.”

Finally the engineer’s tour of the new Boxster reaches the rear of the vehicle. “Last but not least, we come to one of my favorite elements: the rear lights.” The sleek Boxster rear is marked by a sharp ridge, from which a retractable spoiler emerges. But rather than ending at the top of the lights, the dramatic ridge runs through the lights themselves. Wöhler puts his hands in his pockets with evident satisfaction: “I can’t say for sure, but the Boxster is one of the few cars for which the rear lights play such an integral and apparent role in the aerodynamic effect of the rear.”

There’s a lot to discover in the new Boxster—an old friend at heart, and yet completely new. ■

BOXSTER (TYPE 981)
Engine: Six-cylinder boxer
Displacement: 2,706 cc
Power: 265 hp (195 kW)
Maximum torque:
 280 Nm at 4,500–6,500 rpm
0–100 km/h: 5.8 (5.7*) sec.
Top track speed: 264 (262*) km/h (164/163* mph)
CO₂ emissions: 192 (180*) g/km
Fuel consumption
 City: 11.4 (10.6*) l/100 km
 Highway: 6.3 (5.9*) l/100 km
 Combined: 8.2 (7.7*) l/100 km
 * with Porsche double-clutch transmission (PDK)

BOXSTER S (TYPE 981)
Engine: Six-cylinder boxer
Displacement: 3,436 cc
Power: 315 hp (232 kW)
Maximum torque:
 360 Nm at 4,500–5,800 rpm
0–100 km/h: 5.1 (5.0*) sec.
Top track speed: 279 (277*) km/h (173/172* mph)
CO₂ emissions: 206 (188*) g/km
Fuel consumption
 City: 12.2 (11.2*) l/100 km
 Highway: 6.9 (6.2*) l/100 km
 Combined: 8.8 (8.0*) l/100 km
 * with Porsche double-clutch transmission (PDK)