

CTEK Builder: From The Movies To The Dunes, Russell's Builds Include 1933 Plymouth & Porsche Baja 911

A 1991 Porsche Baja 911 and a 1933 Plymouth may seem an unlikely duo, but they both have one thing in common - builder TJ Russell.

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://www.einpresswire.com/) -- A 1991 Porsche Baja 911 paying homage to desert racing and a 1933 Plymouth once appearing on the silver screen may seem an unlikely duo, but they both have one thing in common - builder TJ Russell of Russell Built Fabrication.

For Russell, the 1933 Plymouth was one of his very first builds, while the Baja 911 is a recent SEMA-honored vehicle. Both will be part of the virtual Builder Challenge powered by CTEK.

Growing up in Colorado, Russell spent "hours and hours" building model cars and balsa wood airplanes. "I was always building and creating, and then I got my hands on a welder and started learning about mechanics and building things from scratch," he said.

In the early 2000s, he moved to California and landed a job at Picture Car Warehouse, a company providing vehicles for movies and TV. "They had a side operation building stunt cars, so I had hands-on



TJ Russell, of Russell Fabrication, modified a 1933 Plymouth that once appeared in a Denzel Washington film into a custom hot rod.



A 1991 Porsche Baja 911 built by TJ Russell, of Russell Built Fabrication, pays tribute to Porsche's desert racing heritage.

experience with vehicles and fabrication,” said Russell.

Six years ago, when Russell decided to go into business for himself, he knew he needed a “business car” to show off his fabrication skills. “I needed something I could use to show my talent and craftsmanship, and I love American muscle cars and the old steel hot rods,” he said.



Six of the nation's top auto builders are competing in the 2020 Builder Challenge powered by CTEK.

There was a car at the Picture Car Warehouse he thought was perfect. “The 1933 Plymouth had been driven by Denzel Washington in the movie ‘The Great Debaters.’ It just had style. The old Plymouths had the right proportion, sat right and had suicide doors. They’re a great gangster-looking car.”

Russell modified the vehicle to take it from antique car to hot rod. “How you feel inside a car is always more important than what it looks like on the outside. The cool part about the Plymouth is it’s a four-door car that still seats four. You can go out cruising with your friends.”

While his work at Picture Car Warehouse connected Russell with the Plymouth, it was a different job that gave him his connection to Porsche.

For nine years, he worked as head of fabrication for a Porsche aftermarket company. “In that time, I built 170 different cars, and that’s where my interest and love for the Porsche came in. I’m a big fan of desert racing, and Porsche has this history of off-road racing from the 1980s.”

With that racing heritage in its DNA, Russell knew he could make the 911 something special. “I thought, what if Porsche in the 1990s had continued with off-road racing. What would the car look like?”

He knew the shape of the Porsche 911 was “very recognizable” so he realized his build “had to keep the iconic curves.”

“I wanted to stay loyal to the brand while adding next-level components and parts,” he explained.

His Baja Porsche 911 turned heads at SEMA 2019, where Russell finished in the Top 10 of the show’s highly-contested Battle of the Builders.

“I’d been a spectator at SEMA before, but that was the first vehicle I’d taken. There were thousands of cars there, and being highlighted and making it to the Top 10 was an honor,” he

said.

“When you sit in this, it’s unlike anything else. From the cockpit, it’s still a 911 - a tiny, nimble sports car. But with the suspension and body roll, you’ve got a race feel. It’s all new to your driving senses,” he said.

“We pretty much engineered and made every single part by hand. There are only 5-or-so original parts on the build,” he said, adding he’s especially proud of the car’s body line. “It’s really easy to make a body kit on a car look horrific. You can put parts on a car that look foreign, but this looks Porsche-y from every angle.”

The response to the Baja 911 “has been awesome,” he said. “Everybody has been blown away with how clean the fit and finish are.”

In fact, the response was so good, Russell now commission builds Baja 911s for others. “We do a small number of builds each year, which keeps it unique and personal. It’s a full-grown, luxury race car.”

With his years of build experience, Russell said he understands first-hand how important battery maintenance can be, which is why he appreciates CTEK’s chargers.

“If your build can’t start, it can’t run,” he said. “With the Porsche, we run a MoTeC engine management and power distribution system. MoTeCs require a certain amount of output, and when you run back-to-back MoTeC PDMs, they never really shut off. They ‘keep each other awake,’ so to speak. One does something and sends a message to the other. With newer luxury cars running MoTeC systems, the battery can just sit and drain down, that’s why it’s so important to have a charger that maintains and keeps voltage.”

In the Builder Challenge, Russell will showcase both builds on social media alongside other CTEK sponsored builds. Fans will have a chance to view and vote for their favorites at <https://smartercharger.com/pages/ctek-sema-360> with the winning builder receiving a CTEK prize package. One lucky voter, drawn at random, will also receive a CTEK prize. Voting will be open Nov. 2-6. For more information, visit [facebook.com/ctekbatterychargers](https://www.facebook.com/ctekbatterychargers) or <https://www.instagram.com/ctekchargers/>.

ABOUT TJ RUSSELL

* TJ Russell of Russell Built Fabrication, in Sun Valley, Calif., custom builds Porsche Baja 911s. He placed in the Top 10 in the 2019 SEMA Battle of the Builders. For more information, visit him on Instagram at @russellbuiltfabrication or @the_baja_911 or visit www.russellbuiltfab.com.

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