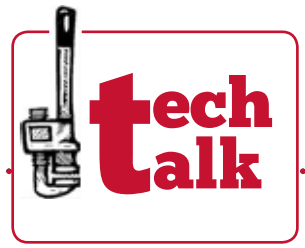


# Having battery problems?



■ Words & photos: Richard Acfield

*A friend of mine who is a member of the Porsche Club, and drives a very nice air-cooled 911 Cabriolet, was showing me his car recently and in the boot I spotted a pair of wires with a small female connector on the end.*

I asked him what it was and he replied "Oh, that's the connector for my battery conditioner". I had no idea what a battery conditioner was, so a discussion followed.

Porsche Club owners were finding that, as their cars are often sitting for extended periods, their batteries would often be flat when they came to drive them. A problem that is not restricted to Porsches.

Their solution was to purchase a small smart charger made by a Swedish company called CTEK (in China) and use it to keep tabs continually on the charge status of their batteries and top up where required. According to the technical blurb that comes with the device, it also troubleshoots and fixes myriad problems that batteries sometime experience.



*Female connector in my engine bay with the waterproof plug pulled out; the other end of the connector is permanently attached to the battery terminals*

I had always understood that it was not a good idea to have a battery under continuous charge, but evidently with these new microchip-equipped chargers that is no longer the case.

My MX-5 is primarily used for Club runs and as a consequence sometimes sits in the garage for weeks, particularly in winter. I investigated purchasing a CTEK charger earlier in the year but found that at about \$175 it was more than I wanted to pay.

Then twice in the last few months I've gone to start my beautiful Velocity Red NC only to find the battery was flat.

Evidently the burglar alarm was percolating away and slowly draining the battery, which was very frustrating. So it was back on to the internet where I found a CTEK model 3.8 for \$99 ... I ordered one immediately.

The charger comes with two inter-changeable lead ends that are swapped by way of a clever waterproof connector. One lead is permanently fixed to your battery so just the female end is

visible; you don't have to keep uncovering the battery terminals. The other lead has alligator clips to charge other batteries. My CTEK has been connected for two months now and I haven't had a problem starting the car.

My son rang me the other day to tell me his NA had a flat battery (again) and needed a long slow charge. He jump-started his car and brought it over for a charge; he drove off in my car while I connected his to the CTEK. 36 hours later his battery was fully charged.

I decided to buy him a CTEK as well as he obviously needed it; so back on to the internet I went and found a newer model with higher amperage and extra features at the same \$99 price. Being a good dad I bought him the updated CTEK 5.0 ... *WRONG!* I kept the new one and gave him the original.

At \$99 I think this is cheap insurance; it keeps your battery ready for use and prevents damage to the battery from a complete discharge. CTEK claim that it can fix sulphuration as well but some experts dispute this.

I'm sure there are other chargers/conditioners out there that do a similar job but this is the one that the Porsche Club and the Acfields use.

**I'm very happy with my decision to buy one (two). ■**



*Contents of the box*

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