

Magazine Watch

By Foster Cooperstein

This month's article report.

(UK)

Here's one I missed – the June issue of Practical Classics. An Elite (type 74) dominates the cover and is reviewed inside as are a group of cars described as “sporting estate” that won't break the budget. While the early Elites were expensive and troublesome, latter cars were built better. The reviewer found the “handling ... excellent, the power steering has plenty of feel – rare in a car of this age – and the ride superb.”

Autocar (16 August) compares 4 generally affordable sporty cars (allowing a cost of about \$200/week), including the new Elise S. The others are a Mustang and a RenaultSport Clio 197, Mini Cooper S Works GP and a used BMW M3. The Elise was described as “the most Lotus-like Elise of them all; light, simple and cheap.” What wasn't liked was that it is noisy. The author found the Elise to be the “supreme sub \$60,000 roadster” but at \$32,000, the Clio was a better everyday car (and the used M3 was tempting).

The Europa is on the cover (inset) of the 13 September issue of Autocar. Inside are the first driving impressions of the Europa S and the Exige 265E (6 pages). They don't like the Europa (“... this particular resurrection was unwise.”)!! The Europa came from plans to produce a Proton sports car that was nixed. The reviewer doesn't think the car compares well against its competition (Cayman and Audi TT). The interior looks cheap and while a bit bigger than the Elise, is still not very roomy. The engine throttle response is slow. The only areas the reviewer had positive comments about were the agility and steering. Just too many compromises with this car. The Exige 265E is Lotus' environmentally friendly car. It runs on E85, fuel that is 85% ethanol. As described elsewhere in this column, this car goes like stink but doesn't stink – it emits very low levels of harmful emissions.

What is Britain's best handling car this year? Autocar (20 September) says it is the Cayman S. But Lotus fans, don't be too disappointed – the Exige S was named the 2nd best (out of 18 widely varying cars). The car with the fastest time around the international circuit at Oulton Park was the Caterham CSR, almost 5 seconds quicker than the runner up, the 911 Turbo. The Exige was just under a minute slower

than the Cayman S and 10 seconds plus slower than the Caterham. The Exige was described as “[a]n unbelievably talented and rewarding circuit car, but the Exige's real genius is the way it makes these talents accessible to the driver.”

Autocar (27 September) continues its breaking Lotus news with a 2 page spread about some more of the Lotus of the future. In this instance it is a mid-engined V6 +2 to be priced around \$75,000. This car will use the same platform as the next generation Esprit. It will use the same technology as the Elise's tub but will be about 9” longer with bigger doors, lower sills and more headroom. Lotus has a 2,500 unit/year production goal for this car, with a projected introduction date of late 2008. That is 6 months after introductions of another newly announced car, a Proton high performance saloon, similar in concept to the Cortina and Carlton. The “new” Esprit's introduction has been delayed for a number of reasons, not least of which is an engine decision. All of these developments are part of CEO Mike Kimberley's plan to have Lotus producing 6,500 cars a year by 2010. He expects the car making operation to turn profitable halfway through his 5 year plan, which was recently approved by Lotus owner, Proton.

Emerson Fittipaldi, along with a number of former F1 drivers, including ex-Team Lotus driver Nigel Mansell, has come out of retirement to be part of the Grand Prix Masters race series. There's a 7 page interview with Emmo in the October issue of Motor Sport. Much of the interview deals with his development as a racer and his days at Team Lotus. He describes Colin Chapman as: “... the best guy I could have had as a teacher. I had wonderful years driving for Lotus because Colin was a genius and I learned so much from him.” He also talked about his reason for leaving Team Lotus, the failure of Chapman to give the order to have Ronnie Peterson allow Fittipaldi to pass him at the 1973 Italian GP. They finished 1-2 and this may have cost Fittipaldi the chance to repeat as champion.

It's been 10 years since the Elise hit the road and EVO (October) compares the latest, the Elise S, with the first. The Elise S is Toyota powered and the S1 has the K-Series Rover based engine. The newer engine is a bit more powerful and torquier, resulting in a slightly higher claimed top speed and a bit quicker 0 – 60 time. Both cars acquit themselves well, the biggest difference seeming to be the steering feel.

The newer car has narrower front tires and a more progressive turn in. But both cars want to be driven hard and that is the way to enjoy them.

Elsewhere in this issue of EVO are a blurb about the 130 mph electric powered sports car based on the Elise chassis, styled by Lotus Design and to be assembled at Hethel, a test drive of the low cost Westfield 1600M (a kit based on Mazda Miata parts) and a report about racing a 260bhp Caterham CSR at Spa in the rain (2^{3rd} place finishes, losing 2nd place in the 2nd race at the last turn after being outbraked).

The Europa S graces the cover of the November issue of Evo. Inside is an 8 page driving impression of the latest Lotus. The car, which will not be sold in the US and is to be produced in limited numbers (500/year), is described as a “refreshingly mature and desirable sports car.” The biggest complaint the reviewer had was the brakes, which he said weren't as good as the Elise's and faded a bit under hard use. As to aesthetics, the interior was describes as “something of a letdown” (hard, scratchy plastic dash and cheap looking leather). The car did well on the track, while it was a second slower than the Elise 111R, its time was comparable to a Mercedes SL55 AMG. All in all, keeping in mind the market the car is intended for, the reviewer thought the Europa S to be a good car and one deserving the Lotus name.

In the same issue of Evo is a ½ page blurb about the bioethanol Exige (the 265E). CO2 emissions are said to be 70% less than for a gasoline powered car. This Exige has almost 50 more horses than the supercharged Exige S and does a 3.9 second 0 – 60.

Mario Andretti reflects on his F1 career in the September issue of F1 Racing. His 1st race was at Monza in 1968 for Team Lotus. Well, that isn't quite right. He was supposed to drive for Lotus at Monza. He was also to drive a USAC race in the US on Saturday. So plans were made for him to commute back and forth. Italian race authorities gave him permission to miss Saturday's qualifying. He set a time that would have put him 7th on the grid when he practiced on Friday. When he returned to Italy on Sunday, instead of the promised helicopter, there was a mechanic driving a Mini. It seems that someone, Ferrari he believes, had protested the arrangement and he was not allowed to race. His 1st actual race was at the Glen where he won the pole.

Magazine Watch (Continued on page 11)

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Lotus Car Care Tips

Article and Photos by Atwell Haines

Part 3 of 5

Engine Cleaning

Let's face it, the engine can be a grime magnet. You have many vapors around, and lots of airflow. Things leak and seep. Water splashes up.

What's an owner to do?

Every few months (especially after the winter) it's good to clean and detail your engine.

Start by cleaning the radiators and grille since this will blow dirt around. For cars with a ram type air intake, leaves and stuff will accumulate. While this is not strictly a detailing tip, cleaning the radiators will help the engine run cooler and the car will be more reliable.

The Esprit has its radiators mounted up front, and the low intake assures that road junk and debris will find its way through the intake and lodge against the radiator. I am in the habit of reverse-blowing the radiator from the rear (fan) side. You can use compressed air for this (I use a leaf blower), or, carefully use a garden hose (NOT a pressure washer) to clean the fins. If your car is front-engined you may be able to clean the fins by hand with a brush.

The picture shows my Esprit radiator after 16 years of use. Pretty gummed up, I'd say.

Then, it's on to the engine to get that clean. The first step is to prepare to protect anything that might not like getting wet. This includes anything electrical like the alternator or battery...and of course you want to block any air intakes with a rag.



You are just trying to prevent the majority of the water from going in...in normal use the engine doesn't care if it is wet. Use aluminum foil, which shapes great to the various bits, maybe a baggie here and there.

Before you actually bag the engine up, start it up so that it is warm to the touch (not hot), maybe 5 - 10 minutes of idling. Then protect the electrics. Proceed to spray a degreaser on the oily bits. I like Simple Green or one of the many Orange products. There are stronger solvents but repeated use might deteriorate the rubber and plastic underhood.

Start at the bottom of the areas you intend to clean the better to avoid being dripped upon! Spray the cleaner onto the parts and keep it wet, do the engine bay walls first then your warm engine. You might have to use a variety of brushes the first time...let the degreaser soak for 3 to 5 minutes while you loosen it.

Then hose-off the engine with a garden hose using moderate pressure.

Remove the protection from the engine bay components, then start the engine to dry it better. I use the leaf blower (or the reverse pressure blower from my wet-dry vacuum) to get the water out of the hard to reach areas.

Then it's beautification time. Tire-shine dressing makes the hoses sparkle (I spray it on a rag first then wipe it on, you don't want to get anything slippery on the belts). A waxed paper towel (the yellow ones you can buy at the supermarket) will buff the easily reachable areas. Note: you will have removed car-wax from the body from spraying, so plan on doing this over again.

That's it! Your engine now looks GREAT.

Atwell Haines