

John Miles cornering at Brands Hatch with his Lotus 47. Yes, those are air intakes at the back



Miles again, piloting one of the two Lotus 62s which were developments of the Europa/Lotus 47 idea

uprated transmissions, with four and five speeds, for their own more powerful models, which were eagerly grabbed by Lotus for the Big-Valve Europa Special. In this form, the car was becoming expensive by the standards of the day, costing £2471 (£2044 at a kit) without the usual extras.

With the normal twin-cam engine, the Europa could record a one-way maximum of 120mph with laps of MIRA at 116 or 117mph. 0-60mph acceleration figures varied from 8.2 to 7.0sec. The Europa Special was timed at 123.3mph for the quarter-mile, with a best lap of MIRA of 121.7mph, but the testers differed for the 0-60mph acceleration time, the wide variations of 6.6 to 7.7sec being recorded.

It is difficult to compare the performance

figures of the Europa and the Elan, because although the Elan had a smaller frontal area, it was lower geared and tended to over-rev at maximum speed. About 124mph was the best recorded speed (ignition cutout removed!), though one of the last Elans, with five speeds, has never been 'officially' tested but it should approach 130mph. The weights of Europas and Elans are very similar and so their acceleration figures are of the same order.

As an everyday road car, the Europa was most suitable for the longer journeys as its very low build made getting in and out a rather undignified process. The engine was quieter than one expected, especially as it was operating so close to one's back. The Renault unit was not a ball of fire, but for long life and

reliability it was outstanding, and far more accessible than the Twin-Cam. It paid to use the gearlever, but the Twin-Cam gave remarkable flexibility and the car would pick up quite rapidly from low speeds on top gear. This was just as well, for the gearchange was not all that precise while the clutch was diabolical!

With the light-alloy wheels and bigger tyres at the rear, the roadholding and handling were excellent, the steering being quick and light. However, at high speeds on bumpy or cambered roads there was a tendency to wander on those tricky straight bits. In London traffic on a dark, wet night, the rear quarters were alarmingly blind, even with the cut-down fins. Fuel consumption varied according to the engine fitted but was remarkably economical for such a sporting car, 26 to 30mpg being frequently recorded.

The interior space was adequate if not generous and the ride was quite comfortable on smooth roads, if slightly choppy on bad surfaces. The Europa would be an acceptable everyday car, especially for a young and agile driver, though not so practical as the Elan, but this I have already indicated. As to the advantages of its configuration, it had excellent traction with a minimum of wheelspin and it was not so inclined to lock its front wheels during emergency braking on wet surfaces, as are too many rear- and mid-engined cars. It also had no 'doughnut' universal joints to wind and unwind, as on the Elan.

Lotus 47: short but sweet

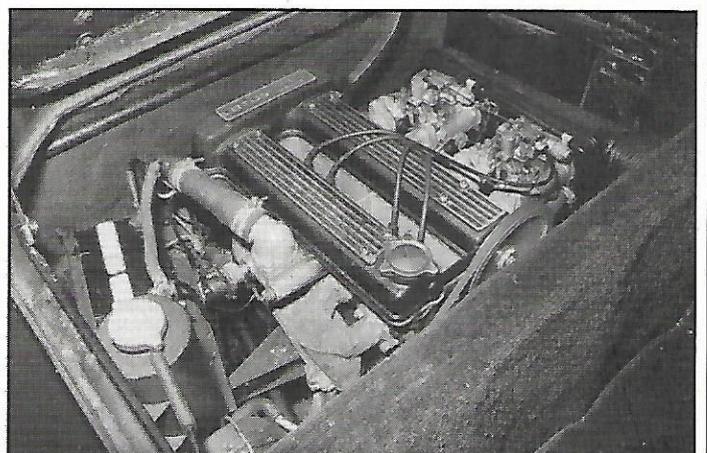
The Europa was meant to be a road car but there was a racing variation called the 47. This had a competition engine developing circa 165bhp and a Hewland FT200 five-speed gearbox, while the rear suspension followed single-seater practice. It had a short but successful competition career and is still often seen in suitable racing events. The original brakes were a serious weakness but the cars now being campaigned have all been suitably modified. This also applies to the chassis frames, which needed strengthening at strategic points, and to some suspension parts.

An enormous improvement over the road-going Europa was a clutch with hydraulic operation. Please remember, however, that the 47 was a racing car and is not suitable for road use. Apart from anything else, the howl of the straight-toothed pinions of the Hewland gearbox would be intolerable in the confined closed body!

John Bolster



Luxurious interior of a late, five-speed Europa. Just visible under the steering wheel is the badly-positioned and rather ineffective handbrake



The familiar Lotus 'Big Valve' engine which could propel the Europa at over 120mph with comparative ease. Watch out for timing chain wear