



The Official Lotus Club

# newsletter

Volume Two • Issue Three

## ROAD-LEGAL AND RARING TO GO!



The new Exige  
looks like a racer  
but you can drive  
it on the road

**EXCLUSIVE FIRST DRIVE! On the limit in the Elise Sport 160**

**Inside this issue:** ■ p2 Exige revealed ■ p4 Elise Sport 160, 340R competition ■ p7 Motorsport round-up  
■ p8 M250: what next? ■ p11 Thruxton profile and competition ■ p13 Dear Dave ■ p14 Elite Mk 1 ■ p17 Prepare your  
car for track days ■ p18 News ■ p21 Updated Esprit ■ p23 Awards and plaudits ■ p25 Letters ■ p26 Diary



# Exige: the racer that's a road car

**Y**ou may well be rubbing your eyes in disbelief, but the new Lotus Exige really is a road car, despite its race car looks. Take it on track days if you want, but the whole point of this exhilarating new machine is to bring the style and thrills of the Sport Elise to a wider audience, one that doesn't wear a crash helmet and a Nomex race suit for their weekend driving.

There has always been a strong link between Lotus race cars and road cars (as you can see in our story, on the Elite on p14-15), but the Exige takes this relationship to its ultimate extreme – it shares large chunks of its mechanical package and bodyshell with the Sport Elise racer. Slap on some race numbers, whack on some sponsors' stickers, and they would be very hard to tell apart; if you want a clue, look for the tax disc.

What's truly exciting about the Exige is that it's a full production model, not a limited edition, and it'll be available right through the UK and European Lotus dealer network, priced at around £32,000. It's important not to think of the Exige as an Elise coupé (tempting though that may be); it's a race replica, plain and simple. By its very nature, the Exige is an uncompromising machine, aimed at drivers who want finely-honed handling, a responsive powerplant, and the very best in driver satisfaction. For that reason it won't suit everyone, so if you're after luxuries you'd best look elsewhere. Hard drivers will love it, though they'll have to get used to swarms of interested onlookers whenever they stop.

The Exige is as close as Lotus could make it to the Sport Elise within the confines of European type approval regulations and the practical needs of road use. Essentially its bodyshell is the same as that of the racer, but the front/apron splitter is raised to improve the ramp-angles – the race car is so low it wouldn't make it up your driveway.

Changing the front end of the car affects the whole aerodynamic package, and as a consequence (and to comply with European homologation regs) the rear wing design is different to that of the Sport Elise, though it still makes a bit of a statement! Just as on the racer, the aerodynamics are set-up to provide a stable balance between adequate downforce and low drag.

Another modification is to the panel above the engine bay, changed from a solid unit to a transparent polycarbonate moulding to improve rear visibility – race drivers may not care what's behind them, but the rest of us do. At the same time, additional cooling vents have been moulded into the panel, as unfortunately all road cars sometimes get stuck in traffic.

The Sport Elise's central seating position was considered, but in the end it was decided owners will want to share their Exige experience, so the road car gets twin seats. Both seats feature an optional four-point race-style harness. Power comes from the same 177PS derivative of the 1.8-litre K series engine found in the 340R, so the Exige won't be short of outright performance. It shares the same broad front and rear track and wide wheels and tyres of the Sport Elise, while its suspension settings are based on those of the 340R – the spring and damper settings, however, are retuned to account for the weight differential between the two cars. Yokohama has developed a special version of its A039 tyre for the Exige, which like the rubber fitted to the 340R is a sort of grooved slick.

Good news for Exige owners who intend to use their car for track days – not only can they pick upgrades from the Lotus accessory range, they can also choose certain items from the Lotus Motorsport parts inventory. The Exige goes on sale this summer and provides the perfect link between the Autobyte Lotus Championship (in which the Sport Elise races) and Lotus road cars. And if Lotus founder, Colin Chapman, were alive today, he'd thoroughly approve of this latest edition to the Lotus line-up.





# Dear Club member,

*When Lotus launched the Sport Elise racer everyone was bowled over by its sensational looks. As a development of the Elise shape it was beautifully executed. Its proportions were spot-on, and it succeeded in seeming both elegant and aggressive in one appealing package. Though intended solely as a race car at the time, at the back of everyone's minds was the thought, 'wouldn't it make a great road car?'*

*As we now know, the Sport Elise makes a brilliant-looking road car, so right and in keeping with what the Lotus brand is all about that the company has decided to make it a full production model and give it a proper model name – the Exige. As you can read in this issue of the OLC Newsletter, the Exige goes on sale this summer for around £32,000. It should be a winner and we can't wait to get behind the wheel.*

*Magazine production deadlines being what they are, we aren't able to bring you a report on the first round of the Autobyte Lotus Championship. The OLC Track Days are booking up rapidly, so if you've not already signed up for one you'd better get cracking! You'll find details of where they're taking place in the diary on p26. To book you can either call the Hotline on 0870 0362277, or e-mail us on [lotus@riverltd.co.uk](mailto:lotus@riverltd.co.uk).*

*We're still keen to hear from you, our members, so if you've got any news or views you want to get off your chest, just let us know.*



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