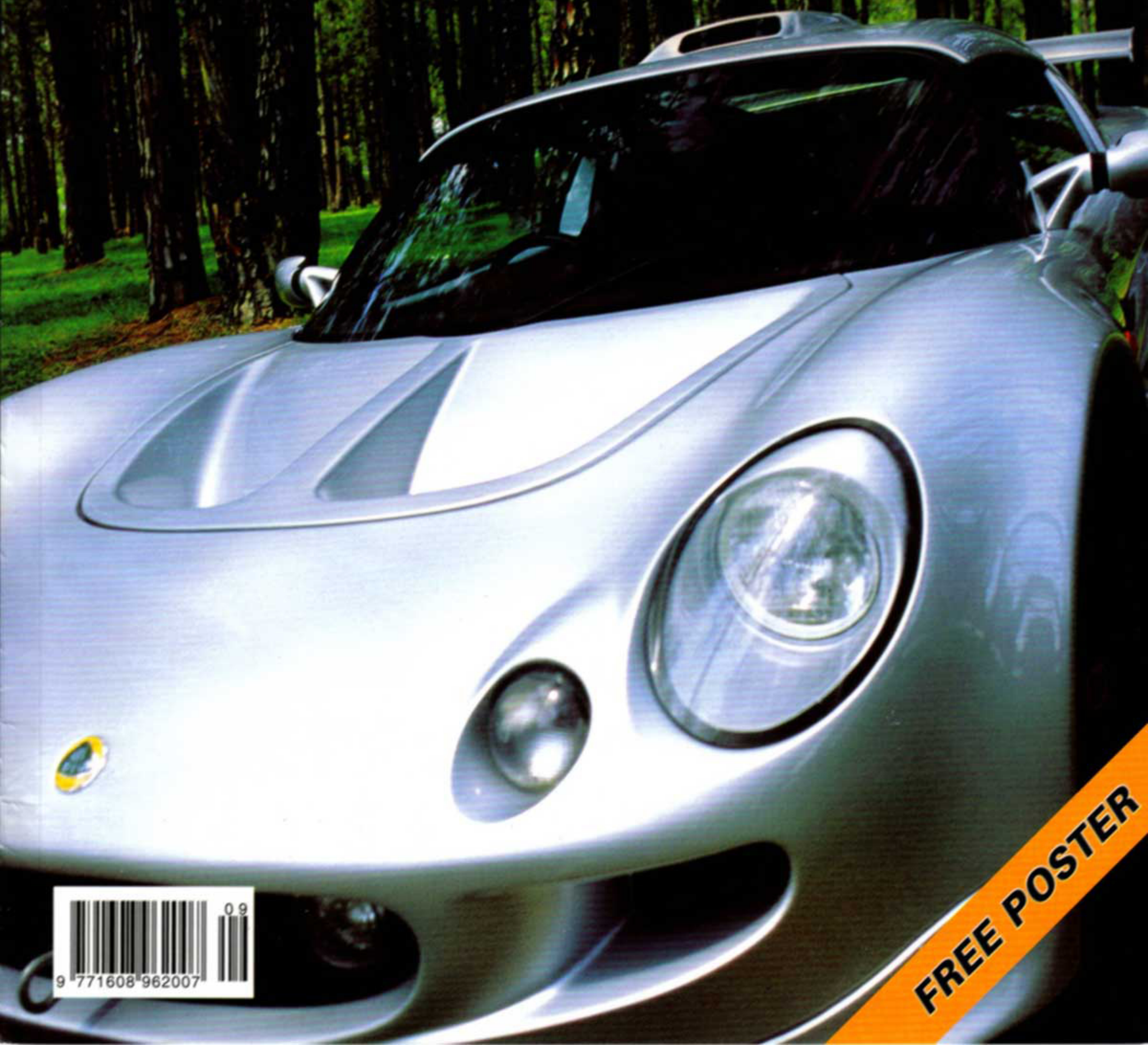


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FREE POSTER



Investment Cars



FRENZIED RACER!!!

By Chris Pandazis with photography by Dobby

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Ever wondered what it would be like to drive a racecar on the road? That's exactly what the Lotus Exige is – a fully-fledged racing car that can strut its stuff on the road too!

Lotus is a UK based car manufacturer that is widely known and respected in motorsport fraternities the world over.



It all started with the late Collin Chapman who started building one-off road and competition cars in 1947. He was also the man who established Lotus Engineering in 1952 and later on, Lotus Cars. Collin Chapman was the brain behind many famous road cars such as the Lotus 6 & 7, Elite, Elan, Europa and then in later years, the Excel, the gorgeous Esprit, the new Elan and the famed Elise.

Lotus' history has also been deeply entrenched in the heart of motorsport – namely Formula-1. In 1967 the Formula-1 Lotus 49 was pedalled by legendary drivers such as Jim Clark and Graham Hill and won four Grand Prix races; one year later it took the Formula-1 championship. In the years that followed, other famous drivers piloted Formula-1 Lotuses to victory – drivers such as Mario Andretti in the late seventies and Ayrton Senna who won his first Formula-1 Grand Prix in a Lotus, at the Portuguese F1 GP in 1985.

Collin Chapman's death in '82, however, was a great loss for Lotus and it took the company nearly twenty years to recover.

...since the turn of the century, Lotus has manufactured some of the most inspiring sports cars to date.

The 2000 Lotus Exige is a prime example of Lotus' racing heritage and excellence. Officially launched by Lotus at Brands Hatch at the first round of the Lotus Motorsport Elise race series on the 9th of

April 2000, it featured Lotus sport suspension, a close ratio gearbox, limited slip differential, lightweight anthracite sports wheels and a carbon rear wing similar to the Lotus Esprit 350. Lotus went to great lengths to minimise the weight of the Exige and for this reason, the car has no sound proofing whatsoever, it has no floor mats and it also has a lightweight glass fibre reinforced composite body. All these racing tactics and materials, allow the Exige to tip the scales at a mere 780Kg.

It has a deep front spoiler and a high level rear wing, which combine to give the car more down-force for better road holding and at the same time minimise drag. Lotus claims that the rear wing can generate as much as 80Kg of rear downforce at 160Km/h – a speed that is easily exceeded on the track around fast sweepers. The car also has numerous air-ducts and air-scoops on the bodywork that are not merely for aesthetic reasons. In total there are eight air-ducts, including the F1-styled air scoop on the roof.

In true motorsport fashion, the engine is mid-mounted to give the car ideal road holding balance – again, similar to F1. The normally aspirated engine is not the biggest engine at 1796cc, but it is certainly well endowed for its capacity, with a screaming 143KW @ 7800rpm and an even more impressive 198Nm @ 5000rpm. The engine speeds, at which these peaks are achieved, give an indication of the aggressive character of the engine. Couple those vitals with the close ratio gearbox that the Exige comes with, and you have a very purposeful track car.

To put things into perspective though, consider that a Subaru STi has a power to weight ratio of 132 Watts per Kg, while the little Exige enjoys 183W/Kg – need I say more? Okay... as it turns out, this example has the up-rated Elise Sport motor, which churns out a ballistic 158Kw and gives this Exige a power to mass ratio of 202W/Kg – a little more than the 196W/Kg of the new Porsche 911 Turbo!

The Exige that we sampled is a private car that is for sale and can be viewed at the new Investment Cars show room on the corner of William Nicol and Ballyclaire roads in Bryanston (provided that the car has not been sold by the time you read this). The Exige looked perfectly at home in the Investment Cars environment of supercars and exotics – it is after all a Lotus, and let's not forget that this marque is also one of the few, that was once piloted by the cunning James Bond. (It's never the movie you remember – it's the car!)

Once the owner gave the green light for the ROADRAGE test, the delicate process of shifting millions of Rand's worth of orgasmic machinery to and fro, began. Once the car was wheeled outside and in the sun, one could not help but admire the car's slick silhouette and dream about this machine's abilities on the track.

The door lever is designed to minimise drag and as a result, proved difficult to find. Opening the door reminded me of the time we tested the Ferrari F40 (RR Jan/Feb 2003), in that the doors have no springs to keep them open – further underlining Lotus' efforts to keep weight

Investment Cars



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as low as possible. Locating the door lever is one thing, but gaining entry into the sporty cockpit is another. Unless you're double jointed in both cervical and lumbar areas of the spine, you can forget about fast entries and exits to and from the sports car. Firstly, the roofline is much lower than anticipated upon first sight of the car. Secondly, the door is the perfect dimension for pygmy-sized individuals, and finally, the driver's side has the added obstacle of a steering wheel. The Lotus Exige was certainly not designed with Brock Lesnar in mind – that's for sure!

Once the jungle-gym antics are complete, you find yourself sitting in ergonomically crafted racing seats that quite literally hug you to death. Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't want them any other way. The sporty seats are complemented by three-point harnesses that once fastened, give a new meaning to the phrase "sit tight"! The cabin has a very racecar feel in its simplicity. There is no glove compartment, stereo, or hand stitched leather.

There is, however, a stirring of the soul the moment the engine is fired up and the cabin reverberates to the menacing tune of the race-bred power plant. It immediately becomes evident that the cams are very wild and that the exhaust set-up is of the throaty type.

The racing clutch needs to be treated with a steady leg if smooth pull-offs are to be achieved. During warm-up, it becomes immediately evident that the engine and chassis does not enjoy being pampered. This is not a car that should be used on a daily basis as it lacks practicality and is incredibly loud in the cockpit, even under normal driving conditions. In all honesty, a sound system would have been in vain, only adding unnecessary weight to the car. Speed bumps have to

betreated in slow motion and other road undulations are not well absorbed by the sports suspension.

To enjoy this car, it has to be driven on the track where it is regarded as one of the best-handling cars on the planet! In pure straight-line terms, the Exige is fast but not super fast. UK tests have seen the car accelerate to 100Km/h in 5 seconds flat, after which the acceleration gradually decreases due to a lack of torque. Show the Exige a corner however – or better still a sequence of them on a racetrack – and it becomes one of the fastest cars in the world. Grip levels are so massive, so high, that you need to recalibrate your perceptions to believe you are travelling so quickly! As a result, this Exige has achieved 1min 11.9sec around Zwartkops – faster than the 2003 GT2 Porsche, Nissan Skyline GTR and any //M! Its lap time is in the top 100 lap times ever recorded around Zwartkops (racecars included).

The Lotus Exige is often sought after for its chassis and set-up, as some owners change the 1800 motor for a more bountiful one. The car is so well balanced with its wide track, mid-mounted engine, suspension set-up, aerodynamics and ultra low weight that it has no peers in the twisty stuff!

The Lotus Exige does not come cheap and should only be bought by a pure enthusiast who will use the car on a racetrack – that is after all what it was designed for.

'Lateral g-forces', 'blaring soundtrack', 'prodigious stopping power' and sweaty palms – just a few of the keywords that come to mind when one thinks... Lotus Exige!



Investment Cars

General

Make	Lotus
Model	2000 Exige
Powertrain Layout	Mid Engine / RWD
Dimensions Weight	780 Kg
Engine Configuration	Inline-4
Valve train	DOHC, 4 valves / cylinder
Displacement	1796 cc / 109.6 cu in
Power	158 KW @ 7800 rpm
Torque	197.9 Nm @ 5000 rpm
KW / Litre	88 KW / litre
Transmission Type	5-Speed Manual
Chassis & Body Steering	Unassisted Rack & Pinion
Tyre Sizes	F 195/50ZR-16 R 225/45ZR-17
Brake Types	Vented & Cross Drilled Discs

Performance(At sea level with 102 octane racing fuel)

Top Speed	219 Km/h
0 - 100 Km/h	5.0 sec
0 - 160 Km/h	12.1 sec



011 709 6300

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