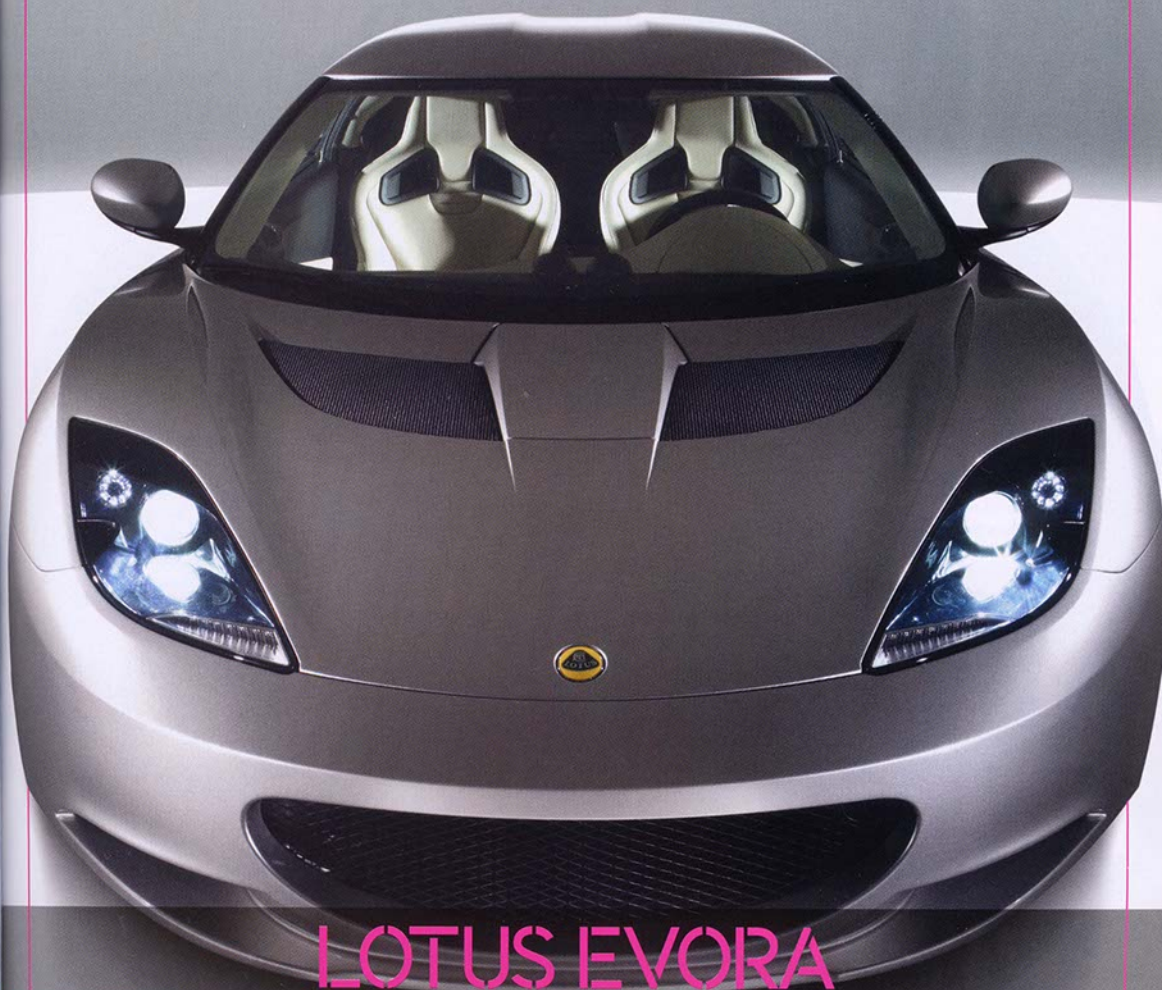


metal

Edited by Paul Horrell

Issue 182

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LOTUS EVORA

The Evora does look good. There's the distinctive Lotus theme in that vented bonnet and wraparound screen, but there's also a touch of Spyker in it, and a trace of Enzo as well.

Captain sensible

LOTUS UNVEILS A PROPER GROWN-UP GT. BUT HOPEFULLY NOT THAT GROWN-UP...



TRY AS WE MIGHT TO BE convinced by the Lotus Europa, it was never quite the GT we wanted it to be. That Lotus said it was. We knew it, Lotus knew it, and the punters seem to have noticed too.

Time then, to fill our boots, and hopefully yours, with what Lotus itself is referring to as 'the biggest milestone' since the Elise. What you see here is the first all-new Lotus in 13 years, a car with a staggering burden of expectation and responsibility on its shoulders. This, after months of whispered

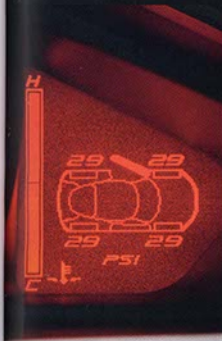
speculation, is going to be called the Evora. It's a ground-up grown-up from the Lotus stable, tasked with propelling the tiny Norfolk firm back into the big league. And properly this time. (Evora, incidentally, is a town in southern Portugal. Someone's been on the loopy juice.)

So what's it got to do to fit the brief? Essentially, it needs to look the part, feel the part, go like stink and be useable. And all for about £50k. That's a pretty tall order for anyone these days. TVR proved that time and again, and the jury's out on whether even Porsche got it quite right with the Cayman.



Just look at that practical interior. Now where's the cupholder?

'It will have a cabin that mixes high tech with luxury. Hand-stitched leather will sit side-by-side with innovative controls'



Less fanatical about weight-saving, Lotus gets stylish

First thing, it does look good. A bit hard to get your head around maybe, but it's already better than a grower. There's the distinctive Lotus theme in that vented bonnet and wraparound windscreen. But there's also a touch of Spyker to the roofline, and even a trace of Enzo in that flick-up of the rear quarter glass. Even if Lotus is referencing a few other manufacturers, it's certainly aiming very high. And apparently the firm has, at long last, paid real attention to what it's going to feel like; that all-important notion of perceived quality. The Evora will have a cabin that mixes ultra-high tech (for Lotus) with superlative luxury (for Lotus). Lots of hand-stitched leather will sit side-by-side with ergonomic and innovative controls.

But of no less importance is what goes on behind the driver. There are two more seats back there. Not big ones, by Lotus's own admission, but >



You can see a bit of the Europa in the profile. There's no doubt that it's a Lotus

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. WOODS; MATT HASTON



Things from here should be pretty much business as usual, i.e. bonkers

Some cool '80s graphics here. Reminds us of the video game Outrun



enough for a short trip. They've even got Isofix mountings, which is an interesting indication of the target market: 'Seriously, darling, we don't need a Volkswagen Touran. Look at this brochure...' The divorce lawyers are going to be flat out in 2009.

And what about poke? Another half-secret is finally flushed out, in that the Evora will indeed be getting a V6 for its mid-engine configuration. Another Toyota unit too, the 3.5-litre currently seen in the Lexus RX350, so it'll take some punishment and be ripe for tuning, much like the current 2.0-litre lump in both Elise and Exige. From the off, it'll be delivering 276bhp, so performance is going to be solid over stupid. Prototypes have been finding 60mph in under five seconds, and a top speed of 160mph has been mooted. But as with

every Lotus, it's agility, rather than straight-line speed, that will give it that all-important edge.

Last in that check list was useability, and those rear seats have already put 21st-century Lotus into uncharted waters. There's also going to be some serious onboard multimedia, with a touch screen audio/satnav set-up, Bluetooth, iPod adaptability and even an optional reversing camera. The final touch comes right at the rear, where a boot already capable of swallowing the mandatory golf clubs even has a fresh air cooling system to stop your luggage (or perhaps your weekly food shop) from getting cooked by the engine. Sounds over the top, but anyone who's ever spent any time in an Elise will know just how invaluable that could prove to be. Lotus is serious about you taking this car seriously. >

'It's even got Isofix mountings, an interesting indication of the target market: "We don't need a VW Touran, darling, look at this brochure..."'



Halfway between an Enzo and a Picasso. Should have called it the Picenzo

High-tech display?
In a Lotus? Have
you gone stark
raving mad?!

Bit of discreet
Lotus badging
to remind you
of the pedigree

Further to which, not far down the line, a straight-up two-seater version will be available with the stunted second row replaced with more luggage space. Vastly more sensible, but Lotus has to go with the '2+2' set-up initially to drive home that notion of practicality. Somewhat further off are a convertible and the inevitable harder, higher-performance version. A short-throw 'box is being developed for this, and expect some savings on the already-modest 1,350kg kerb weight.

But right now the focus is here, on a brand new, almost stunning, almost affordable, almost all British, almost supercar. It's turning up next spring, and should be absolutely fantastic.

Oh, and hold the front page. Apparently someone called Patrick Dempsey thinks so too. He's on the waiting list to test drive the Evora. Who the hell is he, I hear you ask? Women out there probably know him as the heart-throb 'McDreamy' in the US series, *Grey's Anatomy*. The press release that precedes the unveiling of the first new Lotus in living memory simply calls him 'a Hollywood actor'. We don't care. You don't care. Does Lotus really care? And does the Evora need the half-cocked endorsement of a man with a perma-tan to pique our interest in what might just be Blighty's best sports car in decades? Hopefully not. Roll on spring...

Not far down the line, a straight-up two-seater version will be available. Further off are a convertible and a performance version

More familiar Lotus styling at the back. It really is a thing of beauty, this car

