

oneeleven*life*

tasty digital bits for Lotus enthusiasts | June 2007



A blue and orange Lotus sports car is shown from a high-angle, rear-quarter perspective, driving on a winding asphalt road. The car is leaning into a curve, and the background is a blurred, dark, wooded area. The license plate on the car reads "5TMB112".

Lightweight Damnation

I'm doomed and so are you. Because you're reading this, I presume, you are as crazy about Lotus as I am. We're condemned to a world of heightened sensitivity. It seems that once you've driven a Lotus, your senses get recalibrated to expect a level of responsiveness that normally only comes from driving race cars. How did this become the standard that all of us would demand? Thank those ingenious devils from Hethel who engineered the Elise & Exige to deliver these sensations in spades. Clearly, Lotus realized that this was the hook needed to secure a faithful and somewhat masochist following. This nutty diaspora was the inspiration for the spawning of Sector111 and now, OneEleven Life.

Yes, this is the premier electronic 'issue'. Issue may be too generous a word since we'll only publish an article every few weeks or so. Yes, these are lightweight issues! We've recruited members of our community and asked them to submit articles on various subjects that would be of interest. There is an amazing wealth of talent within our family. Most of you are familiar with Lotus heroes like Colin Chapman and Mario Andretti, who we've interviewed for a future edition, but how many of you know Lotus tribesmen like Alan Sereboff, or the first American Master of Wine, Tim Hanni? We will introduce you to some of these amazingly talented enthusiasts and more in our on going series of OneEleven Life.

I read somewhere that once you've eaten from the Lotus flower, you are assured to go mad. Since our crazy house is a thinly-padded, aluminum, fiberglass and carbon-fiber screamer, I'd say our form of damnation is not so bad after all. Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shinoo Mapleton".

Shinoo Mapleton, President of Sector111

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Alan Sereboff -

LOTUS ELISE & EXIGE – SEARCHING FOR THE THREAD THAT BINDS THE CLUB – IS THE ANSWER IN A MOTTO? (part 1)

You see us as you want to see us... in the simplest terms and the most convenient definitions. You see us as a brain, an athlete, a basket case, a princess and a criminal

— from John Hughes', "The Breakfast Club"

We all have that moment in our lives where we realize adulthood is, inevitable. I'm not speaking of our entry into said grownupdom; rather more of say... a premature epiphany of sorts, a harbinger to the inevitable. Mine occurred appropriately somewhere in the twilight of my adolescence, ironically around the same time I discovered the act of coitus. Ah, well, the lord givith...and so begins our story of how a little car can bind a group of misfits into the best of friends.

The year was 1985 and it was a typically snowy winter day in Baltimore. My pimple-laden face was pressed firmly against the cold, heavy glass of my mother's Chrysler minivan as I gazed longingly across winter-cracked lanes, past salt glazed cars with rusted out, dripping finny mufflers, at the glorious, virginal Lamborghinis featured in the window of the brand new Exotics dealership. This was becoming a regular occurrence, as the route home from school ran straight by the gleaming new shop. Due to the premature death of my Lancia Zagato (to be explained later) I was temporarily dependant on my mother and her "minivan from hell" for

portage, making this moment all the more fantastical. We were stopped at a red light, meaning I had thirty seconds to pick up from where I had left off in mid-drool the day before: taking in the aluminum-clad beauties and picturing myself planted firmly in their beautiful seats, a thought that in those days shared a special place in my heart along with Farrah Fawcett's breasts. "One day," I uttered. "One day." My mother, ever the picture of efficiency and the 1981 senior national spokeswoman for brevity - needed only four of those precious seconds to crush my car-porn masturbatory moment. (For those of you disturbed by the mention of "masturbatory" and "mother" in the same sentence, see a therapist. That's what it was). She said, "One day, when you grow up, you'll come to look at a car as transportation. Point A to point B. Nothing more." Nothing more. I was seventeen years old. Ronald Reagan was President, Madonna launched her first tour, the San Francisco 49ers beat Miami in the Super Bowl, and Alain Prost won the Formula One world championship just as a young driver named Michael Schumacher won the German Junior Kart Championship.



"A to B?" Telepathic signals sent from the evil Lambos bouncing off snowflakes straight into my synaptic pathways carried different messages – something more in the line of "0-60 in..." But, just as quickly as we had stopped, the light turned green, and the Lambos disappeared into the steamy Baltimore winter along with my innocence. All that remained behind was a Oxy-Cream facial profile on the Chevy's window and the thought, "Wow, is that what happens? Is this how we fade away, into adulthood, into...minivandom?"

The same blind faith in my well-meaning mother that allowed me to accept my "supercarless" future also mercifully assured me everything would be okay. I'd accept my fate as an Oldsmobile owning picture of bliss with the same grace and ease my reasonably bucolic parents must have accepted theirs, and all would be fine.

In a way, it's like synesthesia, the LSD phenomenon in which senses merge, so you can smell sounds and hear colors. In the Elise, the physics of performance driving — weight transfer, coefficients of friction under the tires, roll centers and moments, the stuff of endless chalk talk at driving schools — are all so vivid and obvious. This is how a car is supposed to work.

Or to put it another way: This thing has more moves than a Piccadilly flea circus.

— Dan Neil, Los Angeles Times, May 2004

Twenty such winters have since come and gone; yet the car fantasy-shattering memory courtesy of my mother was fragrant in my mind as I accepted the keys from the crack dealer masquerading as a Lotus car salesman. Was something wrong with me? All these years later, Reagan has passed away, Madonna has undergone six incarnations, two Bushes have been President, and we've invaded Iraq...twice.

Senna is dead, Michael Schumacher has won seven Formula One world championships, retired, and I'm still that same 17 year-old, albeit trapped in a 37 year-olds body.

Congratulations! You're the proud owner of a Lotus Elise; here are the keys. Now, if you would, kindly report to detention. It's right down the hall, you'll make a right up there, past through a series of twisties, slalom a few cones, come to a door. Inside is the rest of your life.

And so, I inspected my new baby with the zest and zeal of an adolescent presented with a Playboy Playmate and a bottle of heat sensitive love lotion. She had better lines than I dare say...anything. Better lines, even, than Woody Allen in "Play it again, Sam."

Allan: I guess the secret's not being you, it's being ME. True, you're not too tall and kind of ugly, but what the hell? I'm short enough and ugly enough to succeed on my own.

Bogart: Here's looking at you, kid.

It was with "Allan's" duality of insecurity and confidence that I climbed into that lovely cockpit for the first time as an owner, and fired her up. I understood I needed to treat her with an extra dose of sensitivity; you see, like most gorgeous women, she has a checkered (flag) past. Her father had passed away before she was born. Anthony Colin Bruce Chapman. She was left with the awesome responsibility of sustaining the house and at the same time, maintaining some pretty high standards. Her father's motto was, "Simplify and add lightness." Ah ha. Performance through lightweight construction. Look good AND perform. Diet, diet, diet.

This was precisely the kind of fractured thinking that has spelled doom for many a supermodel and the millions of teens trying to emulate them. But my little baby seems to have handled the dysfunction with flying colors, indeed rising past it and presenting herself at first glance like a growling b***h with vengeance on her mind and fire in her tires.

A good handler is progressive, going from grip to less grip, no grip to nothing. Rear-drive cars can have initial understeer, (sic) like an old 911, but you must go progressively from under to oversteer controllably. That's what differentiates a sports car, the way you can adjust it on the throttle.

— Tony Schute, Elise Program Manager

My eyes closed for a moment as my hands gripped the wheel and set off. Oh, how she purred! And that steering – responding to my every touch, my every wish and whim! She liked me, she really did. F*** that. She loved me. And what topic might you think was running through my over-amped cranium at this moment? Racing, for one would have been appropriate, as would aerodynamics. Sex would certainly work. As would wardrobe, you know, driving shoes and such. But alas, all I could think of was...geography. I knew L'Auberge de Sedona – a Boutique Hotel and Spa in Sedona - was exactly 484 miles roundtrip to from my front door. 968 miles round trip and an additional 27 to Lotus of South Bay. I knew because I had done the research. You see where I'm going with this? A total of 996 miles, added to the five or so showing on my odometer would bring me to the requisite 1000 miles needed to complete the break-in period and allow me to really take the cane to her...after her rubdown and salt scrub. Life had never been better. This was it. Mom was wrong.

I had no idea how wrong. But man, I was about to find out.

You see, at the same time I was courting my new Graphite Gray girlfriend, I was being given an ultimatum by my redheaded fiancée. Simply put she said to me, "It's me or the car."

Now, I loved my fiancée. I really did. But this was a side of her I'd never seen before. And she was adamant. Invitations were printed and postage applied. Expensive invitations. We were to be married in front of 200+ guests only a month later. The wedding was to be in Manhattan, in an insanely expensive penthouse space overlooking the city. We had an incredible band, an embarrassingly decadent menu, enough flowers to beautify a city block in Harlem, and a red-velvet wedding cake made to look like a stack of gift-wrapped boxes. And now it all stood to tumble, as another woman had entered my life. But oddly enough, it wasn't about the car to me. As much as I loved her (the car) I certainly didn't value her (the car) more than my fiancée. After all, would the car be there in times of trouble? Would it comfort me when times were hard? Would it ease my suffering? Would the car lift my spirits and be my creative muse? Of course it would, but that wasn't the relevant issue.

What was relevant here was that my purchase of the Elise showed me a side of my fiancée I had never seen, or had perhaps, repressed awareness of. The controlling side. And if I had indeed repressed knowledge of this side of my future wife, perhaps the car was telling me a little something about me as much as her. I suddenly saw a life of being told what I could buy, how I'd spend my time, which of my friends

were "acceptable," and who'd have to go. Not being a fan of ultimatums and having my testicles fully en scrotum, I held my ground. And suddenly, like that, I was single. And alone. Again I recalled my Mother's admonishment, and thought, "Now I've done it." My failure to embrace the more mundane aspects of adulthood had resulted in my sudden singleness. Or had it? After all, Liz was in the garage, beckoning me.

The Elise is, by most reasonable measures, the best-handling car you can buy today.

— Kevin Smith, Motor Trend, July 2004



I remembered a tip given to me by Abraham Reyes, my crack...er...car dealer, "Check out this internet site, elisetalk.com. You'll learn a lot about the car." So, adjusting to my new-found single status - in other words, having nothing better to do on a Friday night - I jumped on the web in search of, well, I didn't know what.

To Be Continued...