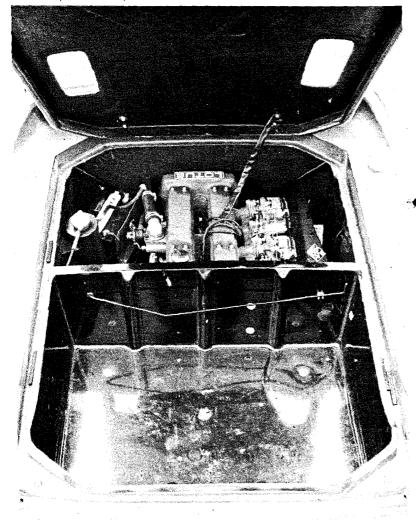


John Bolster drives the experimental development car on the factory track.

One of the two "boots" on the Europa. Besides this luggage space behind the engine, there is another compartment at the front.



67-I was able to try three examples of the Europa Twin-Cam, ranging from a perfectly standard car off the production line which was still a little tight, to a well-thrashed develop-ment car that was nice and loose but had a few experimental settings. Under these circumstances, I decided not to bother too much with exact performance figures as I shall in any case be carrying out a full road test in due course. It seemed better to employ the available time in getting driving impressions of the cars, and I was lucky to have the Lotus test circuit at my disposal, where I could corner to the limit without danger to Her Majesty's lieges.

It is at once obvious that there is more power at any speed within the car's range. The gearchange feels precise and accurate and though it was heavy to operate on the low-mileage example, it moved quite freely on the well-used machine. Perhaps the most impressive feature is the excellent sound insulation and nobody could criticise the noise level, though this is generally regarded as the bugbear of mid-engined cars. The heat of the engine is well confined to the rear bonnet, too, and does not tend to creep forward and cook the occupants. The adjustair inlets provide a good volume for breathing, which is rare since these things seldom pass a sufficient flow. The windows move up and down electrically.

The comfortable seats give a driving position that approaches perfection and, in conjunction with the very effective suspension, they ensure a smooth ride that would make a long day's journey a most untiring experience. I tried both the standard tyres on pressed steel wheels and the optional wider ones, with broader treads at the rear, on light alloy wheels. Though the Europa is well-balanced and handles well on the standard equipment, it definitely corners faster on the differential sizes and the loud screaming when sliding takes place is almost eliminated. With the smaller rear tyres, some tucking in and rear-end breakaway could be provoked by lifting the accelerator in the middle of a corner, but this effect was almost totally absent with the wider boots. Of course, I was driving harder on the circuit than would be advisable on the road, but the extra cornering power is well worth having

The body shape and the strategically placed spoilers certainly seem to confer excellent stability. On a road circuit, the brakes stand up to continuous hard driving without any sign of distress. The exhaust silencer easily complies with the latest noise regulations and the car can be accelerated up to full revs on the gears without attracting unwelcome attention. The mirror now gives a wide field of view, too, so no unwelcome followers can catch one unawares.

The Lotus Europa has acquired a useful performance increase from its new engine. Much more important, it has ceased to be merely a fun-car and has become a thoroughly practical form of everyday transport, equally suitable for the trip to the office or for long, fast continental journeys.

## JOHN BOLSTER

SPECIFICATION AND PERFORMANCE DATA

Car tested: Louis Europa Twin-Cam two-sater coupé, price 1595 or 1995 including tax.

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