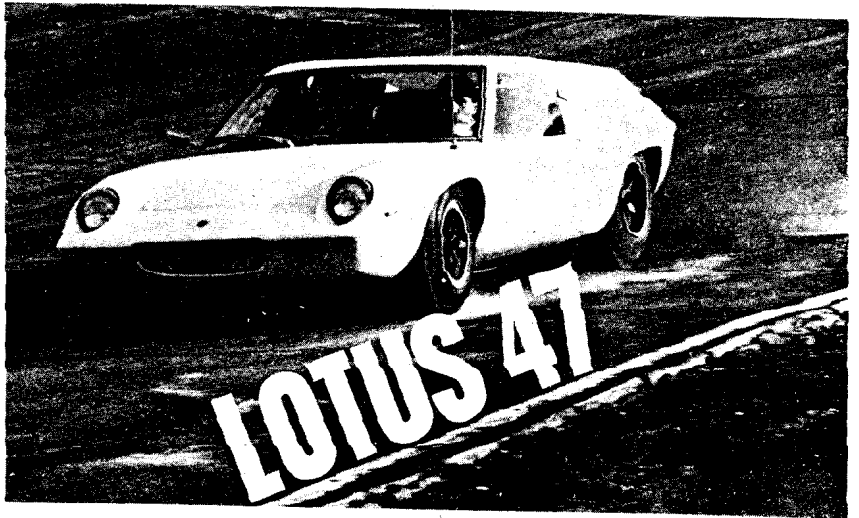


"**B**ET it don' 'alf go!" That was the response of that great man of letters, and editor of C & CCs, ol' Watkins, when the subject of this particular splurge was first mentioned!

Well, it don' 'alf go, and that's the truth! Who hasn't dreamed, at one time or another, of whopping up Cannon Street at 9 a.m., snicking through the gearbox of a full-blooded P4 Ferrari? Imagine all those birds drooling and fighting in their efforts to compromise themselves in the pseudo-passenger seat. Well, this particular subject was NOT a P4 Ferrari, but it WAS just about the nearest thing, a Lotus 47 to be exact. Not a Europa, but an honest-to-goodness, rorty, raring-to-go racer, half-tamed for civilised use outside the confines of Brands Hatch. You can't buy Europas in Wilsonia at present, so if you want to own a 47 you've just got to make do with the race version; twin-cam motor, racing suspension, wheels and tyres, the whole box of tricks.

Not the most perfect car for the High Street on a Saturday morning, you may be thinking. On closer acquaintance, however, the possibilities for quite normal everyday use begin to make themselves apparent. I'm not saying this is the original traffic-jam special made to grace the pot-holes

A Car No Eligible Bachelor Should Be Without



of Putney; but hidden under that glassfibre skin, the advantages of the FIA's Appendix "J" are legion. So you've just spent a couple of hours trailing round a supermart shoving one of those evil-handling wire baskets. The shopping is done, and you're feeling a little peckish. Fine! Just stick some of those oven-ready pies in the Appendix "J" luggage box, mounted in the engine compartment, and, presto! You arrive home with a nice hot meal cooked while you drive! With only two seats inside, the same luggage box will take a couple of small children at a pinch, central heating and everything! Oh yes! Together, Colin Chapman and the Baumgartner boys are really with it on luxury extras.

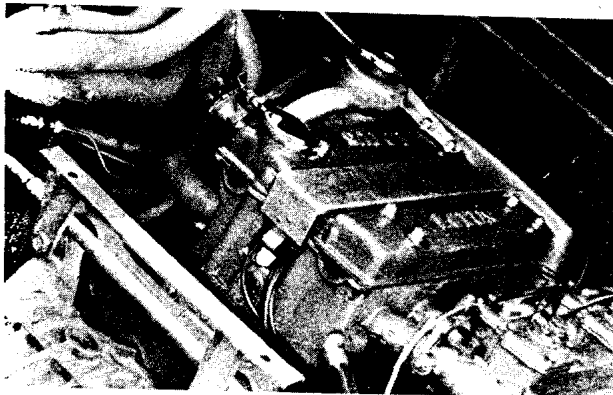
Joking apart, the Lotus 47 is today's car, and will leave pretty well everything else standing, with the added attraction that it could fill the little black address book of one of Frankenstein's monsters! At a little over 3,000 quid, however, the market for a barrow of this type is a wee bit limited.

Originally, the test car was sold to Clive Vandervell as a racer. Business commitments preclude him from indulging himself, so what better than to hand it over to Lotus Components for a spot of untweaking, in the capable hands of David Lazenby?

It's an odd fact that untweaking a racer can be far more expensive than giving a mundane vehicle the go-faster once-

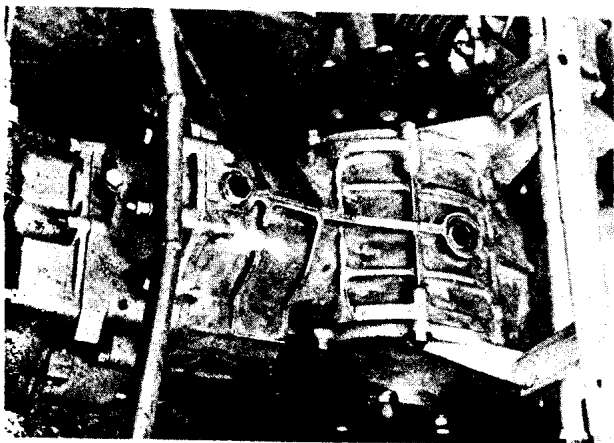
over. Almost certainly, it was for this reason that the car's final assembly was carried out at Purley Performance Cars, the expanding new organisation in which Clive Vandervell has more than a passing interest. Alterations to the original specification included the substitution of a wet-sump Cosworth unit, instead of the dry-sump variety. Two twin choke Webers replaced the Tecalemit-Jackson injection system, reducing the usable revs ever so slightly, but in no way affecting the pick-up out of the corners and at low engine speeds. A four-speed gearbox took the place of the five-speed Hewland FT 200, this providing an easier change in fraught traffic conditions. The ratios proved to be quite reasonable, bottom gear needing little clutch slipping to get the car moving without clouds of blue smoke! Surprisingly few outward sops to the pansy life of the road were apparent. There were no bumpers—a few scratches on the nearside wheel arch bearing testimony to the clod-footed idiocy of the A to B motorists. Most incongruous of all on a car of this configuration, was the long whippy radio aerial, not that it was of any particular use, as the receiver fitted suffered dire interference while the engine was running. Getting in and out was not the easiest of operations for one of my prosperous proportions, and I always seemed to leave

a leg or an arm or something outside to be smuggled in at the last minute when the rest of me was firmly embedded like an egg in an eggcup. The seats hugged like a fond farewell, with the parts that matter deep down in the black leather hole, surrounded by the chassis backbone on one side and the door sill on the other. The former corporal locator was exceedingly useful as an arm rest, encouraging wrist flick gearchanges with the tiny little lever. Fittings and trimmings were obviously "Europa" parts, and very pleasant they were too, with just the right amount of opulence without losing any sportiness. Small door pockets, suitable only for pocket handkerchiefs or bikini briefs (but not both!), were the only places where anything could be carried in the cockpit. As might be expected in a thoroughbred, all controls were in absolutely the right position, and after only a short time the various switches and things came to hand without trouble. It would possibly have been better to wear weltless shoes driving the 47, as the brake and throttle were very close to one another, but this was not much of a hindrance. From the driving seat the view to the front and to the sides was perfect, the sloping nose providing an unobstructed sight of the road a few feet in front of the car. Visibility to the rear, however, was quite abominable, and only slots directly behind could be found without that awful glassfibre tearing sound.



That ain't no Renault, and that's for sure!

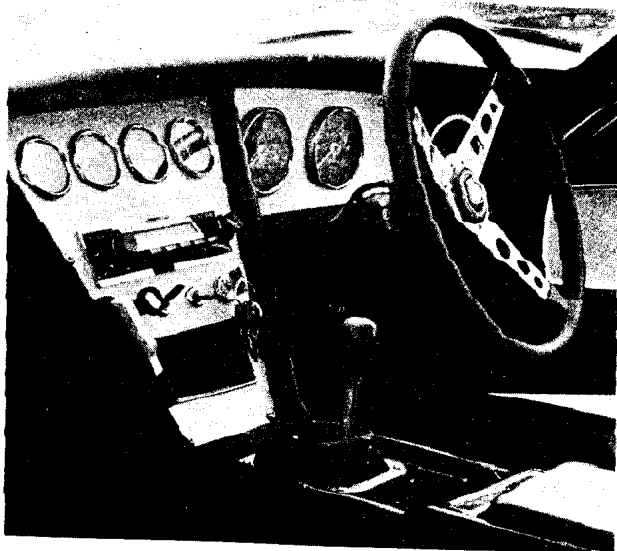
To those like myself who are not used to non-synchromesh gearchanges, getting the car to move could be an embarrassment. In my case, the first attempt, and many of the subsequent attempts, sounded rather like a skiffle group wash-board virtuoso doing a solo! Soon the grating noise grew less, and once or twice even disappeared completely! Without any reservations at all this was a pure dolly to drive, and the speed with which confidence was inspired was unbelievable. After only two laps of the Brands Hatch club circuit, I was trying to think of some polite way of telling that fellow—whatsisname, the guy that writes the "Club Racing" bit—to pop along to the labour exchange double quick! With a gloriously wild hum from the right-hand camshaft, bashing away next to my left ear 'ole, I was at peace with the world. Handling was incredible, for were there not four ruddy great big—and I do mean big!—R7s, latest 183 compound and all, squatting like Buddhas on the tarmac? Yea! 13-inch rollers, with six-inch rims at the front and eight-inch at the rear, wrapped around those saucy Lotus pattern mag' wheels. Even with slightly soft shockers—in deference to the open road—the whole car stayed well glued down to the limit, and then some! This mortal used to find it hard to imagine a car with better cornering characteristics than the good old Min' (OK I'm blushing like a maiden). Forget it! The Lotus 47 will go all the way round the outside with its driver peeling an orange, having given any Mini a 50-yard start! Initial mild understeer, most noticeable at Druids, gave way to what can only be described as utter neutrality in the faster bends. It was while slowing for Druids that an odd shimmy, rather like that initiated by heavy braking, became noticeable on one or two laps. It was certainly nothing to worry about, and no corrective action was ever required, neither was it apparent at any other point



This is a gearbox; there are gears inside.

on the circuit. A hard prod at Clearways, in an effort to step the tail out on second gear, was a dismal failure. An abrupt lift-off in the same corner, however, did the job beautifully! Changing into top, level with a point half-way along the pit road, with a tach reading 6,000, seemed to keep things going quite nicely, thank you. With a 10 m.p.h. error on the speedo, owing to alterations in the gearing, Paddock braking panic stations were reached at 100 m.p.h. I had heard that the brakes on the 47 were, if anything, too good, but I must have a weak right leg or something, for I was bracing myself against the rear bulkhead in order to anchor sufficiently for my peace of mind (there again, however, I'm a craven coward, and proud of it!).

One thing out of the many useful features was the fact that one never had to search for the place where it was parked—just look for a crowd! Even at Brands Hatch where, let's face it, everyone's a bit blasé about hot tomatoes from the marque "Lotus", there was a never-ending stream of



Yes, even a wireless.

admirers, poking and prodding, pushing and pulling, opening and operating everything that could be poked and prodded, etc., etc. Whenever I hopped into the cockpit for a lap or two, there was always a body in the passenger seat dying to risk life and limb for a short experience of such exotic motoring. One of these was a Swedish rally navigator—saved by the RAC's cancellation of the RAC Rally from the terrors of a SAAB V4. He was Fergus Sager, and his claim to fame in my book was his straight-faced enquiry as to whether such a car could be prepared for rallying. This came at the end of a lightning lap, and conjured up such unlikely visions as a 47, plastered with gunge and QIV, smashing its way through a forest stage! Now David Lazenby may be some sort of a genius, but magician he just ain't, Mr Sager! With such a variety of motoring interests, all dotted around the place, jet-age transport is a match for someone like Clive Vandervell. Quite frankly, however, I can't help feeling that no amount of taming will ever make a car of this type feel at home anywhere other than on the race track. After all, how many road cars have to be blipped all the time they are idling? One can be sure of being branded as a boy racer by the popular users of our wonderful roadway system. "But honest officer, it's a feature of the car you see, and anyway, I didn't realise it was 2 o'clock in the morning and your wife had a hangover!"

Paul Harrington