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## For Your Bookshelf: Lotus Europa

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Book review: Lotus Europa - 'Colin Chapman's mid-engined masterpiece'

Author: Matthew Vale



Reviewed by: Kim Henson

Published by: Veloce (in June 2026)

[www.veloce.co.uk](http://www.veloce.co.uk)

160 pages (softback), 250 x 150 mm format

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As a car enthusiast I have long been fascinated by the wide variety of models produced by Lotus over the years, and personally I have always thought that the very different looking mid-engined Europa was one of the most interesting sports cars of its time.

My own interest was encouraged further when, many years ago, a friend purchased a Europa as a project car, as the vehicle had been damaged in a fire. On examining the car it amazed me just how much technical cleverness could be packed into the low-slung fixed head design, and how well that vehicle drove and handled.

I digress; back to the main story here... Matthew Vale's new volume on the Europa, from Veloce's extensive line-up of books for car enthusiasts, starts by covering the design and development of the model, set within the context of other sports cars, including the innovative and highly competitive in motorsport early Lotus sports cars from the 1950s. Indeed, very usefully these cars are described chronologically and in some detail, helping readers who may not know the full Lotus story, and giving insight into Colin Chapman's relentless pursuit of sporty performance and excellent handling.

The text describes how the Lotus Mark VI, Seven, Elite and Elan had each made their respective positive marks in the sports car world of the late 1950s to 1960s, and how the vehicles were developed and improved.



The book's story continues with coverage of Colin Chapman's mid-engined Lotus models, starting with the 1960 Type 18 Formula 1/Formula Junior contender, and the desire by Lotus to produce a mid-engined sports car. This was at a time when this configuration was becoming more popular.

The reader is then guided in detail through the gestation and production history of the Europa, which was the first mid-engined road car from Lotus (the project started in 1964, with production starting in 1966). The text describes the use, initially, of the Renault 16 engine and gearbox assembly, which became available at just the right time for the new Lotus, and was used in it until 1971. The use of the Lotus/Ford Twin Cam motor from 1971 is also described in detail, including how the car was modified to accommodate the unit.

Throughout, this book is lavishly illustrated with colour photographs, and it includes many tables to give an 'at a glance' summary of the main technical aspects of each version of the Europa through its production life, which ended in 1975.

The positive reaction to the Europa, including accounts from contemporary road tests, is included too, and makes for fascinating reading.

Another aspect of the book I like is coverage of examples owned and enjoyed by enthusiasts, giving a personal view from people who own and know the cars well.

There's also a useful chapter on 'Buying, Owning and Running' a Europa; invaluable for would-be owners.

## **VERDICT**

**Comprehensive, well-written, easy and enjoyable to read. A 'must' for anyone interested in this classic Lotus model.**

Kim Henson



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Note: Within the book is mention of two other Lotus books by Matthew Vale, both in the Veloce 'Essential Buyer's Guide' series, and covering the Elan and Europa respectively.