

streets of your city? When firing the ignition button, you'll find that this smart-looking devil sounds nothing like the Toyota Celica GT-S that it gets its reliable and infinitely tunable power plant from. This Elise sounds like a racecar. The fact is, Lotus offers other aftermarket exhaust systems that do nothing more than change the sound coming out of the tail pipes. Lotus has derived the maximum horsepower out

of the stock exhaust system. How's that for dedicated engineering? The Elise will not let you exceed 6,000 rpm until the engine is up to operating temperature. Luckily, it warms up pretty fast. I blipped the throttle and let out the clutch slowly while the Elise growled out of the parking lot.

Once the engine was up to temperature, I pushed my foot to the floor and found

out that 6,000 rpm was the magic number. Lotus has made full use of the Celica motor's 190-hp variable-valved timing, which kicks in like a turbo when under load. The Elise comes standard with a six-speed transmission that makes it a blast to open up. It seems that there's power to be found in every gear. I also discovered what all of the buzz was about in the handling department, dodging potholes at a bit more than the legal limit. The Elise felt firm, yet never rattled me like some of its stiffer springed competition. After about an hour, I did start to feel a bit of a dull pain in my lower back, attributed to the less than plush drivers' seat that I praised earlier. The seat has a lumbar support like the pump sneakers of the early 90's. Much like the sneaker fad, I think it was mostly for show, because the pain never went away. In stop and go traffic, the Elise's high-revving engine made taking off a bit of a throttle-blipping chore. The motor doesn't really come alive until about four grand. The cross-drilled rotors provided as standard equipment are more than adequate when bringing this English go-cart to a stop. Other features like the lightweight composite body as well as the aluminum wheels say a lot about Lotus' dedication to creating a supercar within a reasonable budget. *The Elise is not big on trunk space, but hopefully your date won't be either.* This car is it when it comes to style in the city. It's affordable, yet provides the owner with stares of envy that super car owners with twice the investment only dream about.

After my time spent with the Elise, I'd have to say that this wouldn't be my number one choice of transportation on a road trip, but I would be the first to valet this bad boy at any club in the city. Overall, the Elise is a more than well-rounded vehicle that's a joy to drive. It's about time that a car company put forth the effort to place a car into the market that has the end user's best interest in mind as well as their own.

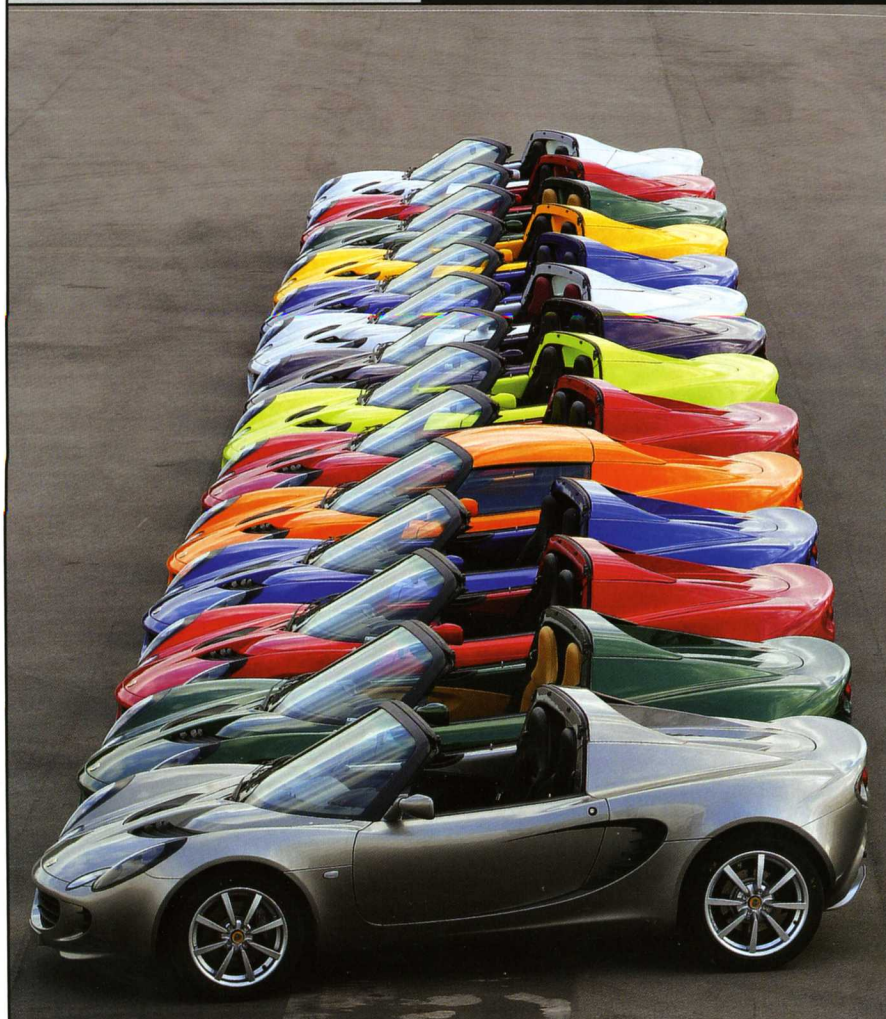
For more info on the Elise, check out the Fox Valley Motorcars website at foxvalleymotorcars.com. Be careful when test-driving the Elise...it may lead to you making a large withdrawal from your bank account.

Highs:

- A super car for under \$50k
- Great acceleration
- Killer looks
- Stops on a dime

Lows:

- Seat comfort
- High-revving motor can be a chore in traffic
- Entering and exiting a bit tricky



2005 Lotus Elise

Engine:	1.8L 16-valve DOHC w/ variable valve timing
Horsepower:	190 hp @ 7800rpm
Torque:	133 ft-lbs @ 6800rpm
Transmission:	6-speed manual
0-60:	4.9 sec
Top speed:	150 mph
Curb weight:	1984 lbs
EPA city/hwy:	23/27 mpg
Base price:	\$42,990