



*The clay models representing the final three possible iterations of the Evora, one of which got the nod. (Courtesy Lotus Cars)*



*Mirror image: front-three-quarter view of the three finalists for the Evora design; certain features such as the front splitter would appear in subsequent production versions. (Courtesy Lotus Cars)*

cars need to look good on the day they're launched, they need to look good five years into production, and they need to look good 20 years from now, from whence they occupy the classic car market as well."

Incorporating the DNA of Lotus is an important factor as well. "We want this to be recognisable, so when we talk about Lotus DNA, a few things are relevant: first of all, the front of the car, so we have a signature grille, and we highlight certain technical features on the car and make them key characteristics of the design, so the top exit radiator, the rear wing and the rear diffuser are all there to create downforce, while other details such as the cutaway sill are very important, not least because it improves ingress and egress out of the car. Perhaps most fundamentally with any Lotus, though, is that it should look agile, athletic and sleek, and the agility aspect comes from the way we shrink-wrap the forms over the mechanical package, we tuck the body surface under, we cut away the sill as well, so the wheels look as if they're at each corner, so it has a fantastic stance, really short overhangs and no wasted space at all. The athleticism comes from the strong shoulder on the car, which you see here: if you look at the car in plan view you can see a lot of muscular shape and that is also accentuated in side view so it looks like an animal torso.



*The Evora always had a distinctive front grille 'mouth,' revised quite radically with the 400 version introduced in 2015. (Courtesy Jason Parnell)*

"This sleekness comes from the fluid forms on the car that run effortlessly from the front of the vehicle right the way to the back highlighted by crisp intersection lines. Of course, it's also important that we have new characteristics on the car, so we're



*Releasing 2000bhp, Gavan Kershaw lights up the rear tyres of the Evija hypercar on the Goodwood startline, 2021. (Courtesy Antony Fraser)*

which in turn dictated the size of the holes in the bodywork, a significant consideration for the styling team. Richard had to make sure that it worked harmoniously with safety factors such as pedestrian impact legislation.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the Evora frontal structure and bodywork was designed to be relatively soft, with an ankle catcher at the bottom of the bumper which ensured the pedestrian would fall onto a soft bonnet. That softness was also a function of the radiator ducts, which emerged in the upper deck of the panel, while the wiper mechanism had to be accommodated aft of them. There was much more energy to disperse on the

Evora than on the Elise or the Exige because it weighed half as much again as either of those models, so the tub was more solid and significantly stiffer. The front and rear structures were essentially sacrificial, as shown on the crash testing video of a perpendicular frontal impact, where the subframe concertinaed to about a third of its original length at 35mph. This came about by the spacing of the rivets, the thickness, caging and shapes of the boxes, and the positioning of the windows. Richard credited Tony Shute with locating the battery package over the gearbox and making it accessible from the boot, "A great solution, since it is in a dry but comparatively cool area of the car."



The Evora GT4 was a successful contender in the 2011 British GT Championship, driven by Ollie Jackson and Jack Drinkall. (Courtesy Johnny Tipler)



Resplendent in red, white and blue, the Evora GT4's Pollock-esque livery promotes Anglo-Japanese synergies. (Courtesy Lotus Cars)



Tokai ran an Evora for five seasons in the GT300 class of Japan's Super GT, with backing from Lotus Cars Japan. (Courtesy Lotus Cars)



Stanbridge Motorsport ran James Simmons and Fraser Smart in an Evora GT4 in the 2019 and 2020 British GT Cup series. (Courtesy Sarah Hall)

by the regulations, but carefully integrated so they suited the lines of the car. The powertrain was a 4.0-litre, 395bhp version of the Evora's normal 3.5-litre normally-aspirated engine, with Cosworth electronic management, allied to a Cima 6-speed sequential gearbox. Maintaining its relationship with the road car, the GT4 used the same suspension with forged aluminium

double wishbones, Eibach springs and dampers, plus AP Racing brakes. The exhaust was unrestricted but retained the catalyst. The Cup GT4 ran on Pirelli slick tyres mounted on 18-inch centre-lock Rimstock wheels. The fronts were the same size as the road car's, but the rears were smaller in diameter than the road car to suit the characteristics of the slicks. At the time, it



*Rushing the Evora towards Monte Baldo and the Parco Regionale, winding upwards along short, fast straights and wonderful hairpin-punctuated backroads. (Courtesy Jason Parnell)*

the corn-basket plains of the Veneto is marked by a transition to arable farming, maize fields alternating with wheat, though strong aromas of cattle waft through the humid air. Even in late June the combines have started the wheat harvest. Avenues of Lombardy poplars, little canals and aqueducts define the landscape, with more orchards, vineyards and big wine co-ops. The appropriate weapon of choice on these field-boundary farm roads would be an Elise, though the bigger Evora acquits itself well enough. Birdsong is audible in quiet moments, but the chirruping of cicadas is omnipresent.

That evening we keep a rendezvous in Verona, not with Romeo and Juliet, nor the Two Gentlemen of that ilk, but with Aida, Giuseppe Verdi's protégé who's playing under the stars

*The smooth blacktop flanking Lake Garda was irresistible for tracking shots during our Hethel to Verona road trip. (Courtesy Jason Parnell)*



### Elisa Artioli and the Evora

Granddaughter of Romano Artioli who owned Lotus from 1993 to 1998, Elisa was just three-years old when the Elise was launched. It's a matter of genius that Artioli named the new sports car after his granddaughter, bequeathing her an original Series 1 Elise in the process. Having passed her test, Elisa began driving her heirloom Elise, leading Lotus expeditions on road trips such as the Stelvio pass, not far from her home in north-east Italy. Having interviewed her in the past about her Elise, I quizzed her in 2021 about the Evora, and here's her response.

"The Evora is the first all-new Lotus after the Elise. To me, it is incomprehensible that the Evora never got the attention and appreciation she really deserved. She is a true Lotus in every respect. I am mainly used to driving my Elise, which is why it took me a while to understand the Evora. To start with, she felt very large. One thing I still find challenging is the lack of a rear view, especially when parking without using the back-up camera."

"After spending some time driving the Evora, getting used to her and adapting to her different dimensions, I felt that she has all the ingredients of a proper Lotus. The crisp response to the steering, preciseness and responsiveness is something you only find in a Lotus. The Evora is so powerful and agile. What I especially like is the sound she makes, and the fact that she has a lot of luggage space. She is a very good driving companion on long distance trips. She is definitely a perfect Gran Turismo, but also a powerful supercar. That, however, didn't stop me from taking her to Ikea as well!"

"This particular model is my favourite one. It is a model-year 2017 Evora 410 Sport, featuring the ducktail spoiler and slats rather than a window in the back. Also, it has many carbon-fibre parts like the roof, the front splitter, the mirrors, the seats and the front access panel. The combination of dark grey with the yellow accents and the black forged wheels just looks awesome."

As we went to press, Elisa had just ordered the very last Elise and Exige to be built, both finished in gold with golden upholstery!



*The Elise's namesake, Elisa Artioli, also fell in love with the Evora – in this case a GT410 Sport. (Courtesy Joerg Uhr)*



*Elisa Artioli describes the Evora as "a perfect Gran Turismo." (Courtesy Joerg Uhr)*

### SIMPLY GORGEOUS

#### The magnificent V6 echoes off the soaring cliffs that form Cheddar Gorge

It's a bonus when a road trip enables me to drop in and visit friends or relatives along the way. My eldest son Jules lives in Bristol with his wife, Dr Vic and their two kids Florence and Henry (name checks all round!), and after weekendening with them I drove the Evora GT410 Sport press car the short distance to Cheddar Gorge for a rendezvous with my snapping chum Antony Fraser. I know this actual car quite well, having had a blast in it previously to visit lifelong Lotus aficionado Malcolm Ricketts at his Hertfordshire base – when my local pal Steph Ewen took some pictures of it.

Approaching Cheddar Gorge from its southern start point, you pass at 20mph through the bustling village, easing quickly into the winding rock corridor. The utterly dramatic chasm provides an awesome setting for a circumspect blast along its serpentine thoroughfare, a steady incline (or syncline, as you'll want to go up and down it) designated the B3135, demanding total attentiveness due to the tendency of the feral goat population to suddenly dart – or leisurely amble – across the road, plus reckless cyclists (wrecked cyclists pending) hurtling downhill and puffing up it, as well as striding hikers armed with Scandi-poles. Those soaring cliffs, sometimes sheer on the south side, are staggeringly awesome – 137m at the max – but beware falling rocks: the Evora received a near miss when a tumbling stone ended up beneath the car.



*King rocker: the Evora did have a near miss in a Cheddar Gorge car park. (Courtesy Antony Fraser)*



*Soaring cliffs, flocked by wild goats, provide a craggy backdrop for an outing with the GT410 Sport. (Courtesy Johnny Tipler)*

Longleat Estate owns the southern flanks, and the National Trust the northern ones. A Longleat employee drew up at one of the generously broad parking areas in his 90TDi, bent on collecting the garbage he said was ejected nightly by nocturnal party types, though the large quantities of rubber deposited by their doughnuts did prove impossible to harvest. Why are some



*Snaking through Cheddar Gorge in the Evora GT410 Sport was a highly pleasurable experience. (Courtesy Antony Fraser)*

of us so slovenly? Meanwhile, birds of prey including buzzards, kites and falcons circle high overhead. The limestone canyon was formed 1.2-million years ago when water trapped below ground and frozen in the caverns melted after the ice age, and subsequently the erosion by the underground Yeo river, causing slumping that's visible in the in the bare rock strata, and creating