

Elan's got international intrigue on top of its curious build story, though the original body tags are long gone.

Potosky sold it to Lotus enthusiast (and serial Seven and Elan owner) John Malcolm of Silver Spring, Maryland, who keeps the car's early records and remembers the Broadspeed Elan thusly: "It was running when I bought it, but not well, and was a little scuffed up for such a low-mileage car (about 4,100 miles). Somebody had messed with the carbs and left a couple of bits out, and I later learned that the clutch had been replaced without machining the scored flywheel. The disc that was in it

didn't last too long! (First gear was fairly tall and it took a bit of clutch slip to get it off the line)." It was a street-driven machine until Malcolm sold it in the late '70s.

The '80s are a time of mystery; Malcolm recalls selling it to someone in South Carolina, but by the end of the decade, it was in a backyard in Mesa, Arizona. Bill Begley from Arizona Twin-Cam and Carlo DeRi found it and partnered on the car, restored it (including a color change to Ferrari Fly Yellow), then sold it to the current owner, Bill Close of Mesa, Arizona, in the late '90s. Bill has maintained it ever since. It's still registered and titled as a 1964, a year that lets it quietly duck out of Arizona's increasingly onerous smog regulations.

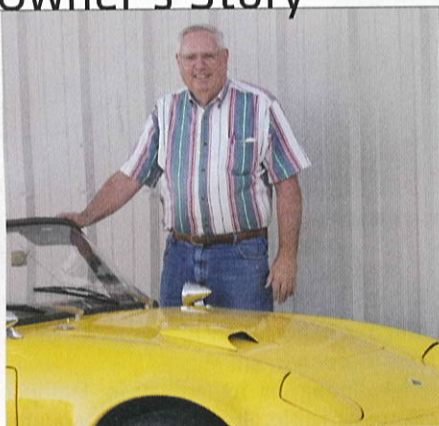
Our drive, with owner Bill riding shotgun, revealed what the previous press reports expounded on at length—that this was a much happier car when it was on the move. Revs and clutch-slipping were necessary to get things off the line, so acceleration wasn't startling despite the big power and light curb weight. Once moving, the steamroller tires offered more grip than legal speeds could ever trick into letting go, lane changes were practically telepathic, and acceleration above three grand (or where we assumed 3,000 RPM to be—most of the needles on the dash were waving like the *Gilligan's Island* crew after spotting a helicopter) was epic. The clutch and the snickety shifter were well-matched. The mechanical chatter of the BDA mixed in equal part with the exhaust (which currently includes—whisper it—a Midas muffler) was blunted only by the rush of wind in your ears; the effect is that you want to go faster to hear the mechanical beauty ticking away therein, in effect turning up the volume. But the wind gets louder too, so you want to go faster still. And so on.

The ride allows you to feel every expansion joint, road repair and gum wrapper that the contemporary 205-section Fuldas run across, and could get tiresome on long-

er Interstate journeys—but it was always firm, never crashy or in audible danger of breaking something. (And honestly, is this really a longer Interstate journey kind of car?) Just as remarkable was the notion that your driver, 6 foot 1 and entirely too much circumference, was able to slot himself comfortably behind the wheel. That's not special to this car—any Elan will do that.

So, what is the Broadspeed Elan, really? It depends on your point of view. (No one will deny that it's a hoot to bomb around town in.) Purists may sniff that, at its core, it's a retagged '72 Elan Sprint that's been around the world and back again. And maybe they're right. But for others, this one-and-only Broadspeed Elan encapsulates the far-flung associations within the British end of Ford's Total Performance orbit—Lotus, Cosworth, Broadspeed—and crystalizes them all into a single, singular sports star. It lives on the ragged edge of acceptability, one that's far more comfortable at super-legal speeds than pootling around town. It's a car that none of those companies sought to build—but the only one they all contributed to. 🌐

Elan Broadspeed Owner's Story



I like fast, good-handling cars. I was racing Alfa Romeos in the mid-1990s, and while my race engines were being rebuilt at Arizona Twin-Cam, my local Alfa shop, I saw the Lotus that was being restored for my friend Carlo DeRi. I knew Carlo, I saw him out with the car several times at events, and when he decided to sell it in 1998, I decided to buy it. Since then, I've heard many stories about the car from many Lotus owners and knew that it had an interesting history. I love its history and provenance, but most of all, I like to drive it!

—Bill Close



Club Scene

Lotus, Ltd.

P.O. Box L
College Park, Maryland 20741
www.lotuscarclub.org
Dues: \$45; Membership: 1,000

www.lotuselansprint.com

Not a club, but a comprehensive site dedicated to the Lotus Elan Sprint, the car that the Broadspeed Elan is based on

Pros & Cons

Pros

There's just the one
Sublime communication from chassis and steering
The mechanical chatter of 16 valves and two cams

Cons

There's just the one
Not so snappy off-the-line
Rough-ish ride could get tiresome