

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Joining the Radford Lotus 62/2 on its first shakedown around Los Angeles](#)

Lead

Ahead of the first deliveries of the Lotus 62/2 Coachbuilt by Radford, we joined for an exclusive first drive through Santiago Canyon in Orange County and caught up with Ant Anstead at Radford's Newport Beach HQ to learn more about the developments they've made since its reveal last year.



Assuming your head has not been buried underground for the past 12 months, you should be familiar with the rebirth of Radford, a rather cool coach building company based in California with a little bit of British heart. [We sat down with the guys at Radford last year to discuss their newly-unveiled supercar](#), but for those of you that missed it, the freshly reformed operation, spearheaded by Ant Anstead, Jenson Button and Roger Behle, is ambitiously ushering in a new era of coachbuilt motoring. This time last year Radford announced their first collaboration with a manufacturer and in August we had our first taste of the exquisitely styled Lotus Type 62/2 coachbuilt by Radford. A remarkable first car to relaunch a brand with when you consider Lotus have not collaborated in this way, for decades.



Of course, we all adore the historical references and tobacco era liveries, but so far very little has been divulged about the car's performance or engineering. That is until now. Classic Driver are thrilled to bring you an exclusive first look under the skin of Radford Motors' first offering, and as we've come to learn, the 62/2 is so much more than a retro pastiche or re-bodied Lotus. In fact it's far from it. After joining the team for a test drive around the scenic canyon roads of Southern California, we caught up with Ant Anstead at Radford's Newport Beach headquarters to find out what's beneath that beautiful body and why the 62/2 matters.



“We premiered our TV show ‘Radford Returns’ on January 22nd in the UK and US, and that really is the last bit of information we’ve given out. The show documents what I think is the first half of the process, reviving Radford, partnering with Lotus, manufacturing what is effectively a prototype and design concept. What’s happened since the premier is tons and tons of re-engineering underneath the skin, and this will be the first chance we get to tell anyone what we’ve been up to.

“The starting point for this car was selected by Jensen and he chose the already awesome Lotus Exige. As a basis the Exige is epic, its very raw, very visceral, very analogue, and we could’ve just left it at that... but we didn’t. Everybody knows we made the car longer and wider. On the show those engineering solutions were extemporary as we established our body designs. But for clients cars we go several steps further. Starting by creating an all new rear spaceframe. Through Jensen’s connections in Formula 1, we turned to ROCK, a world class team of ex-F1 engineers, to completely redesign and develop the rear space frame not only to be longer, but also lighter. The whole car now weighs close to 960 kg, making it the lightest supercar available on the planet today.” Although Lotus is supplying the iconic, extruded and bonded, aluminum Exige chassis, little else is carried over from the Lotus sports car. Ant continues...



“The car has all new wishbones, new uprights, new hubs, it even has titanium driveshafts. Everything is machined individually, all billet. The upper crossmember is carbon and we have carbon wheels with machined magnesium centers, which saves so much weight. We’ve changed to 4-way adjustable dampers and we’ve installed an electronic lift kit so it can clear speed bumps and driveways. So much attention to detail has been layered into this car.” It would seem that no part of the 62/2 has been spared the Radford touch, including the fully redeveloped 3.5 litre V6 engine.



“Every Radford engine is manufactured in Austria by JUBU Performance and almost everything in it is new; new pistons, new con-rods, new crankshaft, new cylinder heads, new superchargers. We changed the exhaust and the ECU and we’ve managed to move the engine forward by 100mm and lower it by 80mm thanks to a dry sump system. Most customers have spec’d their cars to between 550 and 600 BHP. The power to weight.... Well you will see.”



It’s important to remember that Radford consider themselves a coachbuilder, not a manufacturer and that every car they build is uniquely tailored to the client. “Apart from the JPS, which is a fixed model, the trim options are endless and it’s been really interesting to see how customers spec their cars. It’s actually quite fascinating to get inside the minds of our clients. We’ve completely re-engineered the interior so the panels are all lighter and we’ve changed the seating position. A lot of time has been spent on the interior to create a Le Mans feel. We wanted to keep it analogue and to have the fewest number of moving parts to make it functional. I really like it because we only have a handful of switches. It feels like a racer, there is an obvious heritage lean.

“We’ve also removed some of the fancy paneling that would have gone in the back of the car. We realised that with our new space frame, the carbon crossmember and the beautiful shocks and wishbones that we didn’t want to cover it up. When you open the rear clam shell, we wanted it to have this race car feel. This car would look at home being fettled in the paddocks of Le Mans, eagerly waiting to get out there and drive.”



In recent years digital connectivity has become an increasingly important aspect of our driving experience and Radford has developed a solution for this too. “We’ve developed a Radford app. In keeping with Colin Chapman’s ethos of adding lightness, we’ve fitted discreet speakers within the car but without a stereo system. Your phone becomes the system, it sits on a magnet on the dashboard and the Radford app brings up maps, music, contacts and details about the car. This is something we’ve been really excited about developing and I think it’s something that other low volume manufacturers will follow and adopt. I mean it makes sense right? Everyone carries a phone now, why not make it part of the car. That’s what Colin Chapman would do.” It is clear that Radford Motors has chosen to define itself by its principles, exhaustive attention to the details of engineering combined with bespoke refinements.



“We asked ourselves from the beginning, what would Colin Chapman do? What would Harold Radford do? Colin Chapman’s agenda was very clear; having the least number of moving parts to get an effective outcome, and making things as light as possible. Whereas Harold Radford was all about refinement, comfort, individuality. So treading that balance has been considered on literally every single component.

“What we’ve shown so far is an A-surface visualisation of the first Radford in several decades and the last ever petrol-powered Lotus, which is great. Most would agree it is an attractive car, we’ve carried the heritage from the original 62 really well, I think we have captured the design DNA. You can see it when they sit next to each other. And this is at a time when heritage is relevant, but as a performance piece of equipment that currently has the caveat of being the world’s lightest supercar available today, the engineering is more exciting to us than the looks. Yeah she’s pretty, but man she drives!



“The uprights for example, I would place one on my mantelpiece, but let’s be honest, most people will never see them. You can’t see them because the carbon discs are so big. It will be this piece that nobody will know is there, but we will know it’s there and that it’s been designed with purpose. If you can save a gram or make it perform better, do it. We’ve not compromised anything on this car. Everything has been engineered deliberately to make the car perform.”

Ant’s excitement for Radford is palpable. Far more than just a passion project, to the team here in Newport beach, Radford represents everything a car should and could be. A car defined by its principles and built without compromise. Your chance to see the Lotus 62/2 coachbuilt by Radford in the flesh will be from June 23 to 26 at Goodwood Festival of Speed where Jenson Button will be driving up the hill. We cannot wait.

Text by Daniel H. Lackey / Photos by Huckleberry Mountain for Classic Driver © 2022

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Gallery

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