

CLASSIC DRIVER

Is this ultra-rare Lotus the ultimate 1990s sleeper?

Lead

Long before Lotus began building heavyweight electric vehicles, they made one of the greatest sleepers of all time. This Lotus Carlton heading to Historic Auctioneers’ Flight of Elegance sale on May 3rd just might be peak super saloon.



Regardless of what was going on under the bonnet, if somebody asked you to hand over 140,000 pounds for a new Vauxhall saloon, you would most likely tell them to get lost (and rightfully so). Perhaps that's why the Lotus Carlton, an extensively modified version of the Vauxhall saloon of the same name, failed meet the sales figures the executives had hoped for back in the early 1990s. Combining the Carlton's period price of 48,000 pounds with the then-recent depression, it meant just 950 units were sold between 1990 and 1992, making it quite the rarity on today's roads.





However, don't let the underwhelming sales figures fool you; Lotus put every ounce of their race-winning experience into making the Carlton the ultimate sleeper of its era. Under the hood, they bored-out the standard Carlton's 3.0-litre, 24-valve straight-six to 3.6-litres and added to Garrett turbochargers for good measure. The resulting power output was a mighty 377 horsepower, making the Lotus Carlton the world's fastest saloon upon its release with its 177mph top speed.

To hint at its considerable pace, the Lotus Carlton was equipped with a number of exterior enhancements, including bulging wheel arches, a rear wing, and a vented bonnet. In a brighter shade, its sporting credentials would be obvious, but the Lotus Carlton was only sold in this unassuming shade of Imperial Green, disguising its more muscular appearance in anything but broad daylight.



Now you have a fantastic opportunity to add one of these desirable super saloons to your garage as this well-maintained 1992 example heads to [Historic Auctioneers' Flight of Elegance sale on May 3rd](#). Showing 73,492 miles since new, this Carlton has certainly been enjoyed throughout its life, meaning the next owner need not worry about taking this rare Lotus on the open road and adding to the figure. As high-performance saloons of this era from the likes of AMG and Alpina continue to appreciate, this Lotus Carlton would likely be a savvy addition to any collection!

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