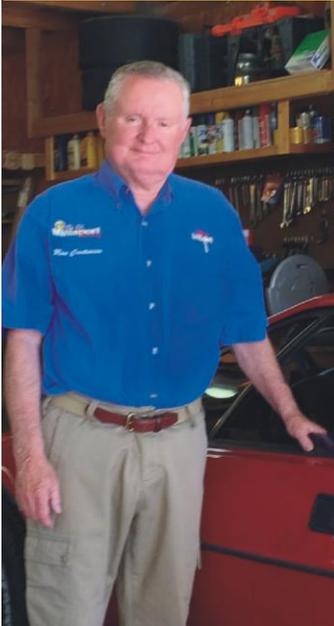




Ron Couturier Roncouturier78@gmail.com

TECH TALK

Roger Moore never actually drove the underwater Esprit.



The Lotus Esprit Submarine Car

In July 1977 United Artist released the James Bond "007" action packed movie, *"The Spy who Loved Me"*. The spectacular film, starring Roger Moore, was the tenth in a series of Ian Fleming's novels based on British secret agent 007. The films' budget was 14 million, part of the budget (100,000), went into the construction of a 1976 Lotus Esprit submarine car. The car was used for an undersea film sequence of James Bond driving the Esprit off a pier and having the car submerge underwater to avoid villains chasing him. There were six Esprit's used in the movie but only one was used as a "wet sub" car. The car was built by the marine engineering firm, Perry Oceanographic, Inc., based in Riviera Beach Florida.

The vehicle, using a Lotus Esprit Series1 body shell, was propelled by four electric motors. The interior, which was of a wet environment, in no way resembled a road going Esprit. The Lotus consisted of a flat platform filled with an array of electric motors, pumps, levers, batteries, pipes and ballast tanks. Roger Moore never actually drove the underwater Esprit.

The crew consisted of two scuba divers equipped with auxiliary air tanks, the pilot, Don Griffin, was a retired U. S. NAVY SEAL. The stream of air bubbles that follow it through the water in the film are an example of cinematic magic - they were created using a large supply of Alka-Seltzer tablets. The underwater film scenes were shot in the Bahamas. After filming was completed, the Lotus aquatic car went on a promotional tour. At the end of the tour the car was

shipped to Long Island, New York, and placed in a storage unit. The storage unit was prepaid for 10 years; at the end of the lease no one claimed the contents, so the storage unit was placed on auction. The auction took place in 1989. A Long Island man who owned a small tool rental company acquired the contents of the storage in a "blind auction". He paid less than \$100.00 for the contents which contained the famous movie car. He had never seen a "James Bond" movie. All he knew at the time was that he had bought a strange looking white sports car that had no wheels.



He soon found out about the car's history and went out and rented the 007 movie. The new owner had the exterior restored and painted to its original color; the car then was occasionally exhibited between 1990 and 2013. In September 2013 the car was put up for auction by RM Auctions in Battersea, South-West London. Businessman Elon Musk purchased the car for just under one million dollars. Elon Musk, a South African born Canadian-American business magnet, founded Space X and co-founded Pay Pal and Tesla Motors. His Space X, became the first private company to deliver cargo to the International Space Station.