

50
YEARS
OF LOVE
AND
REVOLU-
TION



ENDURING LOVE

Few revolutions have enjoyed such sustained acclaim; 50 years after the original Mini was launched, the brand continues to put smiles on faces around the world. A look back through its history helps explain the enduring popularity of this cult car.

1. DAY ONE

A revolutionary concept.

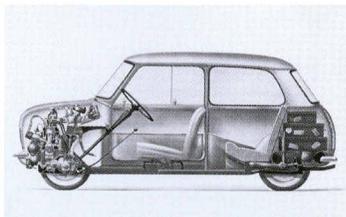
The original Mini was a stroke of technical genius, the concept of an economical and space-saving small car triggering dramatic changes across the motor industry and beyond. Indeed, the significance of the Mini is closely linked to the cultural and social arena into which it was born.

1959. The first examples of the Mini roll off the assembly line. Elsewhere, Fidel Castro comes to power in Cuba, the Dalai Lama flees from the Chinese military to India, Nikita S. Khrushchev makes history as the first Soviet head of government to visit the USA, and the USSR becomes the first nation to send a probe – the Lunik 2 – to the moon.

These were times of widespread unease and upheaval, and the world was gripped by the menace of the Cold War. At the same time, however, a new confidence was taking root among young people. Rock 'n' roll, miniskirts and rebelling against their parents were all de rigueur. Teenage years no longer represented

merely a transitional phase into adulthood, but a stage of life and expression of attitude in their own right.

Meanwhile, Richard Hamilton, Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein and Jasper Johns had opened up totally new avenues of artistic expression with their pop art movement; in France the New Wave signalled a move away from long established cinematic conventions, film director François Truffaut putting himself at the head of the curve with his first feature film *The Four Hundred Blows*; and the release of Günter Grass' *The Tin Drum* reverberated like a



A cross-section of the original Mini.



A star is born: the 1959 Mini.

thunderbolt through the fledgling Federal Republic.

A whole generation sought to break free from the shackles of old-fashioned values. "Make love, not war" was the message from hippies a few years later. In Great Britain, a musical revolution was unfolding. Bands like The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, The Who, The Kinks and Pink Floyd not only added fuel to the teenage fire, they changed the face of the world. This spirit of awakening was also reflected in fashion, language and the need for personal mobility.

The Mini fitted into this new world order seamlessly, with its new design language, inherent understatement, groundbreaking engineering and space-optimising body. It looked totally different from the cars the

teenagers' parents were driving, it was nimble, more dynamic, quicker. And ultimately it was only a matter of time before those same parents had a Mini parked in their driveway, eager to secure a piece of this new youthful chic for themselves.

2. FAMILY VALUES

Siblings for the Mini – from the Countryman to the Mini Moke.

Right from the earliest days of the Mini, the question on everybody's lips was whether its simple perfection and clever, space-saving engineering could be transferred to other body shapes. Where else could you find such progressive technology in a machine with such a small footprint? All it needed was for cre-

1959

August sees the unveiling of the Morris Mini Minor and Austin Seven.



1963

A Mini wins the Alpine Rally.

1965

The one-millionth Mini hits the roads.



1966

Not fair: "wrong lights" bring disqualification from the Rallye Monte Carlo.

1971

A record-breaking 318,475 units of the Mini are built.

1976

The Mini Limited Edition 1000 is the first special-edition model.



1961

Powerful debut: John Cooper builds the Mini Cooper.



1964

First Mini victory in the Rallye Monte Carlo.

1967

A Mini stars in The Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour*.

1969

The Clubman arrives.

1972

Total Mini sales hit the 3,000,000 mark.



Very British: the Traveller from 1960.

ative designers and engineers to enclose this technology in a new wrapper. However, it still came as something of a surprise that the Brits would risk diluting the chrome and frill-free form of the Mini – an almost futuristic look at the time – just a year after its world premiere, particularly as it was to do so with a small estate car clad with strips of wood. The Countryman and Traveller duly achieved cult status from the moment they were unveiled in 1960. The blend of avant-garde technology, timber and two small rear doors had such a leftfield panache that now even automotive traditionalists could feel comfortable as members of the Mini approval society. After all, it was now an even more practical car, offered improved access to the slightly bigger boot and had a look that was as British as a Sunday roast.

But that was not the end of the story; the two estates were joined in the range by handy van versions and curious pickups. The Mini Moke from 1964 had the Army to thank for its addition to the family, answering as it did their request for a lightweight, strong and manoeuvrable vehicle that could, if necessary, be dropped out of an aircraft by parachute. Moke admirers plumped for the most “airy” of the Mini breed as an expression of their philosophy on life. Production of the Moke ended in Britain in 1968 but another 26,000 units were produced in Australia, the band of devotees ensuring that the factory was kept at full capacity. And when Australia also pulled the plug, another 10,000 examples were built in Portugal.

The 21st-century MINI has counted a works Convertible in its line-up for some time already – the original having been denied an “official” open-top sibling – and a small SAV is also waiting in the wings to fill another market niche. However, it seems unlikely that we will see another Moke anytime soon. Which is a shame: no other car has offered so much fresh air on the move for so little money.

3. THE SPEED OF YOUTH

Spectacular triumphs turn the Mini into the darling of motorsport.

Everybody loves an underdog, the little guy socking it to the high and

mightily. We admire examples of the apparently weak taking on the powerful and, with their smart brain, strategic nous and skill, showing them how it’s done. It is therefore not surprising that resourceful engineers and racing drivers soon picked out the Mini as the perfect David with which to put the wind up the Goliaths on the world’s race tracks and rally stages. One of the great exponents of the rally art, the Finn Rauno Aaltonen, recognised the strengths of the Mini at an early stage. The “Rally Professor”, whose thorough knowledge of the physical limits of driving and of vehicle mechanics remain the stuff of legend to this day, saw his first Mini in Finland in 1960: “It was a green 850.” Immediately he was struck by the realisation that here was the perfect rally car: “Small, nimble, all four wheels positioned right in the corners, an optimum wheelbase combined with the smallest possible basic area and, above all, this low polar moment of inertia. As soon as I laid eyes on the Mini, I knew it was a winner,” he recalled.

The Mini boasted extremely precise steering and changed direction with unparalleled ease. Its first finishes in circuit racing came as early as 1960 and it

wasn’t long before Pat Moss, sister of Formula One driver Stirling Moss and one of Britain’s finest female racers, became the first woman to drive a Mini in race action. Her victory in the 1962 Tulip Rally in Holland was the maiden success for the Mini Cooper in a major rally. Despite celebrating some spectacular results in the Mini, Moss soon switched camps to the Ford team and later moved on to Saab. She won the European Ladies’ Rally Championship five times, and also found time to write two books on rally racing (including her 1967 publication *The story so far*).

The incredible popularity of the Mini was further enhanced by its epic encounters with much larger cars. Drivers of significantly more powerful Jaguars, Mercedes, BMWs and Lancias often had



Pat Moss.



Pat Moss in the 1962 Geneva Rally.

1980

Hard times with production dropping sharply.

1984

The Mini 25 marks the brand’s 25th birthday.



1987

Twiggy records another TV commercial for the Mini.

1988

Sir Alec Issigonis dies at the age of 81.



1991

The “Lamm Cabriolet” is launched in a 75-unit series.



2000

The final classic Mini, no. 5,387,862.

1982

The exclusive Mini Mayfair and the Mini City step out in style.



1985

The London Collection kicks off with the Mini Ritzy.



1990

Rover gives the classic Mini a shot in the arm.

1994

Paddy Hopkirk drives the Rallye Monte Carlo one more time.

to concede that the Mini was more than a match for them. At least as central to the giant-killing reputation of the Mini were its legendary rally triumphs as, for a few years, it held the rally world in a vice-like grip. Among the stars of the sport hitting the headlines in the Mini were Paddy Hopkirk, Timo Mäkinen and Rauno Aaltonen. He might not have been quite as quick as Mäkinen, but Aaltonen's greater ability to keep his car in one piece meant he notched up more wins.

The Mini delivered blow after crushing blow to its rivals, its superiority on occasion prompting a change in the rules. The Rallye Monte Carlo was particularly partial to shifting the goalposts. The Mini had rolled over the competition in dominant style in 1964 and 1965, but the following year Timo Mäkinen was disqualified - ostensibly for having the wrong type of headlamps on his car. Among those incensed by the ruling was Rauno Aaltonen, who returned in 1967 to win the rally once again and then finished third in 1968.

4. RARE BEAUTY

Limited editions become sought-after items.

The Mini remains a style icon - and one available in many guises. From the early days, special-edition models in small series have earned cult status. Limited editions in special colours and trims have

given the Mini fresh impetus time and again, and often acted as a test bed for new technical features. Indeed, works alloy wheels and rear seatbelts both made their debuts in special-edition models.

Just as the Mini was beginning to feel its age, its fire was rekindled with a selection of exclusive variants: the first Mayfair edition from 1982 and the four London Collection models, launched between 1985 and 1987, stick in the mind. The latter included the Mini Ritz (in Silver Leaf paint finish with the first Mini alloy wheels and an interior dominated by Prussian Blue), the Targa Red Chelsea, the Mini Piccadilly, decked out - in true 80s style - in Cashmere Gold with chrome bumpers and tailpipe, and last but not least, the first Park Lane in black, with beige and black striped velvet upholstery. The limited editions were sold in Britain in production runs of



Silver 80s: the Mini Ritz.

between 1,500 and 2,200. Added to this number were always a few hundred cars for export. Right-hand-drive Japan, likewise in the grip of Mini mania, was usually one of the recipients.

Well-organised internet forums have helped piece together an overview of the myriad Mini variations. These dedicated custodians of history have counted a total of some 140 models, variants and special editions (including almost 50 official limited editions) for the seven model series from 1959 to 2000. The Mini Cabriolet (1993-1996) surely has a very special place within the group. In 1991, German Rover dealer Lamm converted a Mini Cooper into a soft-top and was given special clearance to sell 75 examples in Britain through Rover. Massive demand for the car prompted Rover to put its own convertible model into production in 1993. Not exactly cheap at the time, the soft-top remains highly sought after today.

5. THE RENAISSANCE

Clever ideas turn the new MINI into an attitude to life.

Building an unusual car is one thing, selling it is quite another. And all the more so when you're talking about a cult item anchored into the iconographic memories of at least one entire generation.

When the new MINI came onto the market in 2001, it wasn't horsepower that

took centre stage but fun at the wheel and excitement. "Is it love?" mused the adverts. Oh yes, and at first sight to boot. The MINI was hogging the public consciousness with spectacular appearances - in XXL limo trim with flatscreen TVs and a whirlpool at the Athens Olympics, decked out in fancy dress at the London Mardi Gras, and posing as a MINI hotel at the football World Cup in Germany. One day it was floating on the River Thames in Christmas tree formation, the



Creative Use of Space: the MINI hotel.

next it could be seen suspended on the side of a building like a giant yo-yo. The MINI has also shown its stylish side as a star of the "Life Ball" Aids charity gala, and in New York the brand demonstrated the "Creative Use of Space" on a rooftop. It is an approach that has seen MINI charm not only legions of younger fans, but also aficionados of the classic Mini.

By: Jürgen Lewandowski, Peter Würth



2001

The new MINI arrives to popular acclaim.

2003

Economical and quick: the diesel-powered MINI.



2006

The second generation of the new MINI.



2008

The fastest: the MINI John Cooper Works.

2009

Open all hours: the new MINI Convertible.



2002

Speedy sibling: the MINI Cooper S.



2004

Always open: the new MINI Convertible.



2007

Unique design: the MINI Clubman.

2009

The MINI 50 Mayfair and MINI 50 Camden mark 50 years.



