

MINI

US Press Information



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1959–2009: Fifty Years of MINI.

Woodcliff Lake, NJ – September 15, 2009... Economical small cars have a great future.

Precisely this was the premise applied from the start in developing the classic Mini, and precisely this premise applies just as much today as it did 50 years ago. Compact exterior dimensions and lots of space within the passenger compartment were essential back then, as was superior comfort, sporting driving characteristics and fuel-efficient engines as further features of the new small car from British Motor Corporation (BMC).

As a result of the Suez Crisis in 1956 with a dramatic shortage in the supply of oil, constructor Alec Issigonis was given the task to meet all these demands. Today, in turn, the quest for efficiency has become a common value shared by consumers the world over – and again a compact car from Great Britain offers the most convincing answer to this challenge.

However, neither the outstanding success of the classic Mini nor the unique position and popularity of the current MINI can be explained through economic qualities alone. For in both cases there are also emotional factors resulting from the car's characteristic flair and thrilling qualities in terms of handling. "Small car, great driving pleasure" is therefore the formula making this particularly economical rendition of mobility as attractive today as it was in the past.

Fifty years ago, to be precise on 26 August 1959, British Motor Corporation (BMC) proudly revealed the result of its development process, presenting no less than two new models to the public: the Morris Mini-Minor and the Austin Seven.

This double premiere of two almost identical four-seaters was a tribute back then to the broad range of different brands under the roof of BMC, but was also of symbolic value:

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The brilliant ideas applied by Alec Issigonis in developing this family-oriented two-seater were quite sufficient for more than one single model, and therefore were carried over most appropriately to other versions. As a result, the Mini Van and Mini Estate appeared in the market in the very first year of the classic Mini, with further models joining the range in the years to come – from the MINI Pick-Up in 1961 through the particularly sophisticated Wolseley Hornet and Riley Elf supplementing the range by the addition of two BMC brands in the same year, and all the way to the MINI Moke four-seater open all-round and presented in 1964.

The principle applied no less than fifty years ago has been re-affirmed time and again ever since the brand was re-launched through the introduction of the MINI in 2001: a superior concept offers a wide range of diversity. The MINI, as well as the MINI Clubman and the MINI Convertible, therefore boast their own specific strengths and offer unique character, while in their core remaining one thing in particular: a real MINI.

Clear vision, right concept: setting the basis for the classic Mini.

Only very few vehicle concepts have survived for such a long period and achieved such immense success – and none of them has ever seen the same diversity as the Mini. This outstanding success is also due to the fact that the MINI right from the start successfully met the requirements of its time but also offered further qualities. Measuring 3.05 meters or 120" in length and selling initially at a price of GBP 496, the MINI was just perfect for confined parking spaces and small budgets. But through its agile driving characteristics and the charming flair of its proportions, it also appealed to discerning motorists with a penchant not only for the economic use of space and economic considerations as a whole, but also on sporting performance and individual style.

To provide maximum space for the occupants within a small footprint, the classic Mini even moved the technical features and components of the car together. While the engine fitted at the front and front-wheel drive already offered the ideal concept for this purpose, even this was not sufficient in the eyes of Alec Issigonis. Rather, there was space beneath the short bonnet for a four-cylinder power unit, but only because Issigonis fitted the engine crosswise and positioned the gearbox beneath the drive unit. Clearly, this was a very innovative rendition of “form follows function”, the principle still crucial to MINI design today.

The principle of front-wheel drive with the engine fitted crosswise at the front – now the standard solution for compact cars – had admittedly already been applied by several

manufactures, but had never been used as consistently to promote driving behavior and the economic use of space as in the Mini.

The position of the 10-inch wheels right at the outmost corners of the car likewise helped to optimize driving characteristics and the space available. Wheelbase was 2.03 meters or 79.9", overall length 3.05 meters or 120.0". At the same time the MINI was 1.41 meters (55.5") wide and 1.35 meters (53.1") high.

The most important point was that 80 per cent of the car's footprint on the road was available to the passengers and their luggage. Four seats and luggage capacity of 195 liters or 6.8 cubic feet were more than most observers would believe when looking at this compact car.

A new approach was also taken in the transmission of power. Since the universal joints used at the time tended to deflect under hard movements of the steering, Issigonis decided to instead use homokinetic joints for the first time in a car. These joints were made up of a ball bearing surrounded by three cages, two of which were connected to the input and output drive shafts.

This construction allowed sufficiently large steering angles without deflection, significantly reducing the influence of the power unit on the car's steering and at the same time setting the basis for the Mini's go-kart feeling legendary to this day.

Small engine, great potential.

A four-cylinder power unit with the crankshaft running in three bearings, overhead valves and the camshaft fitted at the bottom served as the source of power on the classic Mini tailored specifically to the features and character of this innovative small car. Displacing 848 cc, the engine delivered 34 hp at 5,500 rpm, an engine speed equal back then to the revs on a thoroughbred sports car.

A very special model destined to shape the legend of the classic Mini more than any other car made its appearance just one-and-a-half years after the initial start of sales: the MINI Cooper. Sports car constructor John Cooper, already a close friend of Alec Issigonis, had recognized the sporting potential of the new small car right from the start while the prototypes were still under development. And now, with the go-ahead of management, he developed a small series of 1,000 MINI Coopers featuring a 1.0-liter power unit with maximum output of 55 hp.

Sporting highlights: three wins in the Monte Carlo Rally.

The response to this car entering the market in September 1961 was absolutely euphoric, with only one further wish: even more power. So Issigonis and Cooper enlarged the engine to 1,170 cubic centimeters, increasing maximum output to 70 hp.

Clearly, this made the MINI –Cooper S an outstanding performer not only on the road, a class victory scored by Finnish racing driver Rauno Aaltonen in the 1963 Monte Carlo Rally marking the beginning of an unprecedented series of success in motorsport leading on to three overall wins in Monte Carlo in 1964, 1965, and 1967.

These victories scored in the Monte Carlo Rally are just as much part of the brand's history as the successful production models proudly bearing the name Cooper. So right from the start when re-introducing the brand in 2001, the MINI Cooper – now with 85 kW/115 hp – played a leading role in the line-up. And re-introduction of the MINI Cooper S with its 120 kW/163 hp did not take long, either.

MINI at its best: John Cooper Works and the MINI CHALLENGE.

Today the John Cooper Works brand operating under the roof of MINI is the epitome of extreme driving pleasure based on extensive know-how in motorsport and cooperation going back several decades. Apart from accessories on the drivetrain, suspension, aerodynamics and design, John Cooper Works now also features as the brand logo on three truly outstanding models in the MINI range: the MINI John Cooper Works, the MINI John Cooper Works Clubman, and the MINI John Cooper Works Convertible.

MINI has also made a strong name for itself on the race track, the MINI CHALLENGE held for the first time in 2004 having become one of the most successful and popular Clubsport Series in the world. This year the Series will be held in four countries (Spain, Australia, New Zealand, and Germany), and is therefore more international than ever before.

Accounting for a line-up of 39 cars registered for racing, the German 2009 MINI CHALLENGE comes with a record turn-out, just as the number of races is also greater than ever before, with no less than 16 races on 8 weekends. As usual, these races will be held on the occasion of the most outstanding motorsport events in Germany and neighboring countries.

The MINI CHALLENGE owes its exceptional appeal to a truly innovative concept: motorsport meets lifestyle, a blend very popular among both drivers and fans.

The starter grid also contributes to the special atmosphere of the races, not only experienced drivers and young talents in motorsport, but also celebrities in show business and other sports taking the wheel.

The classic Mini proved its sporting talent not only in rallies, but also in road races, becoming the most outstanding racing car of the 1960s thanks to its long list of sporting achievements.

A further point is that many famous racing drivers started out their spectacular careers in a Mini. Austrian driver Nikolaus Andreas Lauda entered his first hill climb at the wheel of a classic Mini in April 1968 near the town of Linz and finishing second in his very first attempt. Just two weeks later he again proved his talent by bringing home the first win in his career destined to eventually take him to three world titles in Formula 1. And like Niki Lauda, Formula 1 champions Graham Hill, Jackie Stewart, John Surtees, Jochen Rindt, and James Hunt all gained their first racing experience in a classic Mini.

Extreme diversity right from the start in the classic Mini: from the Mini Clubman to the MINI Convertible.

Moving back to the production models, the “basic” version soon also received extra power for enhanced performance: In 1967 the classic Mini received a more powerful engine displacing 998 cubic centimeters and offering 38 hp. Two years later the MINI Clubman joined the family as a slightly larger model with a modified front end versus the classic Mini. This sister model was indeed approximately 11 cm or 4.35" longer than the original, while the Estate version replacing the Morris Mini-Traveller and the Austin Seven Countryman measured exactly 3.4 meters or 133.9" in length, with width, height and wheelbase remaining unchanged.

At the same time the MINI Cooper was taken out of the range, being replaced by the 59-hp 1.3-liter top model in the Clubman series proudly bearing the model designation Mini 1275 GT.

A number of other details also changed in 1969, the front sliding windows featured by the classic Mini ever since its introduction now being replaced on all models by wind-down windows, the door hinges at the outside being moved to the inside, and a special MINI logo appearing on the bonnet.

Starting the mid-70s numerous special versions of the classic Mini focusing on different highlights – from sporting to trendy, from distinguished to youthful and fresh – entered

the market to make the range even larger. The first special model was the conspicuously progressive Mini Limited Edition 1000 in 1976, further variants taking up the trend to specific personalization time and again, with well-known boroughs of London and street names often serving to give these models their particular designation – Piccadilly, Chelsea, Knightsbridge, or Park Lane.

In 1982 the Mini Mayfair conquered the streets for the first time as a particularly exclusive and well-equipped top model. And after the re-launch of the brand in 2001, a special version of this small car also gained great attention once again.

As a further highlight, MINI today offers unique opportunities for customizing the car, with the brand enabling customers to live out their personal style in creating their very own car with a wider range of features and more details than any other manufacturer of small cars has to offer. The unusually large number of paintwork colors, interior colors, seat upholstery and trim variants sets the foundation for individual model configurations tailored to the specific owner.

Ongoing success of the classic Mini and the comeback of the Mini Cooper.

The model range was subsequently streamlined from 1980–1983, with the Clubman, Estate and Van being dropped from production. The only car left over was the classic Mini with its 1.0-liter power unit now developing 40 hp. Customers nevertheless remained absolutely faithful to the car, with the –five-millionth classic Mini coming off the line at the Longbridge Plant in 1986.

The return of the MINI Cooper to the model range in 1990 was welcomed enthusiastically by countless fans the world over, with the car now boasting a 1.3-liter power unit. Production of the 1.0-liter engine for the Mini, in turn, ended in 1992 due to growing demands in emission control, with all models from now on featuring the 1,275-cc engine.

A new variant of the classic Mini entered the market for the last time in 1991 – and it was the only model to come not from England, but rather from Germany: An enthusiastic dealer in the German town of Baden had cut off the roof of the classic Mini – as some tuners before him – turning the car into an extremely attractive Convertible. But unlike former attempts, the result was so good this time in terms of quality that Rover Group now responsible for the classic Mini decided to purchase the design and production rights, building some 1,000 units of this model in series production from 1993 to 1996.

Production of the classic Mini finally ended once and for all in the year 2000. Over the years more than 5.3 million units of this small car immensely successful the world over had left the plants in a number of versions. But even after 41 years the story did not come to an end, with a new chapter in the history of the world-famous English brand opening up after a bit less than one year in 2001.

A new start in 2001 – including the MINI Cooper right from the beginning.

Taking over Rover Group in early 1994, BMW was now able to offer the MINI brand new perspectives. A concept version of the MINI Cooper was therefore presented at the 1997 Frankfurt Motor Show, offering an outlook at a new edition of this unique small car. The MINI Cooper production model then made its first official appearance in November 2000 at the Berlin Motor Show, the future-oriented new rendition of the original appearing at the dealership only one year later in the guise of the MINI Cooper.

Creating this new model, the MINI designers showed what the ideal small car would look like when combining the convictions of Alec Issigonis from the 1950s with the technical potentials and customer wishes of the 21st century.

The MINI Project Team originally led by Frank Stephenson and later with MINI Chief Designer Gert Volker Hildebrand at the top, made absolutely sure to carry over not just design details, but above all the fundamental idea of the classic Mini into the new age of motoring. The MINI was likewise to be unique, offering ample space for four together with their luggage, an economical drive concept, and driving characteristics not featured so far by any other model in this segment. At the same time the development engineers gave full consideration to the latest demands in terms of comfort and safety standards.

The design of the car therefore clearly reflects the similar characters of the classic Mini and the MINI in truly authentic style based on design language characterized by the interplay of lines and joints, circles and ellipses.

Significantly longer than ever before, the MINI nevertheless retains the same proportions with short overhangs front and rear to make the car extremely agile and offer a strong message to the beholder at very first sight.

Features typical of the brand already unmistakable on the classic Mini were re-interpreted in creating the new model. The modern version of the hexagon radiator grille and the round headlights are now no longer surrounded by the car's wings, but rather integrated in the bonnet, and characterize the typical face of the MINI. The side

indicator surrounds are likewise a design icon, serving on the MINI to distinguish between the individual model variants. At the same time they direct your eyes towards the engine compartment joint on the MINI running down at an angle like the metal joint on the side panels of the classic Mini. The upright rear light clusters, in turn, also serve as a clear sign of distinction boasting a classy chrome frame on the MINI.

Featuring front-wheel drive, four-cylinder power units fitted crosswise at the front, short body overhangs and space for four, the new models come with elementary features carried over from the classic Mini. And while the exterior dimensions of the car are greater, reflecting modern demands in terms of interior space, the overall design of the MINI with its proportions so typical of the brand and unmistakable design elements at the front, side and rear, show a clear connection between the MINI and its classic predecessors.

At the same time the MINI is the first premium model in the small car segment – a status also reflected by unique safety features in this class as well as uncompromising quality built to the high standards of the BMW Group.

Right from the start the MINI set a new benchmark also through its thrillingly agile handling, moving up to the highest level of driving pleasure right away.

From the original to the original: the second generation of the MINI.

The overwhelming success of the MINI exceeded even the boldest forecasts. Indeed, this also provided the momentum for consistently continuing the concept and developing additional potentials. Upgraded in design in an evolutionary process but fundamentally renewed in technical terms, the second generation of the MINI entered the market in 2006. Following the motto of “from the original to the original”, the looks of the MINI already immensely popular the world over were further refined in numerous details, giving even greater emphasis to the sporting virtues of this compact performer. So that now the looks are clearly confirmed by the driving experience and the dynamic performance offered by MINI on the road.

New, even more powerful and at the same time much more efficient engines interact with the optimized suspension to re-define the driving pleasure so typical of MINI. The MINI –Cooper S with its 172 hp power unit and the MINI –Cooper Delivering 118 hp available from the start immediately won over enthusiasts everywhere through their even higher standard of performance on significantly lower fuel consumption and emissions.

Modern diversity: the MINI Clubman and the new MINI Convertible.

Almost exactly to the day a year after the introduction of the new model generation, the MINI range was expanded in autumn 2007 by yet another innovative concept: With its wheelbase extended by 8 centimeters or 3.15", the MINI Clubman offers brand-new opportunities to enjoy the driving pleasure so typical of the brand. Through its diversity alone, it interprets traditional Shooting Brake concepts highlighted by the flowing and stretched roofline and the steep rear end as strong tokens to sporting performance and superior function.

Versus the MINI, the MINI Clubman is 24 centimeters or 9.45" longer, with its longer wheelbase serving exclusively to provide extra legroom at the rear.

Featuring an additional door on the right-hand side, the Clubdoor opening against the direction of travel, the MINI Clubman offers the rear-seat passengers comfortable access to the seats at the rear. The two-piece rear door, on the other hand, re-interprets an authentic feature carried over from the car's classic predecessors, the Morris Mini-Traveller and the Austin Mini Countryman of the 1960s.

The latest member of the model range is the second-generation MINI Convertible. Now even more sporting in design, with optimized active and passive safety, an even wider range of functions and the latest generation of power units, the only premium Convertible in the MINI segment once again raises the benchmark for supreme driving pleasure.

The new MINI Convertible stands out in particular though its everyday driving qualities, simply begging the driver and passengers to enjoy every mile with the roof down. Indeed, the soft roof opens and closes completely through electrohydraulic control at the touch of a button within 15 seconds, even at speeds of up to 30 km/h or close to 20 mph. Improved all-round visibility with the roof closed results, first, from the slightly larger rear side windows and, second, from the newly conceived rollbar moving up instantaneously whenever required.

At the same time the single-piece rollbar provides space for a large through-loading between the luggage and passenger compartments, giving the new MINI Convertible an even higher standard of diversity.

The current range of engines is greater than ever before: The MINI now comes with a choice of four petrol and two diesel engines, the MINI Clubman with three petrol units and one diesel, and the MINI Convertible with two petrol engines.

For the first time there are also three unique models under the John Cooper Works brand, the MINI John Cooper Works, the MINI John Cooper Works Clubman, and the MINI John Cooper Works Convertible top performers offering a particularly intense experience of MINI motoring with their 208 hp four-cylinder power unit derived straight from motorsport.

The current MINI combines the character so typical of the brand and its unmistakable design with an even higher standard of driving pleasure, consistently enhanced safety and outstanding quality of finish. The MINI Cooper comes with the highest rating of five stars in the Euro-NCAP crash test, with its excellent occupant safety based on an even sturdier body, the use as standard of six airbags, three-point inertia-reel seat belts on all seats, ISOFIX child seat fastenings at the rear and central safety electronics for the appropriate management and activation of the car's restraint systems.

Another outstanding feature of the MINI is the car's exceptional reliability already confirmed on several occasions by top positions in the breakdown statistics of ADAC, Germany's and Europe's largest motoring club.

The supreme standard of product quality, equally outstanding handling characteristics and the flair typical of the brand all interact with one another to set the foundation for the great appeal of the MINI as the guarantee for ongoing global success and remarkable stability in terms of lasting value. So in its class, the current MINI is not only the epitome of driving pleasure and individual style, but also a very good investment.

Made in England: MINI production based on tradition and high quality standards.

The outstanding success of the MINI brand is closely connected to the production of the cars in Great Britain. On 4 April 1959 the first Austin Seven came off the production line at the Austin Plant in Longbridge near Birmingham. Five weeks later, on 8 May, the first Morris Mini-Minor left the plant in Oxford.

Production at both plants then continued for ten years, with Oxford, where cars have been built since 1913, building exactly 602,817 units during this period.

The decision to build the modern MINI in Oxford was taken in spring 2000, after the BMW Group had already invested approximately GBP 280 million in the then Rover Plant in 1996/1997 to extensively modernize the Bodyshop and the Final Assembly, and build an ultra-modern Paintshop.

Now another investment of approximately GBP 230 million was made to once again modernize and re-structure the Plant.

As a result, the Oxford Plant is one of the most modern car production facilities in the world equipped with the latest technology and focusing specifically on production of the MINI. All production processes naturally follow the strict quality standards of the BMW Group.

In the assembly process the MINI now comes off the same line as the MINI Clubman and the MINI Convertible, workers assembling up to 2,000 components on each model in accordance with the customer's specific order and the level of equipment chosen.

Ever since the start of production of the new MINI in autumn 2006, the Oxford (Bodyshop, Paintshop, Assembly), Swindon (Pressings) and Hams Hall (Engine Production) Plants have all been interacting as the MINI Production Triangle.

Like the classic Mini, the MINI has exceeded all expectations right from the start, with no less than a million units being built in Oxford in just six years – precisely the same period of six years the classic Mini also required to pass the million-unit mark.

Just a few weeks after the official celebrations on the 50th birthday of the brand at the Silverstone race track, the MINI Plant in Oxford was able to announce another milestone, celebrating production of 1.5 million MINIs in Oxford since 2001. Combined with the sales figures of the former model, the brand as a whole now accounts, therefore, for no less than 6.8 million units built in Great Britain and sold the world over.

MINI in the US

MINI is an independent brand of the BMW Group. In the United States, MINI USA operates as a business unit of BMW of North America, LLC which has been present in the United States since 1975. Royce Motor Cars NA, LLC began distributing vehicles in 2003. The BMW Group in the United States has grown to include marketing, sales, and financial service organizations for the BMW brand of motor vehicles, including motorcycles, the MINI brand, and the Rolls-Royce brand of Motor Cars; DesignworksUSA, a strategic design consultancy in California; a technology office in Silicon Valley and various other operations throughout the country. BMW Manufacturing Co., LLC in South Carolina is part of BMW Group's global manufacturing network and is the exclusive manufacturing plant for all X5 Sports Activity Vehicles and X6 Sports Activity Coupes. The BMW Group sales organization is represented in the U.S. through networks of 338 BMW passenger car centers, 335 BMW Sports Activity Vehicle centers, 142 BMW motorcycle retailers, 86 MINI passenger car dealers, and 30 Rolls-Royce Motor Car dealers. BMW (US) Holding Corp., the BMW Group's sales headquarters for North America, is located in Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey.

Information about BMW Group products is available to consumers via the Internet at:

www.bmwgroupna.com

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