

# 50 Years of the Mini Presented by MINI of Nashville

At Lane Motor Museum April 16, 2009-September 28, 2009



The Mini is, to use an overused term, a legend in its own time. Star of the streets, the racetrack, and the silver screen, the Mini was that rarest of cars – obtainable, desirable, *and* durable! Now, fifty years after its introduction, we welcome you to our exhibit, **50 Years of the Mini – Presented by MINI of Nashville**. We hope you will find yourself both educated and entertained, and that you come away from this exhibit with a deeper understanding of one of the most influential automobiles of our time, the Mini, “a proper miniature car”.

Whether you labor under your British original to keep it in good nick, or enjoy the benefits that modern German engineering and design have wrought, Mini and MINI enthusiasts share a deep and common bond – the love of motoring...



1965 TWINI MINI (REPLICA)

The Twini Mini was an idea that was never fully developed. In 1962, British Motor Corporation built a Mini Moke with 2 engines to help its off-road capabilities. It was hugely successful as an experimental vehicle, and when John Cooper visited BMC and drove the vehicle, he was impressed. Cooper envisioned a “Twini Mini” for rallying; with its added power and traction, he believed it would be unbeatable. John Cooper had his company spend the next six weeks constructing a Mini with one engine in the back, and one engine in the front. (The standard Mini was front engine, front-wheel drive.) The car was then tested on the street for evaluation of potential competition use. The car proved to be fast and well-balanced, but it had a rear engine failure one night, resulting in a rollover, and Cooper was seriously hurt. The car was destroyed and development stopped. Downton Engineering also built a Twini Mini and raced it in the 1963 Targa Florio. The car was plagued by overheating and excessive tire wear, but managed to finish the race. It’s unclear how many Twini Minis were built, maybe 6, and

they were all different. Our research has not revealed any original surviving examples. This replica before you shows some of the interesting and innovative ideas attempted in the 1960s.



1967 Morris Mini-Minor Traveller

Morris Motor Company was started in the 1920s and established a reputation for reliable family cars. In the 1950s, Morris merged with its old rival Austin to form British Motor Corp. Economic factors in the U.K. in the mid-1950s made the creation of “a proper miniature car” a priority, and BMC assigned a small team of designers to the task. Alec Issigonis, a Greek immigrant with an extensive racing and engineering background, led the design team. Mini was introduced in 1959, to wild acclaim. The popularity of the Mini spawned many models that targeted different markets. The Mini Traveller, a two door station wagon with double “barn-door” style rear doors, was designed for carrying. The luxury model you see here has wood inserts in the rear body. This left-hand drive Mini was designed for export and was originally delivered to a dealer in Portugal. It remained in Europe until 2002.



1971 Morris Mini

Sir Alec Issigonis designed the Mini, which became one of the best selling cars in Europe and one of the most recognized cars ever produced. This car defined Issigonis’ philosophy “less is more.” Mini production started in August 1959 and was an instant success. This small British car originally came with an 850cc engine but through time was enlarged to 1275cc. Almost as soon as the Mini was out in the showrooms, Issigonis’ friend and racer John Cooper decided there was a need for a sporty Mini. He was loaned a production car and he fitted an engine out of a Formula Junior racing car. With this 997cc engine and its tiny 7 inch disc brakes, the Mini Cooper was born. The Mini Cooper was well received, with over 100,000 produced in 10 years. Production of the “original” Mini ceased in 2000. The BMW MINI was introduced in 2001. This 1971 Morris Mini has been updated to mid-1990 Rover Mini specification.



(ALSO KNOWN AS THE CONSTELLATION SAFETY-US MAXIMUS)

- ▶ 5-Star Driver-Side Impact Crash Rating\*
- ▶ 5-Star Rollover Rating



## MINI OF NASHVILLE

4040 Armory Oaks Drive  
Nashville, TN 37204  
(866) 460-6089

MINIOFNASHVILLE.COM

\*5-Star ratings are for the driver-side impact and rollover on the '09 MINI Cooper Hardtop, MINI Cooper S Hardtop and MINI John Cooper Works Hardtop. Star ratings are part of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Safercar.gov program. © 2009 MINI, a division of BMW of North America, LLC. The MINI name, model names and logo are registered trademarks.



**1969 Austin Mini Convertible**

This 1969 Austin Mini has been updated to mid-1980 specification. Although Austin never produced an in-house cabriolet, several independent companies in England performed the conversions. The steel reinforcements welded to the bottom of the rockers were to help increase the body strength, but the reality is there is still a lot of chassis flex. Fun to drive and small enough to park anywhere, this Mini is a great car for fair weather days.



**1969 Austin Mini (Fiberglass)**

In the mid-1960s, Austin decided to produce the Mini in South America. Knowing the production volumes would not be large, they could not justify the cost of making another set of stamping dies for the new factory. Austin contracted with Peel Engineering, who made the famous microcars, to make a prototype Mini out of fiberglass. Peel built several prototypes, and they were tested extensively for durability. After passing the tests, the fiberglass molds were sent to Chile and the bodies were produced locally. All other parts of the Mini were shipped to Chile and the cars were assembled there. Although outwardly the fiberglass body is almost identical to the steel body, the fiberglass body does not have the seam at the rear edge of the front fenders.



**2006 BMW MINI Cooper S Works GP**

In 1994 BMW purchased Rover Group, which included the Mini brand. In 1995 BMW began working on a replacement for the legendary Mini which had been in production since 1959. Rover continued to produce an updated original Mini during this transition period. In early 2001 the first version of the new MINI was produced by BMW. The new MINI was an instant success and has been a strong seller since its introduction in 2001. BMW decided to slightly redesign the MINI for 2007 to keep it updated. The car you see here was purchased new by the museum in 2006 because of its uniqueness. The last 2,000 MINIs produced with this body style (R53) were all the same; they had the John Cooper Works package (higher horsepower, stiffer suspension, bigger brakes, unique wheels) and lacked back seats to reduce weight. Each car was numbered, and only 400 of the special edition cars came to the U.S.



**1967 Austin Mini Moke**

The Austin Mini Moke (British slang for “donkey”) began production in 1964. It was designed as a four-wheel-drive jeep-like utility vehicle for the British army. Although it was rejected by the military because of its low ground clearance, a two-wheel drive version became popular around the world as an inexpensive “fun” vehicle ideal for hot climates. As you can see, the Mini Moke is a minimal vehicle. It has no doors or hard top, but can carry four people in its tub-like body. It is based on the successful Mini drivetrain and suspension. Through its life, the Mini Moke was produced in England, Portugal, and Australia, with production ending in the early 1990s. An odd feature of this car is the fact that you can remove the gas cap (which is located at your left hip) and check the fuel level—all while you are driving.



**1964 Peel Viking**

Most people associate Peel Engineering with the building of fiberglass bike fairings and microcars. Peel also made a couple of different car models based on then-current production cars’ running gear. Before you is a Peel Viking, which is one of only seven left known to exist. Peel actually never produced the whole car; they would sell you the fiberglass body and you had to find a junk Mini to take the drivetrain and brakes from. Many other parts were borrowed straight from the Mini such as the steering wheel, doors and windows. Although it was a nice-looking and practical car, it did not sell and production hardly got started before it stopped. If you go to our microcar section, you will see a Peel P-50 and Peel Trident, also made by Peel Engineering.



**1980 Midas Bronze**

In 1965, Marcos Cars Ltd. produced a Mini-Marcos coupe with Mini running gear and a fiberglass body and monocoque. It was based on a design by Paul Emery and was sold as a kit. Although they shipped cars to the United States, they could not be sold for street use due to new emission laws. Marcos folded in 1971 but former Jaguar engineer Harold Dermott took over production of the Mini-Marcos in 1975. The company designed a new Mini-based coupe – the Midas Bronze. This is an exceptional vehicle for a kit-car. The fiberglass is of the highest quality and it houses a Mini front subframe, a steel rear beam axle and a BMC engine. The interior trim is comparable to most mass-produced cars in its price range. Many consider it a fabulous little car with no close rival. Midas suffered a factory fire in 1989 and was forced to liquidate.



**1960 Austin Mini 850 “Plum Mini”**

This is a custom-designed Mini built on a stock Mini drivetrain. As you can see, the car has been significantly shortened. The back seat was removed, and approximately 2 feet has been cut out of the wheelbase. Cars such as this are referred to as “Mini Minis” or “Shorty Minis.” The resulting lighter, shorter car has sometimes surprising performance, and is somewhat skittish in its handling characteristics. In other words, it’s a real handful! A few are known to exist in the U.S. and Europe. This custom job, Plum Mini, was done by a man in Alaska, who then gave the car to his nephew in Oregon. Lane Motor Museum is only its third home.



**1975 Morris Mini 2/3 Scale**

This “car” was built from body parts taken from a 1975 Mini, skillfully “shrunk” to approximately 2/3 the size of a “real” Mini. The body is all steel, and the time to fabricate it was over 400 hours, or about 10 weeks of full-time labor! It is not fully complete, as one can see by closer inspection – it lacks pedals and controls, a working steering gear, and general finishing. Sharp-eyed viewers may note the new MINI badge on the front as well. There is a working Honda four-stroke engine in the rear, which will couple to a centrifugal clutch and transmission. Purchased at a Classic Mini meet in England, the 2/3 Scale Mini is a perfect example of a shrinking car.