

SMALL CAR, BIG HEART

Richard Webb travelled to the UK (again) for the unveiling of the latest incarnation of one of the most iconic cars in the world

Entertaining driving, quality and individual flair were vital components of the outgoing Mini, so the new car surely has big boots to fill. Active in more than 100 markets worldwide, there is an evolutionary design refinement that signals the slightly more mature character of this new Mini model. It promises more of pretty much everything – space, safety, fittings, materials and finish quality, sportiness and ride comfort.

While the shape of ‘The New Original’ Mini remains comfortingly familiar, it has a new look and has been re-designed from the ground up. There’s a radical range of new three- and four-cylinder engines too, and an even wider selection of innovative driver-assistance systems as well as the Connected infotainment facilities. Funky new LED headlamps, the Mini Head-Up Display, Emergency Call and the Connected XL Journey Mate with real-

time traffic information were previously only found in higher vehicle segments, but are now a welcome addition to the Mini experience.

There are three newly-developed power units, all with TwinPower turbo technology. The new Mini Cooper D, which I really hope we’ll get in South Africa, is powered by an 85 kW, 3-cylinder diesel engine with an average fuel consumption of just 3.5 litres/100km. The use of what the company calls Minimalism

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technology reduces weight and improves aerodynamic properties to reduce fuel consumption by up to 27 percent compared to the predecessor models across the range.

I spoke to Jochen Goller, who's just been appointed to lead all things Mini, and asked him what we can expect when the car arrives in South Africa next year. "There's improved safety with head-up display, and the car is not only more spacious inside, it rides and handles better, too," he said.

"We'll start production in Oxford with the Cooper D, Cooper and Cooper S for launch in March 2014, followed by other variants. We've also improved the Mini's ride and handling, with a new suspension set-up said to eliminate the notorious vibrations from the road surface. The variable Damper Control option allows drivers to choose between a comfortable or sporty set-up," said Jochen.

The Mini also debuts BMW's new UKL1 front-wheel-drive platform, which will underpin ten Mini and BMW models. It's 98mm longer, 44mm wider and 7mm taller than the outgoing model. Right now, the brand consists of seven model series, and this new car will be rolled out in all model series in the future. Designers are particularly pleased with the extended functionality of the display.

"The instrument cluster on the steering column shows speed, revs and fuel level, vertically arranged in the familiar circular dials. The speedometer scale includes a colour panel for messages and vehicle status displays," Jochen confirmed.

Until now the large, centrally-mounted speedo has been a recurring feature of the Mini's interior, but the new Mini is the first to do without it. The outer speedo ring is replaced by LEDs, which work in conjunction with the



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THE POWER PLANTS

The Cooper and Cooper D use 1.5-litre three-cylinders – one petrol and one diesel.

In the Cooper, power is up to 100kW, enabling 0-100km/h in just 7.9 seconds.

The flagship Cooper S has dropped its 1.6-litre turbo in favour of a 2.0-litre turbo, with power increasing from 135kW to 141kW. It cuts the 0-100km/h time from 7.0 to 6.8 seconds, and improves fuel economy marginally.

parking sensors – glowing green, yellow or red as parking space diminishes – and will also glow blue, orange or red to match the new Mini Driving Modes. The extensive use of LED's also links up with the optional sat-nav system to create a circle of glowing lights that alter as you get closer to a change of direction.

Infotainment is via a neat rotary dial or a touch-sensitive dial that responds to finger-written letters to access things like sat-nav addresses.

Buyers will have a choice of three six-speed

transmissions – a manual, an auto and a sports auto featuring a dual-clutch gearbox offering quicker shifts and rev-matching downshifts. Pricing has not yet been announced by Mini South Africa, but in the UK the price rise is limited to around 2% on current list prices, which could be indicative of local pricing.

Whether or not Sir Alec Issigonis, designer of the first Mini, would approve of today's models, the fact that we still compare the new car with the one he designed more than fifty years ago is testament to just how much



The iconic central instrument now has a four-line TFT display as standard or an optional colour screen showing vehicle functions, infotainment, navigation and Mini Connected services.

LED lighting around the new Mini Hatch's central instrument panel provides visual feedback.



The driving stability control system (DSC) in the new Mini includes a drive-off assistant, brake dry function, fading brake support and dynamic traction control (DTC). This latter system permits controlled slip at the drive wheels to facilitate driving on loose sand or deep snow.



NEED TO KNOW

Mini Cooper S 4-cylinder petrol engine with Mini TwinPower Turbo. 1998 cc, 141 kW, 280 Nm (300 Nm with overboost). 0-100 km/h in 6.8 seconds (automatic: 6.7 seconds), top speed: 235 km/h. 5.7-5.8 litres/100 kilometres, CO2 emissions 133 g/km.

Mini Cooper 3-cylinder petrol engine with Mini TwinPower Turbo. 1499 cc, 100 kW, 220 Nm at (230 Nm with overboost). 0-100 km/h 7.9 seconds (automatic: 7.8 seconds), top speed: 210 km/h. 4.5 litres/100 kilometres, CO2 emissions g/km.

SMALL CAR, BIG CITY

It's a simple proposition. Take a small car – in this case, the original Mini Cooper – and give tourists and locals an Italian Job experience in the heart of London. The brainchild of Robert Welch, the business was inspired by the bright red Mini Cooper gifted to him for his 17th Birthday. "When I drove round London as a university student, I noticed hundreds of tourists stopping to take photos of this little car," he told me.

I spent a memorable morning being driven around London in an immaculate Cooper S replica, discovering often hidden

and fascinating parts of the city.

The Mini slices through London traffic like no other, with sixties music on the stereo, and attracts more affectionate attention than any of the million-pound exotic pieces of metal that pepper the streets of London.

smallcarBIGCITY opened for business on 26 August 2009 - exactly 50 years to the day that the first-ever classic Mini rolled off the production line, bringing the swinging little Mini back onto the streets of London.