

Mini Cooper hot once again

NEW YORK (AP) — It inspired designer Mary Quant to create the mini skirt and was bumbling comic Mr. Bean's favorite mode of transport.

Now the Mini Cooper, reborn and on sale in the United States since last Friday, is hot again.

Dealers say waiting lists for the tiny four-seater are growing, even though research from parent company, BMW Group AG, shows less than 2 percent of Americans are even aware of the brand.

"Most people have no idea what a Mini is, until you show them a picture," Mini general manager Jack Pitney said in an interview Tuesday during media previews at the New York International Auto Show.

The original Mini was produced from 1959 to December 2000, but was only sold in the United States from 1960 to 1967, Pitney said.

During those seven years, only 10,000 Minis were sold in the United States. This time around, Pitney said, the company expects to sell its entire U.S. allotment of 20,000 vehicles during the first year.

BMW bought the Mini brand in 1997 and built a new plant near the original one in Oxford, England, to produce the new version of the car.

At 11 feet, 10 inches, the new Mini is a little more maxi than the original. It's 2 feet longer and 1 foot wider, to accommodate safety equipment and modern instrumentation, Pitney said, but the wheels are still placed out to the corners, same as the original.

Priced between \$16,850 and \$19,850, the Mini is a lot less expensive than its brethren in the BMW family. That's a key element in the German automaker's strategy to cultivate future customers for its core high-end products.

Minis will be sold by BMW dealers, but in separate showrooms with a dedicated sales staff. Both Mini and BMW customers will

have their vehicles serviced and repaired at the same service operation at the dealerships.

Pitney said the automaker hopes to create "aspiration," which would occur when Mini customers who shop at BMW dealerships look to eventually purchase or lease a BMW vehicle.

Analyst Chris Cedergren with the automotive marketing firm Nextrend, said the strategy is sound.

"Among young people, the BMW brand is off the charts as far as being aspirational," he said.

Younger people also are becoming affluent faster, allowing them to skip from entry-level vehicles to luxury vehicles, Cedergren said.

The Mini is available at 53 dealers in 29 states. Pitney said by the end of the year, 70

Mini dealers will be up and running.

With demand building in the United States and already strong elsewhere, a third shift has been added to accommodate the pressure to produce more Minis, but Pitney said another plant will not be built.

That demand likely is to swell when the Mini is featured in this summer's third installment of the Austin Powers series.

Unlike most product placements in movies or television programs, BMW did not seek to place the Mini in the movie, Pitney said.

Actor Mike Myers, who created the British character and stars in the movies, loved the Mini and had a representative call the company asking for six of them for the new movie even before they went on sale in the United States, Pitney said.

Still MINI after all these years

The latest retro-vehicle to re-enter the U.S. marketplace is the new MINI Cooper, a modern version of the super-small British coupe. The original MINI went on sale in 1959 and sold 5.4 million units worldwide before being retired in 2000.



2002 Ford Excursion
226.7 Inches



2003 MINI Cooper
142.8 Inches

Even as one of the smallest cars sold in the United States, the new MINI still is nearly two feet longer than the original MINI.

Model	Length (Inches)	Weight (pounds)
MINI Cooper	142.8	2,524
Ford Focus	168.1	2,598
Honda Civic	174.7	2,405
Mazda Miata	155.7	2,387
Original MINI	120.0	1,300

SOURCES: BMW, Cars.com; Associated Press

NEWS IN BRIEF

Judge erases lawyer restrictions on Reid

BOSTON (AP) — A federal judge erased restrictions on defense lawyers' access to accused shoe bomber Richard C. Reid, but banned them from repeating the conversations, saying "we are engaged in a war on terrorism."

The Justice Department had sought to curtail Reid's contact with the outside for fear he would find a way to communicate with other terrorists.

Chief U.S. District Judge William G. Young said Monday that federal prosecutors did not have the authority to limit contact between Reid and his defense, but agreed that the sensitive nature of the case required careful handling of information.

"You get access. You keep what you hear to yourself," Young told Reid's attorneys. "We are engaged in a war on terrorism. (Prosecutors) try to restrict data that if it gets loose might affect national security."

Reid has been in U.S. custody since Dec. 22, when he allegedly attempted to light explosives hidden in his shoes during a trans-Atlantic flight. He has pleaded innocent to nine charges that include attempting to murder the 197 passengers and crew members.

Monday's emergency hearing was on the 12-page "special administrative measures" drafted Feb. 20 and approved by Attorney General John Ashcroft. The measures prevent attorneys from bringing expert witnesses to meet with Reid and give prison officials latitude to decide whether his attorneys meet with him in the same room.

"Obviously what he was trying to do was hurt Christine as deeply as possible," Simmons said.

The three older children were identified as Melanie Willis, 17; Stanley Willis, 15, and Stuart Willis, 14.

Melanie, a junior, was a straight-A student, ranked second in her class of 467 students and was on the ballot Friday to become senior class vice president. Stanley was on the baseball team.

"They were very positive and engaging kids," said Golden Valley principal Ralf Swenson.

Students at the school scribbled messages about their grief on a huge banner, and counselors were brought in to discuss the killings.

Students at Our Lady of Mercy School, a nearby Roman Catholic elementary school that all the children had attended, learned of the shootings after arriving at school. Many prayed for the slain children during a special Mass.

Principal Brenda Feehan showed reporters a 1998 picture of Melanie, with braces on her teeth and her brown hair in curls.

"They were bright and full of hope and positive, with terrific senses of humor," Feehan said. "It doesn't make sense."

Former sheriff's deputy kills family, commits suicide

MERCED, Calif. (AP) — A retired sheriff's deputy shot and killed his 5-year-old daughter and his three stepchildren Tuesday while his ex-wife was jogging, then committed suicide with the body of one of the youngsters in his arms.

John Hogan, 49, apparently entered the house with his .40-caliber handgun after his ex-wife left for her morning jog with a neighbor, authorities said.

The motive was unclear, said Merced County sheriff's Cmdr. Mark Pazin.

"Nobody could ever foresee something like this," Pazin said. "I can't put it into words. It's horrifying."

Hogan was found dead in the bed in the master bedroom, the body of 5-year-old Michelle Hogan in his arms.

When Christine McFadden returned from her jog, she found her 17-year-old daughter dead in the hallway outside her bedroom, said sheriff's Sgt. Tom Cavallero.

McFadden went to a neighbor's house in the well-to-do neighborhood to call police, then returned home with deputies and found the three other children and Hogan in separate bedrooms, all shot to death.

"It looks like they had been

sleeping," Cavallero said of the children.

McFadden told authorities her husband was not in the house when she left. Their divorce was finalized last year.

"My husband has a very bad temper and when he gets angry he explodes," McFadden wrote in an application for a restraining order in June 1998, three months after filing for divorce.

Hogan had called a former co-worker at the Santa Clara sheriff's office Tuesday morning and left a message that he was bankrupt and depressed, said Assistant Sheriff Henry Strength. It was unclear whether the message was left before or after the victims were killed.

Hogan served as a deputy from 1983 to 1993 before retiring for undisclosed medical reasons, the sheriff's department said.

For the past six years, he worked as a private investigator, said Casey Simmons, a defense lawyer for juveniles who had hired him and considered him a friend.

Simmons said Hogan never showed signs of violence or a temper while working with the children. She said Hogan became despondent and quit working when he and McFadden split up for good. They had married in 1995.

all NEW!

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Aggies

#1

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inspirations

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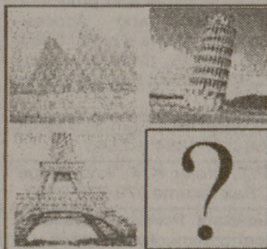
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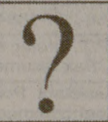
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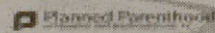
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BIRTH CONTROL STUDY

Planned Parenthood of Bryan is participating in a FDA approved injectable birth control method for women. A pharmaceutical company is sponsoring this 13- to 15-month study.

Qualified volunteers will receive medical-related services, including:

- Study-related medical examinations
- Study-related laboratory blood work
- Study medication



For more information, and to find out if you qualify, please call our Bryan clinic at 846-1744.

Participation is voluntary, and research participants will be compensated for their time.

ATTENTION

All On-Campus Residents

The deadline to cancel your housing contract for the fall 2002 - spring 2003 academic year and receive a 100% deposit refund is:

April 1, 2002, by 5:00 p.m.
In the Housing Assignments Office
Room 101 YMCA Building

Letters of cancellation can be faxed to:
979-862-3122

or mailed to:

Housing Assignments Office
101 YMCA Building
College Station, TX 77843-1258

Deadlines to receive a portion of your deposit:

April 2 - 15	75%
April 16 - May 1	50%
May 2 - 15	25%
After May 15	no refund