



HUGE INSIDE, TINY OUTSIDE, AND WITH TREMENDOUS VISION IN ALL DIRECTIONS, MINI-S WAS A BREEZE TO PARK, MANEUVER, AND DRIVE.

Austin Cooper-S

ROAD TEST

Mighty Mini's a boxload of peppery punch, subtle surprises

by Robert E. McVay, *Associate Editor*

THERE WON'T BE too many Minis sold, because Mini dealers just can't get very many Minis. But if you want a car that's an absolute blast to drive, easy on gas, and an excellent entry into amateur auto racing, the BMC Austin Cooper-S is your cup of tea.

With 78 transverse horses up front, driving through the front wheels, the Mini we borrowed from a local dealer left hot-rodders and sport-car fans alike bug-eyed. They just couldn't believe such a little car could possibly be so big on performance. And our figures don't tell the whole story.

Originally designed for the British economy market, the Mini offered an 850cc, in-line 4. But, wanting to gain a little publicity, certain people equipped their Minis with a 1275cc, 78-hp 4-banger and then went on to win rugged European rallies with boring regularity. They weren't satisfied just winning their classes — they took first overall and many times 2nd as well. Invading sedan racing, the Mini became a legend both here and abroad.

The Mini Cooper-S is a very special automobile, hard to get, and not really expensive at \$2636. But it's a dual-purpose car that'll carry a small family through weekly driving chores and double as a racer on the weekend.

The little car is surprisingly roomy inside, and we got the feeling that Austin engineers made use of every available cubic inch of space. Each door has a large pocket, and there's one on each side of the rear seat as well. Most of the dashboard is a glove compartment; also the car's smallish trunk will accommodate 2 medium-sized cases.

If you drive a Mini to work every day and still have ulcers, it won't be the car's fault. This is one of the top fun cars available on any market. With $2\frac{1}{3}$ turns between locks, steering is quick and precise. At the same time, the car will corner at frightening speeds — if you keep your foot in it. BMC's Hydrolastic suspension makes this one of the best-riding small cars around, and it's one of the big reasons for the car's race-winning ability. For its wheelbase, the Mini has a very wide track, making it almost impossible to turn over — although there *are* those among us who have.

A 4-speed floorshift between the front buckets isn't synchronized in low. It proved a little stiff and a little vague on our test car, but it was good enough to put and keep us ahead of most of our bug-eyed adversaries. Too much throttle will easily "light up" the front wheels, and a quick shift into 2nd gives a loud chirp, much to the surprise of all.

Ride, handling, and performance all get an excellent rating, but the most fun comes from surprising the opposition at traffic lights, on corners, and especially on the freeways. As one gentleman said, "If God intended that car to go 100 mph, He'd have given it bigger tires." It uses 10-inchers.

For American-sized drivers, we feel bigger pedals and either roll-up or at least slide-up windows are needed. And with all that interior room, we'd like to see them move the heater so it isn't in the way of our accelerator foot. That pedal on our test car was a bit touchy, making smooth driving difficult. With the seat pushed back far enough for adequate leg room, the wheel was too far away for full-sized drivers.

Instrumentation is directly in the middle of the dash (for either left- or right-side steering-wheel location) and consists of a huge speedometer and 2 gauges with a smattering of warning lights, all marked save one that reminds the driver when to change his oil filter. Don't look for this one to light up for at least 7000 miles. There are water-temperature and oil-pressure gauges along with warning lights, and markings of I, II, and III show when to shift gears without hurting things. About 6500 rpm is tops, which gives the Mini an over-100-mph top speed with standard 3.44 final ratio.

The Austin Cooper-S proved one of the most fun cars we've ever driven and one of the hottest of the tiny hot rods from across the ocean. Driven hard around town, it gave 21.5 miles per premium gallon, and a 70-mph cruising speed garnered 32 mpg.

If you really like to shake up other drivers, race, or just enjoy a hot performer that's a real sleeper — try the Mini. It's a blast. /MT



No mistake here — engine sits broadside, leaving amazing leg room inside. Sliding windows are mixed blessing. Doors open wide for easy entrance and exit; have big, handy storage bins.

PHOTOS BY PAT BROLIER, DARRYL NOREBERG



Fantastic cornering traction lets Mini-S drivers scare the bejebers out of big-car pilots on winding roads, but even the "S" has its limits, especially with a heavy right foot.



Mini's twin tanks hold 6 gallons apiece. At over 30 mpg, that's a long, long way. Trunk is handy if not spacious, while hanging deck lid allows double loads if tied down well.

AUSTIN COOPER-S

2-door, 4-passenger sedan

OPTIONS ON TEST CAR: Heater, extra 6-gallon gas tank, 4½-inch wheel rims, oil cooler, seat belts, outside mirror

BASE PRICE: \$2420

PRICE AS TESTED: \$2636 (plus tax and license)

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 3000 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 6500 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph.....	3.5 secs.
0-45 mph.....	7.1
0-60 mph.....	11.9

STANDING START ¼-MILE 19.1 secs. and 72 mph

Speeds in gears @ shift points

1st.....	30 mph @ 5800 rpm	3rd.....	76 mph @ 5800 rpm
2nd.....	52 mph @ 5800 rpm	4th.....	100 mph @ 6200 rpm (observed)

Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading.....	30	45	50	60	71	81
Weston electric speedometer.....	30	45	50	60	70	80
Observed mph per 1000 rpm in top gear.....	16 mph					

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 28 ft.; from 60 mph, 142 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine

Ohv, in-line 4, mounted transversely
Bore: 2.78 ins.
Stroke: 3.20 ins.
Displacement: 77.9 cu. ins.
Compression ratio: 9.5:1
Horsepower: 78 @ 5800 rpm
Horsepower per cu. in.: 0.999
Torque: 80 lbs.-ft. @ 3000 rpm
Carburetion: 2 1-bbl. S.U.
Ignition: 12-volt coil

Gearbox

4-speed, floorshift, top 3 synchronized; in unit with engine

Driveshaft

Helical final drive via shafts to front wheels

Differential

None
Final drive ratio: 3.44:1

Suspension

Front (includes final drive): Independent; unequal-length arms with Hydroelastic displacers mounted above upper arms. Swivel hubs mounted on ball joints.
Rear: Independent; trailing arms with Hydroelastic displacers.

ers. Arms carry stub shaft for hubs. Hydroelastic displacers interconnected front to rear.

Steering

Rack and pinion
Turning diameter: 31 ft.
Turns lock to lock: 2½

Wheels and Tires

4-lug, pressed steel wheels, with 4½-inch optional rims
1.45 x 10 Dunlop SP 41 tires

Brakes

4-wheel hydraulic with servo assist. Disc front, drums rear; hand brake operates on rear wheels via floor lever. Pressure-limiting valve between front and rear brakes.
Front: 7½-in.-dia. discs
Rear: 7-in. dia x 1½-ins. wide
Effective lining area: NA
Swept drum area: NA

Body and Frame

Unitized construction
Wheelbase: 80 ins.
Track: front, 48½ ins.; rear, 36½ ins.
Overall length 120¼ ins.
Overall width: 55½ ins.
Overall height: 53 ins.
Curb weight: 1560 lbs.