

## LITTLE LEGEND

# BMW bringing back the Mini

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The Mini is coming back.

The little car that gave fits to Mr. Bean and easily could be pushed by a frustrated driver after a breakdown will hit the road again in Canada in the spring of 2002.

But like Volkswagen's new Beetle — another retro car that came back with a splash — the new Mini will be a completely different car inside an old package.

"They're trying to capture some of the energy and the character" of the old Austin Mini, said industry

analyst John Lawson of Salomon Smith Barney in London.

The new Mini reflects the way the global auto industry has been shaken up since the last Austin Mini was sold in Canada in 1980. The car will be built in Britain — but in a factory owned by **Bayrische Motoren Werke AG** of Germany — and will be distributed by BMW in Canada and around the world. But the engine comes from Brazil in a factory that's a joint venture between BMW and its arch-rival **DaimlerChrysler AG**.

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The original British Leyland Mini, which was sold in Canada from 1959 to 1980, has become something of a cult classic. "They're just a really fun car to drive," says one aficionado in British Columbia.

TED ANDKILDE/PictureDesk

## Mini making a comeback

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British Leyland, which brought the Mini, Triumph, Jaguar and other signature British names to Canada, no longer exists. Ford Motor Co. now owns Jaguar. BMW bought British Leyland's successor Rover PLC, but sold it this year to a British consortium for £10 (\$21).

But BMW held on to the Mini name and rights. Workers will return to BMW's factory in Oxford, England, on Monday after a nine-week shutdown and will begin gearing up for Mini production next year.

BMW also owns the Rolls-Royce trademark, another name synonymous with the British auto industry. A new Rolls will arrive by Jan. 1, 2003.

But even a more powerful engine and the latest in interior comforts and safety equipment probably won't be enough for Austin Mini stalwart Craig McGuire.

Mr. McGuire, who runs Craig's Automotive Inc. in Mission, B.C., owns 19 Minis. His lifelong love af-

fair started when a Mini became his father's first car in 1963 in Britain.

His entire business consists of restoring Minis, selling them and shipping parts throughout North America.

"I could win \$10-million tomorrow, but I would still do this and I would still drive a Mini," Mr. McGuire said.

"They're just a really fun car to drive."

He's far from the only one — there's a bit of a Mini cult in Canada with several clubs and members who own a number of the cars.

Canadian dealers for **BMW Canada Inc.** got their first look at the new Mini two weeks ago at a dealer meeting. BMW will launch it for the automotive press this month at the Paris Auto Show.

BMW probably will crank out about 150,000 Minis for sale around the world, Mr. Lawson at Salomon said.

The parent company is leaving no stone unturned in its marketing effort.

Mr. McGuire said BMW officials

were handing out 1/40th scale models of the new Mini at a British auto club gathering that he attended in Oregon last weekend with about 100 other Mini owners.

It's a car that will generate excitement — similar to the Beetle, the Plymouth Prowler and the Chrysler PT Cruiser, said Hendrik von Kuenheim, president of BMW Canada. Sales could be between 800 and 1,200 cars in the first year, he said.

The Canadian company announced a \$6-million expansion of its parts centre in Whitby, Ont., yesterday in part to accommodate parts and accessories for the Mini.

Dealers said they were told the two models to be sold in Canada will be priced at \$25,000 and \$29,000.

Mr. von Kuenheim pointed out, however, that the final price will depend largely on whether Canada eliminates the 6.1-per-cent tariff on vehicles imported by his company from outside North America.

The vehicles will almost certainly start at no less than \$25,000, he said.