New MINI Seven First impressions

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MINI Brand now with Maxi UK Sales and More New Models for 2017.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

News

MINI has just enjoyed their best ever UK September sales with an 18% increase over September last year. This has resulted in a near 10% increase for the year-to-date as the brand heads towards another record year with an expected 70,000 registrations. The UK remains the number one market out of MINI's 350,000 total global sales.

The boost this year in sales has been fuelled by the introduction of their Clubman range – their first C-segment MINI – followed by the new Convertible range including the recently introduced JCW (John Cooper Works) variant. The Convertible range now accounts for 10% of total UK MINI sales making it the best selling convertible in this country

But nothing stands still in a competitive automotive world and MINI is already looking towards 2017 model year additions. To this end they have just held a media diving day outlining their latest and new models.

They wheeled out their MINI Seven, the first design model of their third generation Hatch range, which is available in three and five door forms at prices starting from £18,545 and £19,145 respectively. It is a 'homage' special edition range to the first Mini Austin Seven model launched in 1959.

Arriving at dealers in the next few weeks for the 2017 model year for the Hatch range MINI has announced a Cooper S Works 210 hp tuning kit and exhaust dealer fit model, priced at £21,690. The new Clubman range gets a John Cooper Works 231 hp model with ALL4 traction as standard, priced at £29,345. The Clubman range will also be extended with a 1.5-litre, 116 hp three cylinder diesel engine with low CO2 emissions of 99 g/km model, which is targeted at the business sector and priced at £21,375. For retail customers the Clubman range will receive an entry level variant, the 1.5 litre turbo petrol 102 hp, priced at £18,990. All Clubman models receive new options and packages from November, including

an 8.8-inch multimedia touch screen and a new updated MINI Yours pack.

Looking further into 2017 a MINI Challenge John Cooper Class has been announced. This eight race weekend series with a grid of 30 cars will be part of the British GT package of races.

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MINI Seven first drive views

The MINI Seven is the first ‘design model’ of the third generation Hatch. The MINI brand has been in BMW’s ownership over the last 15 years but it was only this latest third generation of models that actually used an all-new platform from BMW. Previous models had used updated versions of the Rover underpinnings.

The new MINI Seven takes its name from the very first Mini, the 1959 Austin Seven built by the British Motor Corporation (BMC). Minis were subsequently built by British Leyland and the Rover Group until 2000, after which BMW took over the brand and produced their first MINI in 2001.

Mini under British ownership built around five million cars in 41 years. MINI, under BMW’s ownership, has built three million cars in 15 years. The UK remains the largest single global market for MINI sales with around 70,000 registrations expected this year.

With the new MINI Seven for the UK market around one in 15 customers are expected to chose the Seven ‘homage’ variants, which are available in three and five door Hatch body sizes with four engine types, Cooper, Cooper D, Cooper S and Cooper SD. Prices start from £18,545 for the three door model and £19,145 for the five door version. MINI says that there is no sales limit for this special edition, it will remain in production at Plant Oxford for up to 18 months with unrestricted numbers available.

The MINI Seven made its public debut at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in June but it is

only now that it is being released to dealers, customers and the motoring media.

Compact size, high build quality, the MINI image and the opportunity to personalise your car are all hallmark reasons for MINI ownership. Much of the new Seven version's desirability is about added value equipment offering a customer saving of 5-7% over other versions. There is a choice of Lapisluxury Blue, Pepper White, Midnight Black and British Racing Green body colours. A Melting Silver coloured roof and exterior mirror caps comes as standard for all body finishes. MINI Seven door sill finishers, MINI Seven side scuttles and distinctive 17-inch seven spoke alloy wheels complete the exterior look. Personalisation options include bonnet stripes in Melting Silver with a Malt Brown surround.

Inside, the additions include sports seats with a fabric and leather finish, a MINI Seven logo on the central instrument which surrounds the MINI Visual Boost 6.5-inch colour display – this also comes as standard alongside MINI Connected, Bluetooth Handsfree, floor mats and automatic air-con. For added specification there is also a MINI Seven Chili pack which includes LED headlights, steering wheel multifunction controls and cruise control. Further extra cost options include a panorama glass roof, heated windscreen, heated front seats, uprated hi-fi speaker system, MINI Connected and MINI sat-nav system.

All these extras add up as my test Seven shows. The Cooper S three door Hatch has an on-the-road price of £21,180 but with some of these options it wheeled out for my test drive costing £26,020. Can you really put a price on class and high kerb appeal? MINI owners think not, especially if the model of choice turns out to be 'a keeper', a snapshot of MINI history under BMW's ownership. (Kim asks, "Is this a future classic in the making already?").

For the record my test drive at the MINI media press conference and driving event was with the Cooper S Seven 3-Door Hatch with the new stunning Lapisluxury Blue and Melting Silver roof plus matching body stripes – pure pride of ownership will be a compelling reason to buy.

Off course the Cooper S performance is appealing as well. It is ‘a given’ that modern MINIs, just as they did in the past, have a wheel at each corner, have superb road holding, limpet-like road adhesion and are a joy to drive, compact to park, fuel efficient and just plain fun. Add to that the latest high spec and build quality and the results are to be found by year after year record sales – a modern day motoring indulgence.

The Cooper S powertrain is a 2.0 litre, four cylinder turbo petrol unit producing 192 hp and 300 Nm (221 lb.ft) of torque from just 1,250 rpm. Drive to the front wheels is through a six-speed manual gearbox although an auto transmission is available as well. Top speed is 146 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 6.8 seconds. Officially the Combined Cycle fuel consumption

is 49.6 mpg and on my ‘blast’ around the winding roads of Berkshire the figure was 34.8 mpg. With CO2 emissions of 136 g/km road tax is £130 every year. Insurance is Group 26E.

VERDICT

The engine is strong, punchy during acceleration, with very swift pick up during acceleration from low speeds due to the high torque from low engine rpm, so enough said – and of course the roadholding is a good as ever. But it’s not the performance that is going to sell the new MINI Seven, it is its recognition of 57 years of Mini or MINI history.

For: A ‘homage’ model to the first Mini Austin Seven on sale from 1959, one for the connoisseur’s collection, high spec with distinctive Seven livery, renowned Cooper S performance.

Against: Costly – and even more expensive with added options.

Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

MINI Cooper S Seven 3-Door Hatch. Price: £21,180 (£26,020 as tested).

Engine/transmission: 2.0 litre, four cylinder, turbo petrol, 192 hp, 300 Nm (221 lb.ft) of torque from 1,250rpm, six speed manual.

Performance:

0-62 mph: 6.8 seconds.

Top speed: 146 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 49.6 mpg (34.8 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 136 g/km, VED road tax £130.

Insurance Group: 26E.

Warranty: Three years/unlimited mileage.