

# NIGHT & DAY

Words by Ryno Verster and Craig Watson. Photos by Ryno Verster and Leykor



South Africa was probably the first market with limited editions of the Mini.

The concept of special versions of the Mini really took off in the 1970s, in England, Australia and South Africa.

In South Africa, these special editions emerged from the styling department at Blackheath, managed by Stan Constable. Constable focused on cosmetic features, like the seat design and material, colourful stripes on the side of the body, and matte black inner grilles, with chrome surrounds.

South Africa's Local Content Programme, which was similar in principle to Australia's, aimed at reducing the number of models and enhancing local content in component manufacturing. This inevitably resulted in standardisation of body and mechanical parts. It was therefore only the cosmetic

changes, and the list of options, that set the special editions apart, maintaining the Mini's image as a fun car for young people who wanted something with individuality.

The first test for this format in South Africa was in early 1976, as reported in *The Leyland News* (SA) of March that year. "Leyland Cars gets the ever-popular Mini off to a bright start in 1976 with a limited edition striped-seat Mini 1000. Main features of this Mini are a really exciting interior treatment. The seats are covered in orange-brushed nylon with contrasting brown and orange vertical stripes. The doors, rear sides and parcel shelf are all trimmed in colour-keyed orange. The 'Safari' floor carpets match the rest of the interior trim. The front seats recline and there are face-level vents."

"Special exterior features are double coach lines just below window level and twin exterior door-mounted mirrors. There is a choice of two exterior colours – Brooklands Green and Glacier White."

The first UK limited edition Mini, the Stripey, was released later that same year, and featured similar treatment inside and out.

This approach with limited editions worked so well that Leyland South Africa (Leykor) produced several of Stan Constable's designs, from early 1977 to March 1980. We will concern ourselves with the round-nose versions, which all featured the locally-made 1098cc engines and drum brakes.

In February 1977, the first of these special versions, the Sunshine Mini, was launched at R2,995 (R=Rand, the local currency). According to the new models section of *CAR* magazine it was "To further enhance the 'fun' appeal of the Minis...featuring additional luxury and excitement."

The Sunshine was a very different car from the Australian version of the same name (see Issue 7 for a full feature), which appeared eight months later. In brief, the Australian Mini Sunshine was based on the Mini Clubman S and featured the Air and Sun vacuum-sealed glass Sportsroof, special interior trim and prismatic "Sunshine" decals outside.

The major feature of the South African version was a Webasto-style folding soft sunroof (supplied by Sutton and Walton of Port Elizabeth) matching the Dolomite Yellow exterior paintwork, and a Perspex wind deflector.

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Sutton and Walton sunroof on Mini Sunshine (L) and Moon Roof on Moonlight Mini

A recently restored Sunshine - with chrome.