

CLASSIC DRIVER

Geneva 2011: The MINI Rocketman Concept



At just over 10cm longer than the Issigonis Mini, BMW MINI's carbonfibre-tub concept returns to the original's values of maximum space in the smallest possible overall size.

With its transparent, 'Union Flag' roof – featuring longitudinal/diagonal braces that can be illuminated at night – a carbonfibre 'skeleton' (à la McLaren MP4-12C) and a host of innovative, but hardly 'production' features, the little 2+1.5 city car does not necessarily signal a showroom presence any time soon.

That said, however, the market for super-frugal, designer, urban runabouts (BMW is coy about the little car's drivetrain, although does promise "three litres per 100km/94mpg" consumption) is booming. Having set the trend with the original mini, er, MINI, BMW went a little bigger with the current version, somewhat controversial with the Clubman five-door, and LARGE for the Countryman.



The 'Rocketman', despite a name that for many Brits will evoke the spirit of the 1970s (three-day week, mutton-chop sideburns, 'The Sweeney' and flares), should restore the brand's mojo and be a brilliant way of traversing the metropolis. Like a Toyota iQ, it's a generous two-seater up front, with one smaller seat in the rear and an even tinier one next to that for those "don't worry, we'll get you in somehow..." moments.

The interior is a technological tour de force, with internet-enabled everything and a new dash incorporating a removable control unit that can be configured (sat-nav destination, media files, etc.) at home, prior to departure.





Think of it as a very large iPad. That you can go to work in. I guess.

The doors employ clever external (as on the original Mini) double-hinges. By doing this, one of the bugbears of claustrophobic city living – not being able to open car doors in tight spaces – is considerably eased.





The rear storage area can be accessed via either a wide-opening upper glass tailgate, or a 'drawer' in the lower section of the boot. You just know MINI will offer special bags to fit this, don't you?

All in all, it's a terrifically exciting little car and if/when it goes into production, one we'd be proud to have sitting outside the Classic Driver office.

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Photos: MINI

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