

## MINI COPY

To the outside world, Alex Issigoni's original supermini might not be the first thing that comes to mind when they think of racing cars. But real motorsport fans know different of course – and the original Mini has been used for an incredible range of competitions. From hillclimbs to rallies, saloon car to touring cars, the marvelous Mini has done (and won) them all – and in the legendary Mini Sevens series, it's also the longest-running single-make race series in the UK.

With almost six decades of production, the Mini has, of course, inspired many aftermarket and performance upgrades. But it's a little-known fact that the Mini was the very first road car that Öhlins made suspension units for. In the 1980s, the Swedish suspension gurus had already made a big name for themselves in the two-wheeled world. Based near Stockholm in Upplands Väsby, the firm was founded by Kenth Öhlin in 1976, and started out making rear suspension spring/damper units for off-road motorcycles. By the late '80s though, the firm was expanding into other sectors at a fast rate, and its products were in demand for four-wheeled racing and road motorcycles. Even ATVs and snowmobiles started to use the distinctive yellow-sprung shock absorbers.

By the time Öhlins started making Mini suspension units, the cars were already seen as 'classic' racers. But the huge popularity – and affordable nature – of the Mini racing world meant there was plenty of demand for the Öhlins shocks. These early dampers were solid, sturdy units, using a 36mm damping piston design, with minimal adjustment. Compared with the ultra-high-tech TTX coilovers of today, they were a rather simple design. But they offered dependable, high-quality performance, and like all Öhlins units, were rebuildable, and designed for long service life.

When swapped for the Mini's rather primitive (but effective) standard suspension setup, Öhlins' pressurised damping system made a massive difference to the Mini's performance. The car could perform far better – the entire chassis was so much stiffer, so the driver could use his tyres to the limit, the way they were designed to be used, and get the maximum potential from the engine.

Though they didn't carry the name, these original Mini shocks were the forerunners to the Road and Track suspension series that Öhlins produces today, for some of the finest sports cars in the world. That original Mini suspension design was used for both race, and ultimate road performance – and Öhlins still makes them today, on request, to special order.

Of course, the original Mini is just part of the story now – and a whole new generation of fans have fallen in love with the modern MINI, built by BMW. And Öhlins has a wide range of high-quality suspension upgrades for the various Cooper and Cooper S road cars. The firm's Road and Track suspension series uses Öhlins' DFV Dual Flow Valve damping technology to give massively

improved roadholding, grip and handling on road or track. With a simple tweak of the adjuster dials, the R&T shocks transform from a compliant road setting to a firm, track-ready setup in seconds. They transform the MINI Cooper and Cooper S, turning a merely 'quick' road car, into a high-performance, sharp-handling track-ready tool.

Öhlins was also involved with the design of the original WRC MINI from 2010, built as full-factory race cars by Prodrive. These full-bore rally cars competed at the highest level, but are now being seen competing in national rallies. The Öhlins units on these cars are a completely different, unique MacPherson strut design, built to a very high technical specification. Originally designed for the very highest levels of rally competition, they're still working perfectly half a decade on, thanks to the traditional Öhlins design principles of servicability and rebuildability...

And those principles – together with a commitment to the best in performance and manufacturing quality – apply to all Öhlins products – from those original, simple, tough, shocks for the classic Minis racing thirty years ago, right through to the WRC struts and Road and Track DFV units of today...