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THE SPANISH ACQUISITION

The odds were heavily stacked against German Matthias Boller when he took on a part-restored Authi Mini 1275 GT with plans to rebuild it using only genuine Spanish parts.

Words: Rob Hawkins Photos: Matthias Boller.



Vinyl and cotton reclining front seats were an optional extra on the Authi GT.



Smiths 8,000rpm tachometer is a standard gauge in the Authi 1275 GT.

It has become generally accepted that part of the sport of restoring a Mini is to hunt down new old stock (NOS) components and as many genuine parts as possible. Originality is a must and is always worth the effort. However, many people would have forgiven Matthias Boller for fitting a few non-genuine items when he took on the Pamplona-built Authi Mini 1275 GT seen here.

The task of completing the restoration wasn't for the faint-hearted. Firstly, the car was some 400km from his home in south west Germany, and he couldn't arrange to see it before buying, so he asked some friends to collect it. Secondly, the previous owner had sadly died, but had left strict instructions to find a

good home for the part-finished resto Mini, ensuring it would be correctly restored. No pressure for Matthias, then. The challenge of making sure all the parts were authentic was immense, and here are some of the reasons why.

The Authi name, which stands for Automoviles de Turismo Hispano-Ingleses, was a company that made Spanish versions of some BMC/BL cars between 1966 and 1975. Post-war manufacturing and European trade embargos saw British Leyland striking a deal with Spain in the 60s in an attempt to penetrate their car market. SEAT had been set up by the Spanish government in 1950 and turned to Fiat for help, allowing them access to the Spanish market.

BMC wanted the same, so they teamed up with parts and panels manufacturer Nueva Montana Quijano (NMQ SA) and production started with the Austin/BMC 1100, followed by the Mini 1275-C, at a factory in Landaben, near Pamplona. Trade rules allowed BMC to supply the Mini bodyshells, but everything else had to be manufactured in Spain. For instance, NMQ used its manufacturing experience to make the engines at a separate factory near Santander. FEMSA made electrical components, including the dynamo, voltage regulator and distributor.

Just like the UK trade union and industrial disputes of the 70s, Spain also had its problems and the Authi deal eventually folded in 1975 after



Authi logos can be found on everything, even the keyring. Right: Boot houses a 5.5 gallon fuel tank, Rostyle spare and the battery with FEMSA terminal clamps.



126,567 Minis had rolled off the Landaben, Pamplona production lines.

The Authi Mini 1275 GT was introduced in 1971 and was different to the UK's 1275 GT. It had a round nose instead of a Clubman front end, a traditional Smiths centre-mounted speedo, but it had the familiar Rostyle wheels.

Built on the 17 November 1971 and registered in Madrid, on 2 February 1972, the Authi seen here was originally ordered with recliner seats rather than the standard 1275 GT non-recliners. It wasn't until 1973 that recliners became standard in the Authi Cooper 1300, which had replaced the 1275 GT in the same year.

The first owner of this Authi kept the car in Spain until he moved to Germany in November 1993, changing the documents

and registration. He then sold it the following year to German Mini fanatic Sven Bode, who lived near Hanover. Sven used the car every day until April 1997 when he decided to restore it. Working as a jet propulsion engineer, he wasn't deterred by the restoration but was keen to ensure genuine Spanish manufactured parts were used wherever possible. Consequently, he spent a few years sourcing the appropriate parts, and had the bodywork professionally restored and painted. Sadly, Sven lost his life to cancer in February 2011 but he had asked his friends to ensure that the part-restored Authi found a good home. It was thus advertised on the German Mini forum (www.mini-forum.de). "The 1275 GT project caught my

attention because I noticed that all the work had been done very precisely and to an extremely high standard," recalls current owner Matthias Boller, who has been restoring Minis since he was 18 years old and is a long-term member of the German Mini Register (www.miniregister.org). "Another important point was the GT was 98 per cent complete with all original Spanish spare parts. One reason why Sven's mates didn't feel comfortable to finish the project was his high grade of workmanship, so they were searching for someone who had the skills to continue the restoration to the same level."

Matthias agreed to take on the GT project in May 2011 but he wasn't available to collect it. Instead, two of his good friends, Andreas Henkel »

OWNER PROFILE

Matthias Boller

Age: 47

Occupation: Aircraft engineer, photojournalist and technical editor

First car: 1980 Mini 850 Mascot

Current Minis: Authi 1275 GT, 1965 Mk1 Cooper S, 1967 Mk1 Cooper S, 1967 Mk1 Cooper, 1968 Mk2 Britax Cooper Replica, 1976 IMA, 1984 HLE

Dream cars: Cooper S Radford de Ville, Broadspeed GT

Worst job on a Mini: Changing the steering rack on a freshly restored Mini

Most embarrassing Mini moment: Failing the German TÜV



and Jürgen Schmitt, volunteered to drive the 800km round trip, returning with the car and several boxes.

"The body was on its wheels with the axles installed," Matthias remembers on first seeing his new project. "Everything else was in boxes. Some of the interior and exterior parts were new, others used. The Hydrolastic suspension, brakes and steering rack were already refurbished. The whole drivetrain was just oily and dismantled and needed a complete overhaul."

The first challenge was to find out which parts he had and which were missing. With no manuals or documentation available, research was time-consuming and difficult. However, in some cases, he could simply overhaul parts, as he explains. "I started with the seats. I removed the original seat covers, removed the rust from the seat frames and repainted them. Then I changed the

seat base and installed new seat foams. I cleaned the covers and refitted them."

The Smiths instruments had already been professionally overhauled together with the factory installed rev counter. "The wooden steering wheel is original Authi," he says. "The clear lacquer was peeling off and it was very worn. I sanded down all the old paint and polished the spokes, boss and horn push. I painted the wood rim with several layers of two-pack clear lacquer and finally polished it until it was smooth."

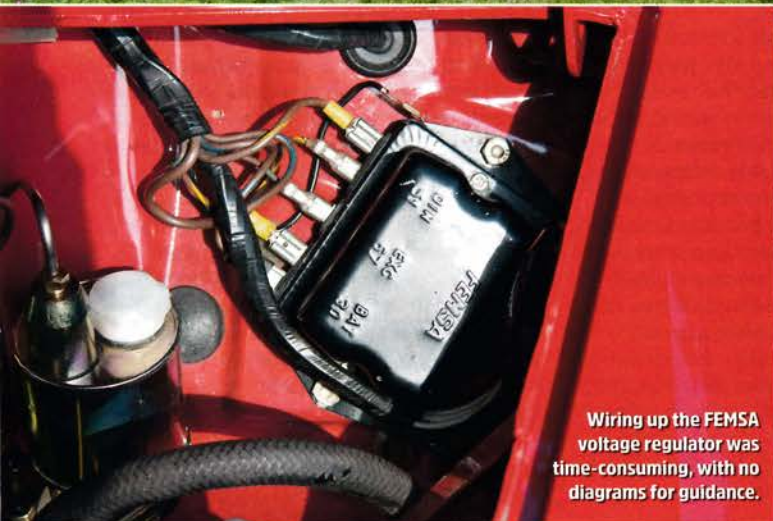
In the engine bay, he reinstalled the original wiring loom but noticed the dynamo and voltage regulator had been replaced by an alternator. In the boxes that came with the car, there was an original new old stock FEMSA voltage regulator but no dynamo. With no original wiring diagrams, Matthias could only refer to his Portuguese Mk1 Mini, which is also fitted with a FEMSA



Matthias would be pleased to help anyone restoring an Authi Mini. Email him at: maboller@gmx.net



10-inch steel Rostyles were fitted to all Authi 1275 GTs.



Wiring up the FEMSA voltage regulator was time-consuming, with no diagrams for guidance.



The Authi had been converted to run an alternator but Matthias refitted the original negative earth dynamo and voltage regulator.

Rear light chrome trim is a Spanish aftermarket item.



"With no manuals or documentation available, research was time-consuming and difficult."

dynamo and voltage regulator. Sadly, the MK1's braided loom was difficult to understand, so he resorted to starting from scratch and making up each individual wire for the conversion back to a negative earth dynamo and regulator.

The Authi's 1275cc A-series engine and four-speed manual gearbox had been manufactured by NMQ and the logo can be found on casings and parts ranging from the oil pump and camshaft to the crankshaft and cylinder head. After stripping down the engine and checking, it was found to be in need of a rebore of +0.020-inch, displacing 1293cc.

While the engine was being rebuilt, by Borger Motorentechnik, he stripped and refurbished the gearbox under the guidance of Andreas. Matthias had already rebuilt a few gearboxes but admits: "I did not want to make any mistakes on this particular gearbox and damage any of the original parts. It took us half a day, including thorough cleaning. We changed all the baulk rings, a few bearings and all the gaskets."

Once the engine and gearbox were complete, the next challenge was to find the correct Authi paint colour for the power train. From the remains that were on the block, he identified the correct colour as blue/grey RAL5008. "I stuck the whole engine together without gaskets for painting," he says. "Then all the parts had to come off again to do the final assembly, including gaskets." »

The build



Sven Bode began the 1275 GT's restoration in 1997. Matthias took it on in 2011 and finished it in 2015. Overall, the Authi Mini was in excellent condition.



This is how Matthias bought the Authi Mini: the stripped, restored and painted bodyshell was ready to be reassembled when he acquired the project.



These special Hardy Spicer outboard joints were standard equipment on the Authi Mini driveshafts.



Spanish-manufactured A-series has been bored to 1293cc and painted in original colour blue/grey.

NMQ-BMC 1275cc A-series has been rebored and now displaces 1293cc.



“...they hadn’t seen an Authi 1275 GT in this condition for ages.”

Another challenge was the ignition system. The Authi Mini 1275 GT originally used a FEMSA distributor, which is not compatible with the Lucas version. Despite the fact that Matthias had the correct type of distributor, he needed a new cap, rotor arm and points. Eventually, he discovered the SEAT Marbella (continuation of the Panda) used the same type of distributor, so serviceable items were readily available.

The trouble with identifying Spanish parts wasn’t restricted to the engine. When he wanted to fit a set of Mk3 door locks with chrome handles, which were in better condition than the original items, he found that a British set wouldn’t fit, despite looking identical. Upon closer inspection, the differences were apparent, as he explains: “Internally the handles are different, thus the locks are different too. It’s also visible on the boot handle, which has a slightly different shape when compared with a British version.”

In April 2015, four years after Matthias had bought the GT, and 18 years since its restoration had started with Sven Bode, the Authi was back on the road and ready in time for Europe’s biggest classic car show, the Techno Classica in Essen, Germany. “During the show the GT caught the attention of many Spanish visitors,” says Matthias. “All of them were

enthused by the originality in every detail and assured me they hadn’t seen an Authi 1275 GT in this condition for ages, neither in Spain nor anywhere else.”

During the summer of 2015, he met one of Sven’s friends who had helped to sell the car to him. “I told him the GT was ready, but I was still searching for some particular parts, including a FEMSA

starter and dynamo. He was happy to hear that and a few hours later he handed me the rare original parts I was looking for. They got lost during the pick up four years earlier, and since then, nobody was able to identify them!”

Matthias would like to thank: Andreas Henkel for technical assistance on the engine and gearbox; Thomas Adamofsky, of Pro Street, for supplying many rare spare parts. **MiniWorld would like to thank:** Braunschardt Castle for the use of its grounds for our photoshoot.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

1971 Authi Mini 1275 GT

Engine: NMQ-BMC 1293cc A-series . cast iron cylinder head, 8.8:1 compression ratio, forged rockers . single 1.5-inch SU carburettor . Spanish manufactured cast iron combined inlet and exhaust manifold, servo vacuum pipe outlet . paper air filter in metal housing . mechanical fuel pump . RC40 twin silencer side-rear-exit exhaust system . mechanical water pump, plastic cooling fan . two-core radiator. FEMSA negative earth ignition system, starter motor, dynamo, voltage regulator . engine, rocker cover painted blue/grey (RAL5008) . **Gearbox:** Reconditioned manual four-speed all-synchro, remote shift . 3.44:1 final drive ratio . NMQ-BMC casing, internal components . Hardy Spicer outboard driveshaft joints . **Brakes:** Servo-assisted single-circuit system . Cooper S brake master cylinder . Spanish IRUNA brake servo . Front: Cooper S two-pot callipers . 7.5-inch discs . Rear: drums, brake shoes . mechanical handbrake . Spanish manufactured backplate, adjuster . **Suspension:** Hydrolastic suspension . ‘factory

grey’ painted subframes . Front: standard upper, lower arms . Rear: radius arms, spring assisters . **Wheels/Tyres:** 4.5x10-inch Rostyle steel wheels, powder-coated silver. Yokohama A008 165/70x10 tyres . **Interior:** Authi factory special-order reclining seats, black vinyl/cotton . black carpets, wool sound insulation . Autolandia British Leyland beige/black rubber floor mats . Spanish manufactured Smiths 200km/h speedo, 8000rpm tacho, coolant temperature, oil pressure gauges . original three-spoke wood-rimmed steering wheel, 1275 GT horn push . fresh air heater. SILCA inertia-reel seatbelts . chrome handbrake lever . **Exterior:** Early Mk3 left-hand drive round-nose UK-built bodysell . painted Rover COF Flame Red (BLVC 818) . long-collar FEMSA wiper arms . Spanish Lucas wiper motor . chrome bumpers, overriders . black front grille . GT grille badge . Spanish lockable flip-up fuel filler cap . period Spanish aftermarket rear light trim . Kinby headlights . Gemo front indicators . Yorka rear lights