



Rear seat is correct pattern.



One item that can tell an original Sunshine.



Front seats changed for better wear.

By the end of the 1970s Mini sales had slowed dramatically and Leyland looked for ways of generating interest through limited-edition models. In Australia, probably the rarest of these is the Mini Sunshine.

Cheap Japanese imported cars, restrictive Australian Design Rules, a company in the financial wilderness, thirty-year-old technology, and a market that wanted modern, efficient, reliable transport. All this added up to the Mini's market share in 1977 being barely a fraction of what it was in 1967.

Leyland Australia was struggling financially, and simply didn't have the resources or the willpower to develop the Mini's ageing design. In the UK, the go-ahead had already been given for the Mini's replacement – the Metro – so as far as Leyland were concerned the Mini was dead after that anyway.

In July 1976 the Australian Government introduced ADR27a, which stipulated minimum air/pollutant ratios in exhaust emissions. Leyland's response, achieved with minimum outlay, was to adopt the air-pump and charcoal canister that had been previously used in the Special Export Moke of 1971-73 (see Issue 6), which had in turn came from the Austin America.



No pop-up sunroof for the Sunshine.

This was a cheap way of meeting the requirements, but sapped the Mini's little one-litre lump of the vital power it needed to remain the "zippy little performer" it had always been considered. Let's face it, by 1977 the Mini needed all the power it could get to still be considered viable, modern transport.

Of course, one thing that could not be ignored with the Mini was its ever-present, and completely intangible, fun factor. By giving the car a more up-beat appearance, a few mod-cons and a bit of an interior make-over, the car again appealed to the young first-car buyer. The Mini Clubman S offered this and became the most common Mini of the period.

With only the 998cc engine available, the only alternative to beefing up the engine was to dress up the car.

This had been quite successfully, if almost accidentally, achieved with the SS of 1976. The SS was, essentially, an S with alloy wheels, fog lamps, metallic paint, vinyl roof, a radio/cassette player, heated rear window, tinted glass and a few other little goodies. There was a bit more to it, but we'll have more on that model in another issue.

The success of the SS prompted Leyland to offer another model, the LS the following year, which was basically the same car with a slightly shorter list of extras. The LS proved popular and became a permanent model.

Around the same time, a Sydney company called Auto Sun & Air developed a world-class sunroof, called the Autosun Sportsroof.



Dig those '70s sounds, Baby.

What made theirs better than most was that it was connected via a hose to the inlet manifold on the engine, with the vacuum created sucking the sunroof's seals in and causing a perfect water-tight fit. When a button on the dashboard was pushed in, the vacuum was cut off and the sunroof released, so it could be slid open by hand.

The tinted-glass Sportsroof ran on nylon sliders in stainless steel tracks, which meant smoother operation. There was also a small wind deflecting screen just in front of the sunroof, which allowed the sunroof to be left slightly open in wet weather. This meant in the middle of winter you could have better airflow through the car, which meant less likelihood of misting up the windows, and making the demister of the heater far more efficient.

*Modern Motor* ran a story on the Sportsroof, which retailed for \$395, in June 1977, saying; "The success of the roof has been such that more than 12,000 units will be exported to Europe over the next 12 months and orders have already begun to come from the United States, the largest car accessory market in the world."

In October 1977 Leyland announced the Mini Sunshine, with its main selling feature being the standard fitment of the Autosun Sportsroof. According to *Motor Manual* in May 1978, only 360 were made.

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Cool '70s graphics!