



Of the hundreds of films where you can find a Mini, there have been a few defining moments.

Just about any British film from the 1960s is likely to have a few Minis, at the very least as background props, and often in a minor cameo appearance.

However, there have only been a handful of movies where the Mini is featured in a major role, or really taken seriously.

Minis often turn up in the most unlikely of places in movies. There is a short, but interesting scene in the 1969 Paul Newman film, *Winning*, where Newman and Joanne Woodward are competing in a rally Mini.



*Winning, 1969*

One of the more interesting Mini cameos is in the 2002 film *Thunderpants*, where every car in the film except one, is a green Mini. You'll need an open mind about flatulence for this one, but it is a lot of fun.

At first I thought there was just the one Mini used a few times, but in one scene there are five identical Minis. None are ever seen driving and they are only used as props, to highlight the fantasy aspect of the film.



*Thunderpants - 2002*

However, the most famous Mini cameo would be that of Peter Sellers' wickerwork Mini in his *Pink Panther* sequel, *A Shot In The Dark*. Inspector Clouseau (Sellers) gets caught in a compromising position - stuck in a traffic jam while (tastefully) naked in the car, with an equally naked Elke Summer.

In *Four Weddings and a Funeral* - a film which managers to use up all its F-word quota in the first five minutes (but in a funny and fairly appropriate manner) - Charles (Hugh Grant) rings the neck of his sister's Mini on the motorway, while running late for the first wedding. There is a similar, less flattering, scene with a Mini in *Three Men and a Little Lady*, when Tom Selleck drives a hire Mini.

Another film of note, which has a very short appearance of a Mini at the end, is *Bridget Jones' Diary*. In the sequel, *Bridget Jones: The Edge Of Reason*, there was a brief deleted scene including a black Rover Mini, which you will only see on the DVD.

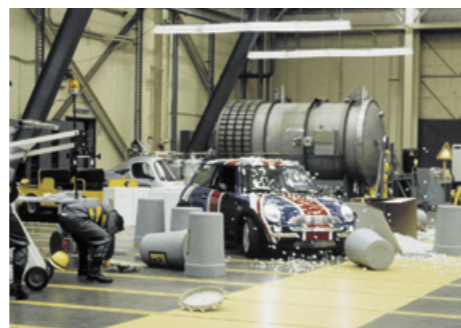
In the 2000 version of *The Avengers*, the bumbling bad-guys (there seems to be a common theme of bumbling bad-guys with Minis in the film industry) drive a very neat black Rover Mini. Unfortunately, they destroy it in a spectacular crash.

Sadly, even Sean Connery's talent and Uma Thurman's body were not able to save this corny, sham of an iconic 1960s TV show.

There are plenty of cameo rolls for the new MINI as well - some good, others not.

In *Miss Congeniality 2-Armed and Fabulous*, Sandra Bullock races down the street in a commandeered MINI, with drag-queen feather hat poking up through the sunroof. It is a short and funny sequence.

*Goldmember* - the third Austin Powers film - has a remote-controlled MINI with Union Jack paint scheme, used by Austin's father. Unfortunately, even the MINI's appearance fails to add any life to this appalling film.



*Goldmember - a sorry sequel, sequel.*

Mokes turn up in the occasional film too, with one chosen for the lead characters in the 1968 film *Salt and Pepper*, starring Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr. I have not seen this film, as it is not available in Australia. By all accounts it is a pretty poor spy spoof, so I didn't bother ordering one from the USA.

One Moke worth mentioning is that owned by Leo and Margaret Jack, from Cooper Cars South West Trading, in Somerset, England.

It was owned by Vision Hire, London, who hired out vehicles for film and TV. The Moke appears in the final fight scenes in the 1965 James Bond film *Thunderball*, painted yellow. It also turns up briefly in *Carry On Camping*, painted red, white and blue stripes and driven by a group of hippies.

When Leo bought it, it was dressed as an army tank, although he has no idea what film it appeared in like that. Any ideas welcome.



*Leo Jack's movie star Moke.*

There are many more films where Minis have made brief appearances, but our interest is where they have made a sizable impact to the film. The following are some examples.

## The Italian Job - 1969 & 2003



*An original 1969 publicity still for The Italian Job.*

**THE** iconic Mini films.

But, they are so vastly different that it is not really fair to compare the two. Like the cars themselves, they are both excellent, but are truly representative of their age.

The 1969 film is a very British comedy; a jolly romp where the bad guys are loveable charmers, especially Charlie Croker, and the good guys are the bumbling polizi of Italy's motor-city Turin.

The 2003 film is more of a Hollywood action flick, and should not really be considered a remake. The only thing to do with an Italian job is the first ten minutes, where the gang carries out a robbery in Venice. The rest of the film may well have been called the American Job.

The similarities between the two are the names of Charlie Croker and Mr Bridger, the traffic jam, and the getaway in three Minis - red, white and blue.

To get your empathy for these lovable crooks, both films rely on the inclusion of "real" bad guys. In the case of the 1969 film it is the Italian Mafia, while the 2003 film has one of the original gang, who steals the gold for himself - murdering John Bridger in the process.

While , the 1969 film is the epitome of the "cliff-hanger", the 2003 film leaves no questions at the end - we even get a running dialogue as to how each member of the gang spends his share of the loot. Nearly 40 years on from the original, debate continues about how the story could have ended, or what Michael Cane's "great idea" was.

Both films were fantastic value for promoting the Mini. The original was once described as the best car commercial ever made. A point noted by BMW in 2002.

FIAT saw huge potential in the 1969 film and made the offer that if the makers switched from Minis to Fiat 600s, they would provide as many as were required, would supercharge them to give them more power, provide \$50,000 for the purchase of other cars, and supply a brand new Ferrari (Fiat had recently taken over Ferrari) to replace the Lamborghini in the opening scenes. The offer was rejected on the basis that it took away from the whole British versus Italian feel of the film.

Giovanni Agnelli, head of Fiat, remained supportive, and ensured total co-operation from his company and the Turin police. The rooftop scene, which leads to that famous jump between two buildings, takes place on Fiat's own rooftop test track.

British Leyland saw little value in the film, and provided six Minis at trade price, while the producers had to purchase the other 25 they required at full retail.

In the accompanying documentary on the DVD, producer Michael Deeley says; "The continuing existence of Fiat and the disappearance of BMC might tell its own story about their behaviour."

When BMW/MINI were approached about the new movie, they couldn't do enough for the film-makers - supplying 32 customised MINIs and technical support.



*Wooden ramp protects steps, and cars.*

As an indication of the changing times, when cars using petrol engines were banned from use in the tunnel scenes, three MINIs were converted to electric motors, by the film's Transportation Coordinator, John Carpenter.

F. Gary Gray, director of the film, explained why so many MINIs were needed. "We had a 24-hour bodyshop. We crashed so many, it required sending them to the bodyshop and kicking them out every three days."

Both DVDs of the films contain making-of documentaries, and deleted scenes. The best of these is probably the ballroom scene in the 1969 movie. It is a masterpiece of choreography, but was rightly left out of the final cut because it would have slowed down the overall chase too much.

Both films require you to suspend belief a little bit, ignore a few continuity faults, and just sit back and enjoy the ride.

Watching the 2003 film, you'll pick fans of the original. They are the ones who spot Michael Cane, in the brief shot from the 1969 film. But, don't blink or you'll miss it.

If you would like to read more about Minis in the movies, subscribe today or grab your copy from your local newsagent.



*Electric MINIs protect the environment.*