

MOTORING



Toy story

A very niche Mini for those who must have the latest electric novelty.

**T**HE new Mini John Cooper Works electric is little other than a toy. There. I've said it. The end. Not much more I can write about it.

Okay, there is still a whole page to fill so I will try to elaborate, but that is pretty much the gist. Which, depending on how you look at it, can be a good or a bad thing. Read on to make up your mind, I guess.

I have driven many Minis since I began writing about cars in 2009, at the tender age of 24 (youth really is wasted on the young). I cannot say for sure, but I must have tested more than 60 different models in the last 17 years, including all versions and layouts possible. Some were just weird, like the Coupé or the Roadster; some were interesting if quirky, such as the Pace-man; and some were great, like the Clubman, both first and second generations.

The John Cooper Works has always been the top dog version when it comes to performance and driving dynamics. Although I always felt the Cooper S was and remains the most enjoyable compromise, I cannot argue with the

fact that the JCW gets the blood flowing.

The need to transition to electric cars is a bigger problem for Mini than for most brands for obvious reasons. Nobody needs a Mini. Customers buy them because they want one. It's an emotional purchase.

It's also obvious a Mini with a fire breathing engine up front will always be more exciting than one with a soulless electric motor. The feel of a Mini is directly linked to how it sounds and the pleasure of driving one comes from shifting gears, hearing the pops and bangs from the exhaust and pushing the revs until the red line. Without that, well, an electric Mini is, sadly, like most other electric cars. The differences fade into the need to save the world - however moronic that might sound and it does sound quite moronic to me.

Things get worse when talking about a John Cooper Works. This is supposed to be Mini amplified. Mini intensified. Maxi Mini in terms of excitement. How can you do that in a silent car with no engine and no gearbox? Truth is, you can't. Never will. No



matter how clever the engineers are and how much electric cars will evolve and become more enjoyable to drive, they will NEVER be as fun as a car that turns burnt fuel into speed.

I knew all this when I booked it for a test and I still booked it, because I wanted to see what Mini could do when forced to create an

electric JCW. My use of the word forced is not random.

I like the look of the new 2024 Mini and in JCW guise it looks every bit the 'racing special' the brand was going for. Purposeful, aggressive, muscular, with the right stance, I am sure it finds some sales appearances alone.

The spec sheet of the JCW electric displays some worrying news though. This Mini weighs 1650kg. Yes, you read that right. 1650kg. In a car less than 4 metres long. That's the same as my diesel 3-Series Touring and 320kg more than the petrol JCW. Anyway, there are 258 horse power available from a 54.2kWh battery pack mounted within the floor, which in turn is good for a claimed range of 370 km. A maximum charging capability of 95 kW DC means 10 to 80% battery charge in under half an hour.

Inside, it's business as usual for the JCW versions, with sporty details everywhere and really great seats. Select D for forward motion and your preferred driving mode among the many available and the JCW is off. It's fast, that's for sure. But, after four days driving it around, it's an easy car to sum up: it's a toy. An expensive toy, at €45,000. For the right client though, it might be quite satisfying actually. It's not just the speed. This thing corners incredibly well and it is capable of amazing things, dynamically wise. It hides its weight remarkably well. I can see it being a fun daily in the right circumstances.

However. It's too compromised to reach a large audience. It is, let's say, stiff. Quite. And if you use the performance on offer,

which is plenty, forget about the claimed range. Think more in the realms of 250km between charges. You cannot really travel far in this car, and passengers won't love riding along with you. Use it on your own and drive it like you stole it, and it's good fun for sure. But then again, not as fun as its petrol sibling.

It's hard to see the point of an electric Mini JCW other than being something that stems from an obligation forced upon the brand. It will definitely have its fans among the world rescuers on a mission to electrify but, as someone who has always been a fan of the Mini brand, I would say, try the petrol JCW before you sign that purchase order for the electric version.

And if you really want an electric Mini, the entry-level electric hatch just makes a lot more sense.



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