May the mini-list be with you

Mini InterNet
International appears to be the fastest growing 'Mini club' – and it's truly global.
John C Bullas logs on with the details.

The world's biggest pin board?
Do you remember the pin-board plastered with notes?
You know the one I mean, the one you saw at the last Mini meeting – lots of little scraps of paper scrawled with messages:
"Anyone got a 12g295 head for sale?"
"Where can I find a reverse rim for my Cooper?"
"Are you here Steve, from the Cooper Register?"
"Anyone from Dagenham at this meeting?"

Well, imagine a notice-board big enough to be seen by the whole world, capable of holding an unlimited number of messages and kept up to date by the second? Does such a thing exist? Too right
it does! The notice-board might be read down telephone wires and not made of silicon chips or cork but it is more effective than any real notice-board could ever be.

This notice-board is called the mini-list. Using a UNIX computer in Utah, USA, which also hosts a number of other car enthusiasts services (the team.net system), this is how the mini-list works...

Anyone with access to an E-mail address can subscribe to the mini-list and then post a message to the list address. Then that message gets broadcast to all the other Mini enthusiasts all over the world who have subscribed along with you.

Get on board!
How do you join in with the mini-list chat? Send a message to: majorjim@autotx.team.net , just put subscribe mini-list as the only text in the message (nice simple plain text; no bold or special characters, and for those computer buffs out there, NO EMBEDDED HTML). The 'major' will then send you a confirmation message that you return (so it knows someone else is not having a bit of fun at your expense, subscribing you – good for protecting Ford Ka owners from malicious Mini enthusiasts, eh?) and then you will be signed up. You have become a mini-list-er! You can easily change to the digest version (a single-post-per-day of the past 24 hours' messages instead of getting each individually, useful if you are using the work E-mail account or have a limited mailbox size), and you can easily unsubscribe, as well!

How you can benefit from being a 'list-er'
Here's a few examples of what the list can offer:

"Ken was sitting in Singapore, thousands of miles away from the nearest workshop manual. He wanted to know how to find out that the vacuum advance on his dizzy was working properly. He simply posted an E-mail to the list. Who helped him? Marcel in Canada, who has raced Minis for 20 years."

"John went abroad on business and wanted to meet up with some Mini enthusiasts near The Hook of Holland. So he posted a message to the list and Henk Burgler and Arnold Bordeuwijk from Mini Club Netherlands turned up at the hotel for a beer or two."

The philosophy of the list
The mini-list is not for computer nerds and anons with sallow complexities and no mates, it is a practical solution to every Mini owner's dreams (and a way of preventing easily avoided mistakes turning into costly nightmares).

If you just want an 'electronic workshop manual' then the mini-list isn't really what it is there for; it isn't for message after message of "How do I take the spark plugs out?" or "How do I check the oil?". But, if you want to ask, "What type of spark plugs would be best for a 1380 running a 11:1 compression ratio with a 37x29 head and a Crank Electronic ignition?" Just ask the list!

It is like a free-access tuning manual based on the experiences of over 600 people; a club listing for the whole world; a guide to Mini shops from Edmonton in London, England to Edmonton in Alberta, Canada; a source of answers to any Mini question – 6,000 years plus of combined Mini-ing is on-line!

A picture can say a thousand words (or E-mails)
To show just who makes up the 'list-ers', take a look at a few photos of their cars sent to me in response to a 'list posting':

Rocky Frisco you already know about from a recent feature in MiniWorld. You may not know he was using his car as an electioneering medium!

Rule Number One: no rule number one!
The list is self-policing and is no place for commercial activities or back-biting. Things move along fine, ideas and experiences get passed around the world and listers offer valuable support to beginners and experts alike, sharing their wealth of experience. Marcel Chichak and I sit back and enjoy the results of a chance E-mail in 1994. We occasionally wield the 'toasting fork' when someone spoils the fun but it is the exception rather than the rule.

MLMs (mini-list meets)
You might think that the listers never meet face-to-face. Nothing could be further from the truth. At the recent MLM 6 (mini-list meet) held in Towcester near Northampton, England, 35

1) Ken in Singapore – his 'sacred' Mini outside a shine.
2) Rocky Frisco's mobile billboard – Tulsa City Council bid.
3) Sixth mini-list meet (MLM6) in early March – 35 cars in all.
4a) Scott Beavis has a few bits left over from his engine build.
4b) Scott's Mini with brother's B50 and girlfriend's Mayfair.
5a) Stunning Canadian backdrop – Marcel Chichak's car.
5b) Marcel again – this time on a Ravine Rally.
Minis and 45 list-ers got together for a convoy run and a pub lunch. Similar MLMs are held elsewhere in Europe and in Canada, the United States and in Australia - listers commonly meet up when travelling away from home; you are never alone when you travel with a laptop computer in your Mini!

The mini-list must be the only Mini club where your excuse for being tardy getting to a club meet could be "the flight was late getting into Schipol."

What the list-ers have to say about the list!

"I remember when I joined the list over a year ago. My first question was 'I want more power, but how?' and my next was 'Can I put a 1275 head on a 998?'."

"I've come quite a long way since then. The list has been so useful and I like to return the favour by helping the novice Minis in the same way I was helped by others when I joined. When the list was smaller there was some question about whether it was really a 'club' but now we know. It's among the biggest and the best. Keep up all the hard work everyone!"

Scott Beavis, UK

"I have found the list invaluable. It is so handy to be able to get lots of advice on a restoration query from a few minutes typing. I also find it fun to know how shows/meetings went in other parts of the world, and find out what humorous things other list-ers get up to in their Minis!"

Brett Nicholson (Nicho), Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

"I am a new Mini enthusiast and on my recent engine and transmission rebuild I received detailed step-by-step instructions to solve a lot of my problems, help from people all over the world who had the experience to lend me."

Jeremiah Whitaker, San Francisco, California, USA

"On 1 March we had our first AMLM (Adelaide mini-list Meet). There were four of us at meeting in Adelaide (Capital of South Australia) - Simon Hill, Peter Whitehouse, my other half David Miller and myself, with two Mini Ks (a model particular to Oz), a Moke, and an MG GT. Thepromy MiniWorld is read at my Mini club (Hotbricks) and is held in high esteem (even at $89). Cheers!"

Gemma Kennich, Adelaide, South Australia

"The mini-list has changed my life! Before the list I used to play with the kids, go to movies, talk with my wife, but now, thanks to the list, I just sit in the basement enjoying that blue glow from the screen..."

Marcel Chichak, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

"I've been driving a Mini for five years. What has the list done for me? Well first of all it has given me information I want without asking any questions! By just reading questions and answers from other listers, isn't it beautiful that we can talk about our Minis in South Africa, New Zealand, USA, and the UK? When I posted to the list that I was searching for a van, I had a quite a few replies... I'm going to Germany to look at one. This would have happened without the list. I look forward to getting my mail every day."

Mark van den Beggelop, Uden, Netherlands

"The mini-list has undoubtedly been the most valuable asset to me in sharing and trading knowledge, experience, arcane lore and hard-to-find parts for my Mini, and has introduced me to some of my dearest friends. Now, there is somebody I know, with common interests, in almost any part of the world I might travel to."

Rocky Frisco, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA

"For those of us in North America, isolated from the mainstream of Miniacs, the connection through the list provides a wealth of knowledge and helpful tips, the value of which cannot be overstated when living in a part of the world where the only knowledge that most mechanics have of the Mini is that Mr Bean drives one."

Malcolm Jeffock, Nova Scotia, North America

"I started knowing nothing about Minis and in one year this list has given me ample amount of info and led me in the direction of my dream, a '67 Mini Cooper S."

David Young, Houston, Texas, USA

"I own an '86 Mayfair in a tatty but solid state called 'Ren', and a British Open called 'Stumpy'. I first drove a Mini in '76/77. It was an Essex County Council car in which I drove seven adults to work on an archaeology dig, from Chelmsford to Witham. Bye."

Andy in Belgium

"Although my Mini (a '60 Cooperised Mini Minor) is a California car, I like the old fashioned English period look. The mini-list provided an opportunity to talk with Minis owners around the world. I've gained so much knowledge that would never get into a workshop manual, from people who work on their Minis as I do. I only wish it were easier for me to join the various list gatherings in England. People can't believe how quick this little thing is compared to big American suburbs or vans that are so popular now."

Peter Siposs, Tusin, California, USA

"My '61 Austin Mini 850 sat in my drive for about 12 years because I couldn't find wheel cylinders or other parts locally. I knew only one other Mini owner, and he was of no use as he wouldn't sell parts or reveal his sources. When I discovered the mini-list on the Internet, a whole new world was opened up for me. I could find parts and get advice from nearly anywhere in the world! Couldn't ask for a better group of cyber-friends. Now, in addition to my '61 which is in the midst of a restoration, I also have a '65 Morris Estate awaiting its turn under the wrench and spray gun!"

Pat Liley, Wenatchee, Washington, USA

"Without support from the mini-list this project wouldn't have started. I'm trying to find enough Minis to get new Hydrolastic units made. I need about 1,000 orders to cover the manufacturing costs. Thank you, Rich, Marcel, John C. and all of you who have helped me. After all, the whole idea started from a few lines that I sent to the mini-list."

Pasi Ristinmaki, Finland

"I discovered the list while casually surfing the 'net. I found that the wealth of knowledge and special tips by far exceed anything available in manuals whatsoever. But there's not only tech talk going on, there's always a laugh or two, even if you discover it's your own fault you are laughing about."

Gernot Von Hoegen, Scotland

"Being in the US, where Minis are few and far between, but where the
passion for cars is boundless, the mini-list gives me a chance to lean back and listen to chatter about my favourite car. Whether it's the latest adventure in a recently modified Mini or the frustration of a home-made repair not working out, it's as though I wandered down to the local garage to chat with 700 or so of my international friends.

I really see Minis on the road but recently saw a Moke when on vacation in the Bahamas. I was the only one interested or excited about it. But if I had access to E-mail I'm sure I would have started a string of memories of Mokes in the Caribbean stories. This is what the list is about - the passion for Minis. 

David Terry, USA

"The mini-list is a constant source of technical ideas and knowledge, generously peppered with friendly conversation (and the occasional argument). It's the first place most of us go for assistance with a problem or confirmation of a diagnosis and is keeping my maintenance bills to a minimum. Not so the list of modifications, which seems to grow in size (and cost!) with every day that passes! I count many of the other listers as my friends which, considering that I have never met many of them, is quite a feat of communication!"

Paul Sloatweg, UK

"The list is what you want it to be. It's a source of info, advice and knowledge. And it's world-wide. Here in the US we don't see Minis that often and when we do, it is like, 'Hey, look at that Mini!' I met Peter Walsh on the list last year and we got together and yanked his engine/gearbox out of his Mini. I had been there and done that and I am certain Peter appreciated my help and advice. Just last week Peter came over and I showed him my Mini, and he was so eager to return the favour. The list makes everybody close. It's priceless."

Rich Ehrlich, Elmont, New York, USA

Surf's up, log in, list on!

Come on then... mini-list@1275gl.com join the list today. If you have a website and want a few more visitors, you can get a link to your site from other listers' pages (and vice-versa). Just ask them, if you are looking for anything Mini – advice, parts, clubs – you will find it on the list.

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