

Press Release
18 December 2020

RAUNO AALTONEN, THE CLASSIC MINI AND A RACY ADVENT PRESENT: A MINI CHRISTMAS FAIRY-TALE FROM THE FINNISH FORESTS.



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What might conceivably be a good early Christmas present for a world-famous rallying legend at the end of a year dominated by lockdown? The penny dropped at MINI: Rauno Aaltonen, winner of the Monte Carlo Rally in 1967 in a classic Mini, was greeted with a yuletide surprise on four wheels in his Finnish homeland.

Munich. He is known the world over as the Rally Professor, but too much theory puts a damper on the mood of even the most ardent specialist at some point. Owing to the lockdown regulations, Rauno Aaltonen had to stay at home in Finland over the past eight months. No outings onto the rally track, no tests of strength in historic competitions, no practice training sessions instructing young learners with a passion for motor sport. Meanwhile, Aaltonen is 82 years old but the itch to floor the pedal has never really gone away. And his astonishing level of fitness still allows him to be a

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potent force behind the steering wheel. Never before had he been forced to do without driving a car for such a long time as during the pandemic year of 2020. And, no, he really isn't cut out for retirement.



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What a good thing that there are some true friends out there who know exactly how to get on top of boredom. Even before the first door was opened in the advent calendar, the people at MINI had a brilliant idea for an advent gift of a very special kind. And because it was crystal clear what the seasoned rally driver and long-term companion of the British brand is currently lacking most, there was no point in sending a beribboned package. A motorised “sleigh” on wheels was dispatched northwards. An enclosed vehicle trailer loaded with a classic Mini and towed by a MINI Cooper S Countryman ALL4 (combined fuel consumption: 6.5 – 6.2 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 149 – 142 g/km) embarked on the long journey to northern climes.

“Over a period of nearly 60 years, Rauno has given us so many magic moments. Now is the perfect moment to give something back,” said Bernd Körber, Head of MINI. In fact, the relationship between Aaltonen and the British brand goes all the way back to 1961. At the time, the driver from Finland had just ascended to Rally Champion in his homeland and he was dead set on taking up the challenge of competing for the first time in what was even then the mythologised



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“Monte” at the beginning of the following year. He found absolutely the right vehicle in the classic Mini. The joint premiere came to an end with a spectacular crash, but already in January 1963, Aaltonen driving the Mini Cooper completed the Monte Carlo Rally as class winner and third in the overall placings driving.

From one year to the next, the classic Mini and the works team got better and better at making preparations to match the unique conditions of the Monte Carlo Rally – not least owing to the precise instructions given to the team by Rauno Aaltonen after each race and for each test drive. He provided meticulous details relating to vehicle tuning, additional equipment, conditions of the road and tyre selection. “Everything allowed by the regulations that was feasible was implemented,” he was to report later on.

Nevertheless, the crowning glory of his ambition initially went to other drivers. In 1964, “Paddy” Hopkirk from Northern Ireland took the first overall victory driving the Mini Cooper S. In the subsequent year, Aaltonen’s fellow countryman Timo Mäkinen matched his success. In 1966, “the three musketeers”, as the trio became known, even took first, second and third place, but the Mini was disqualified by the race stewards, who issued the controversial decision that the Mini’s lights breached the regulations. But 1967 at last proved to be his year: Rauno Aaltonen drove to his well-earned overall victory at the Monte Carlo Rally.

His feat finally transformed the Mini into a rally legend and stamped its imprint on the entire sport into the bargain. Aaltonen is regarded as the inventor of braking on the left, which enabled him to keep his right foot on the pedal while the left foot switched between the clutch and the brake pedal. “Piano playing with your feet” was his name for it. The Finn also made copious notes about the route and was the first to send out “ice spies” onto the course to make notes and drawings about the condition of the road. His meticulous preparations and his ability to give a clear explanation of his rapid driving manoeuvres soon also helped Aaltonen’s career away from rally tracks. As the first chief instructor at BMW Driver Training founded in 1976, today familiar as BMW and MINI Driving Experience, the “Rally Professor” passed on his knowledge about fast and safe driving to numerous participants taking part in the training sessions.

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The 1960s were a “golden” era for the classic Mini, when the Monte Carlo Rally used to start off as a star rally beginning in a number of different European cities. Even the trip to the first regularity stage was often an adventurous drive. In light of this knowledge, it became a matter of honour for the MINI Team to take on a veritable marathon as a tribute to Rauno Aaltonen. The road trip with the trailer towed by the MINI Cooper S Countryman ALL4 started out from Munich and initially headed straight for the Baltic. After a ferry trip lasting around 30 hours, the combination of MINI and trailer continued on another road trip lasting 14 hours along Finland’s roads, some of them already covered in wintry snow.

The destination for the advent mission was Rovaniemi – the main city in the Lapland region, known the world over as the “official residence of Santa Claus”. But the MINI Team hadn’t brought a wish list with them. Instead, they had taken along an advent gift to hand over. They presented the offering with warmest season’s greetings from Munich, socially distanced of course, and the transporter opened up as if by magic. The trailer was decorated with a picture of a classic Mini,



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leaving no doubt about its content, but Rauno Aaltonen was visibly moved when the red classic car with the white roof rolled out.

However, he didn't lose much time. A little while later, high arcs of snow flew in all directions and the old master sped off, drifting as he went, on an extensive tour through snowy Finnish forests. There's no question about it: Rauno Altonen couldn't have had a better advent present. Finally, the enforced break had come to an end and at last he could "play the piano again with his feet". On his way to the Arctic Circle, he will undoubtedly have been singing his own version of a well-known Christmas song. Instead of "Driving Home for Christmas" he was probably singing "Driving at Home before Christmas".



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The figures for fuel consumption, CO₂ emissions, power consumption and range are measured using the methods required according to Regulation (EC) 2007/715 as amended. The information is based on a vehicle with basic equipment in Germany, ranges take into account differences in wheel and tyre size selected as well as optional equipment and can change during configuration.

The information has already been calculated based on the new WLTP test cycle and adapted to NEDC for comparison purposes. For these vehicles, values other than those stated here may apply for calculating taxes and other vehicle-related duties which are (also) based on CO₂ emissions.

Further information about the official fuel consumption figures and the official specific CO₂ emissions of new passenger cars can be obtained from the "Guideline on fuel consumption, CO₂ emissions and power consumption of new passenger cars", available free of charge from all outlets, from Deutschen Automobil Treuhand GmbH (DAT), Hellmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, and at <https://www.dat.de/co2/>.

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The BMW Group

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In 2019, the BMW Group sold over 2.5 million passenger vehicles and more than 175,000 motorcycles world-wide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2019 was € 7.118 billion on revenues amounting to € 104.210 billion. As of 31 December 2019, the BMW Group had a workforce of 126,016 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy.

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