

# The big guy's MINI

Gone is the access limited to two doors, low headroom, cramped driving position, sliding side windows, corroding rear sub frames and a gear shift that had 50 positions of which 49 were neutral. OK, so that was then: built back in the day by British Leyland.

A snarling grill, big headlights and fat rear haunches are not what I would associate with the iconic Mini, but the latest MINI Countryman, made by BMW, has come a long way.

It's big. Four doors. With good head room and rear leg room. I tried it, with the driver seat pushed all the way back, and I am six foot all the way to the dome. It also has a fair-sized boot, with capacity similar to that of the Volkswagen Golf. To all intents and purposes, the genetically modified MINI is now a practical five door family hatchback while retaining most of its original DNA. The classic look is still there while styling elements include the retro-look speedometer pod and centre console, elliptical cut-out upholstery inside the doors, the centre rail feature between the seats that holds — and powers — everything from your ipod to coffee cups and Mini Connected, which allows Twitter support, Google local Search — not recommended for use while driving, RSS news feeds, and Dynamic Music. All demonstrate that this is a very modern piece of kit.

On driving the car for the first time, I immediately felt the sharp response of the steering and handling. Not quite the old 'go-kart' feel, but close. Although not as quick off the mark as the six-speed manual version (0-100 km/h in 11.9sec) the 6-speed Automatic Transmission Steptronic is not far behind (0-100km/h in 13.9sec). I prefer an upright driving position and with the relatively upright windscreen, the normal Mini position, there is a good view of

It's a MINI, Jim, but not as we knew it. In the first of his new columns, *Ian Hind* gets behind the wheel of the BMW version of this Brit classic



Illustration by Ian Hind

the front of the car and the road ahead. It's obviously difficult to push a car to the limit on the roads of Bermuda, but it felt glued to the road at all four corners as it negotiated a series of bends (perhaps one day they will ship me out to a test track...) Despite its limitations, the original mini and its successors were great fun to drive, and none of that has been lost in the

evolution to the new MINI.

I asked the wife if I could have one for my birthday next month. She responded: "Do they have a Matchbox model?"

In fact, four models are available: the MINI One Countryman and the MINI Cooper Countryman, each with diesel and petrol (gas) engine options. **BL**

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action and the power of getting all of us together, on the same page.

He said that if the thrust of the speech can be realised — empowering all of the community, harnessing resources, making Government more accountable, reducing the impact of the public sector on the economy and getting the community working together — then Bermuda should look forward to the future with optimism.

For Mr. Dunleavy the composition of the new Cabinet suggests that Ms Cox understands that the public's well of goodwill towards the PLP is running dry and the party is not living up to expectations. But she is struggling to appease multiple constituencies, internal and external.

"The Cabinet is large, and perhaps characteristically for Paula Cox, the structure and naming conventions of Ministries, while grand sounding, are hard to decipher and confusing."

While Mr. Dunleavy sees hope for a change of tone in the Throne Speech, he noted: "Any change of tone will have to come from the Premier herself, Kim Wilson and perhaps Patrice Minors, who tend to have eschewed the PLP's adversarial inclination."

Tomorrow belongs to no one, and certainly not in politics, but if Ms Cox plays her cards right she could well become the PLP's longest-serving Premier yet. **BL**