

MOTORING



SEGUE

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One of 999

TEST DRIVE || The new Mini Cooper SE Cabrio is here to draw attention to the new car they are launching next year. Sounds like a good idea to me.

TWO weeks ago, in my last text, I wrote that a hybrid still makes a lot more sense than a pure electric car, so here is ... an electric car, of course. But, in my defence, two things must be said: one, it is getting increasingly hard to find a non-electric press car to test; two, this Mini Cabrio is more of a toy than a vehicle in the practical sense, so practical considerations don't have the same weight.

Launched at the end of the lifecycle of the current Mini generation, I am guessing Mini just wanted to have a

kind of segue into the next model which, by the way, has already been shown.

The current electric Mini was not, therefore, meant to be any kind of groundbreaking car. In fact, this outgoing generation was, very likely, never meant to have an electric version, but the way politicians started pushing electric mobility as the solution for all our problems forced constructors to come up with whatever they could in order to lower their overall CO2 output and meet emissions' targets.

So, you see, the new Mini

Cooper SE Cabrio is not that relevant a car for the BMW Group (in case you didn't know, the Mini brand has been owned by BMW for 23 years). Mini themselves say this car was merely an idea eight months before they launched it and they are only building 999 units of it, with a mere 13 coming to Portugal. Coincidentally, they have all been sold, so no matter how good you want one after reading this, you have to buy it from one of the first 13 owners.

Or, and this is actually what Mini want to see happen, just stay interested in this one, keep following the news on the new one and buy one of those when it comes out on sale next year.

Those lucky 13 will have to shell out €62,000 for the electric Cooper SE Cabrio (ouch!). For that, they will

get a very exclusive car, yes, but still a compromised one. I am sure they will thoroughly enjoy it if they have another car in the garage and use the Mini as a kind of fashion accessory – because that's what this car is, and it is very good at that.

The 28.9 kWh battery offers 201 km of range on the WLTP cycle and is not going to win any awards for that. It is roughly the same as the Honda e (another fashion accessory but from a brand not as versed in the matter) and the Fiat 500e, which is the Mini's only other real contender really.

There is only one trim option, but standard equipment is pretty good. Two colours are available: Enigmatic Black and White Silver. Quality is what you expect.

The driving is very Mini-like, with a dynamic edge that makes it quite fun and rewarding to drive. In fact, approaching this car as a toy, like I mentioned in the beginning, is the best way to make the most out of those €62,000.

The fabric roof has a Union Jack on top and can be opened or closed up to 30km/h. Roof down, gliding in the absolutely silent Mini, I have to say the experience is pretty unique. With 184 horse-power, performance is sprightly and the useful 270 Nm of immediate torque makes moping about in urban areas or along a seaside road really quite enjoyable.

Obviously, no one is going to buy this car as a cruiser – although it is pretty comfortable – and nor was it built for that purpose. The Cooper SE uses its electric motor to provide a new way of getting around town in emissions-free form, with a premium touch added to it. You know, do the school run, pop to the

'This car will be rarer than most Ferraris. Only 999 will ever be built and Portuguese roads will only see 13 of them. Talk about exclusivity'

shops and enjoy a night out at the latest trendy restaurant. Not many cars can do it better than this one.

Since the coupé Cooper SE was launched three years ago, one in every five Minis sold is electric. I am not entirely sure that is a good thing in the whole scheme of things, but, for Mini, these are good news regarding the eminent launch of the new model, a car built up from scratch to be electric and that will surely move the game on by a considerable margin.

When you think the next generation Cooper SE Electric will have 402km of range and 214 horse-power, the word progress pops into mind.

Not being the world's greatest electric car fan, I am quite curious about that new Mini electric. I guess that means those guys are doing their job properly and that this 999 units' production run definitely fulfilled its purpose.



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