

was talking special Minis with a mate. Had any finished up in Denmark? Well, said the friend, one Wood & Pickett conversion had indeed been made for the Danish market. Not only that, but it had a JanSpeed turbo engine. Word was that the original bill—in 1985 or thereabouts—was in the order of £8000 and that the car was still kicking about—only less its turbo set-up, the remains of which were sitting in said friend's garage.

Further adding to the Mini's desirability, it had belonged to top fashion designers Margit and Erik Brandt. "They hung out with Jagger, Bowie and Warhol," says Lillelund, "and were the only people in Denmark mad enough to order a Mini from Wood & Pickett – and then spend twice its value on leather and paint. It was Margit's car and was to be seen, complete with chauffeur, at all Copenhagen's posh parties."

Two years later Lillelund, a club disc-jockey by night and a Mini restorer by day, was asked if he could help sell a special Mini. It had leather seats, a wooden dash and tinted windows, said the lady owner, so Lillelund thought it was probably nothing more than a Danish-market Mini Special with fancy aftermarket seats. When he saw the car, he was knocked sideways because it had twin tanks, quarterlights and fat wheelarches. It was clearly a Wood & Pickett - and, yes, said the owner, it was the ex-Brandt car. It was also, realised Lillelund, in a pretty parlous state. Given the steep price asked, he decided to walk away. The Mini duly changed hands, only for the new owner to blow the engine up. After it had another winter in the open, he agreed to sell the even more bedraggled car to Lillelund, for a price more in tune with its condition.

He didn't realise it at the time, but Lillelund had set in motion a process that was to become truly obsessional – right down to recreating the uniform of Margit's chauffeur. Little by little, parts started to be accumulated. A fabric sunroof from a Mini British Open Classic was acquired, to replace the unfortunate glass sunroof fitted at some stage, and a set of special Danish-made 6in 'rose-petal' alloys. These were made for racing, by Denmark's top preparer of Minis, and had originally been on the car of legendary homegrown Mini hotshoe Erik Høyer. Lillelund knows of only one other surviving set.

Sourcing a replacement for a broken door glass was tricky: "I had tried all over Denmark, but nobody could reproduce the exact dark tint. In the end I found an ad in a Swedish magazine for a firm that made glass to special order – but it needed a sample to get the right match. There was no way I was going to risk one of the original W&P windows in the post, but I eventually found some pieces of the old smashed glass in the bottom of the door. A few weeks later a new window was delivered by boat from Sweden."

All the while, Lillelund was goaded by the existence of the blown-up JanSpeed turbo set-up, which his friend refused to sell – but which he knew he had to have: "Once he'd shown me the bits, there was no way back. The installation had to go back on the car – and since he wouldn't sell, the car was left in a corner of my workshop. If I couldn't do it right then I wouldn't do it."

Seven years on from the purchase, the project was kicked into life by the news that the International Mini Meeting for 2007 would be held in Denmark. Asked to DJ for the event, Lillelund

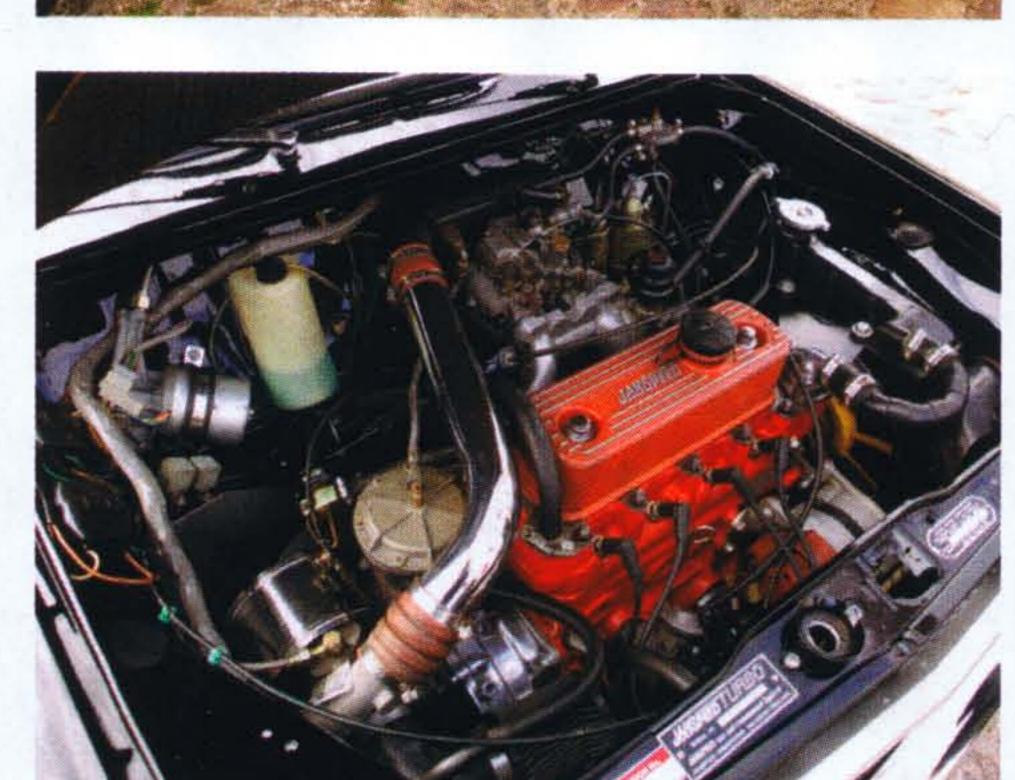
knew that he had to be there with the Mini – "even if I just got it running with a Metro Turbo engine or something". Such a compromise proved unnecessary. After seven years of catand-mouse, his friend agreed to sell the JanSpeed bits: "He said 'Are you going to sell it when you've finished it?', and when I said 'No' he said 'I won't be the one to stop you getting it right'."

Lillelund then had the bare bones of the JanSpeed Turbosonic conversion spread out over the workshop floor, the key part being a Rotomaster turbo operating via a Dell'Orto carb, chosen to avoid turbo lag, and mounted on an adapted twin-SU manifold. The challenge was to work out where everything went, because it was a bespoke installation. In particular, it had been achieved without cutting the bulkhead – as is normally the case with turbocharged Minis – and had instead involved moving the engine forward 2½in, lowering it, and tilting it by 5°.

"JanSpeed had to make special engine mounts, because the normal steady-bar had to be removed to make room for the exhaust/wastegate housing. They welded ears to the timing-chain cover and made a special adjustable mount. Because the engine sits so low, it doesn't need a steady-bar as much. It's brilliant! JanSpeed really thought about the way that they did it." There were plenty of puzzles. "In particular," says Lillelund, "we had to work out where the servo had been moved to. One of my favourite games at shows is 'Spot the servo' – it's under a wheelarch."

Helping piece things together was made easier by a huge stroke of luck. Lillelund received a tipoff about a former JanSpeed employee: "I made contact with this chap, Simon Lee, and said I had a car with a genuine JanSpeed turbo conversion. 'Yes, it's a Mini, with two fuel tanks, the engine moved 2½ in forward and tilted 5°... and I built it,' Simon said. He told me that it was the same spec as a Metro built for Nigel Mansell. I asked him how many Minis were given the turbo conversion. 'Just the one,' he said. 'It was too complicated, and far too expensive, so there was never going to be another.' They had to remake almost every part for the set-up, to make it go





With 140bhp, Mini is rapid and handles well on stiffer set-up; it sports special Danish copies of Cooper 'rose petal' alloy wheels

Clockwise, from below:
ex-JanSpeed man donated
badges; Margrave dash
has full set of Smiths dials
and JanSpeed boost gauge;
engine 2½in forward and
tilted 5° from standard;
door's 'puddle lamps' are
from Daimler Vanden Plas





under the bonnet. But they succeeded, because there is not one single body modification."

By then, Lillelund was well on the way to piecing together the Mini's history. The conversion was carried out for its second owner, a reclusive millionaire car enthusiast who spotted the turbo unit at a British motor show: "Apparently, he saw it on a pedestal and said 'I want that engine'. JanSpeed said it wasn't something that could be sent wrapped up in a box, ready to go. He had to have a full conversion, plus the suspension and brakes uprated to cope with the power. He said Ok, signed the contract, and had the car sent to Salisbury. When it arrived they said 'We can't do it. The installation is for a Metro'. But he persuaded them to do it as a one-off, helped by the fact that the Clubman has a longer bonnet."

Fortunately, money was no object. When JanSpeed's Metro turbo kit cost £1250 or so, fitted, the final bill for the Mini was more than six times higher after the car emerged from two months-plus of fettling. Not only was there a brand-new gearbox and a brand-new engine, but JanSpeed also modified the suspension – with adjustable tie-rods and negative-camber lower arms at the front and camber brackets at rear, plus Spax dampers – and then neatly integrated

Group 5 arches, before respraying the car. That the venture was judged worthwhile was confirmed when Lillelund ran to earth the mechanic who had maintained the car at the time. He recalled the 140bhp 'dog kennel', as the Danes nicknamed the Mini, severely embarrassing a hard-driven Mercedes-Benz SL.

While Lillelund joined the historical dots together the restoration was proceeding – and that meant a full rebuild. "Lots of fresh metal was let in, with almost every panel bought from British Motor Heritage to ensure a good fit," recalls Lillelund. "For the doors – which had to be altered to take in all the special Wood & Pickett features – plus the bonnet and bootlid, I hunted down rust-free period parts. If you buy new panels the fit isn't the same as it was in '73.

"Meanwhile I got in touch with the third owner, who told me that the original JanSpeed head had been sold to another part of Denmark. After some time I traced it, so I could see what colour the engine had been painted. It also has the same JanSpeed numbering as on the rest of the set-up. I could then rebuild the engine. It was given new exhaust valves, special Omega turbo pistons, a special cam, and so on. When the turbocharger was rebuilt I told the guy to keep



the old ID plate, and not to polish it. I wanted all the JanSpeed parts to keep their patina."

The same thinking was behind the only lightly refurbished cabin. "I deliberately left the interior as it was," says Lillelund. "A friend said you could get all the leather re-done for a good price in Poland, but I said there wouldn't be anything of Wood & Pickett left in the car - and anyway, I like the smell of old English leather."

Such was the car that made it – by the skin of its teeth, and as a non-runner - to the summer '07 IMM at Roskilde. There Lillelund received a special present from Lee: "Simon had asked me whether the JanSpeed emblems were still on the JanSpeed cufflinks. I don't think restoring old cars gets much better than that!"

But Lillelund still had to find parts specific to the W&P conversion, including a headrest, the correct radio and speakers, plus details such as the switch for the electric sunroof and the W&P

wouldn't have been right. At car shows I Vauxhall FD grille reveals. "It has been re-made displayed photos of what I was looking for, but to fit inside the aperture," says Lillelund. "We had no response. Then I was at the dentist's and showed him the pictures. He said 'That looks like the seat from my Porsche RS' - and so it proved. They were Recaros from a 911 Carrera. So I was able to source a pair of seats in Germany, to get the missing headrest and a pair of knobs."

As for that elusive switch, after a seven-year hunt Lillelund stumbled across the right item in a local radio shop: it came from a BMW 3.0 CS. Also successfully identified and sourced were the Voxson speakers, which were used on Ferraris as well. A pair was found in Italy, then two more on car. My heart fell, because they weren't. He'd ebay, so now all four are to the original '73 spec, At IMM, I was given a box from Simon contain- radio and 8-Track. Other parts sourced in the the usual instant responses and abrupt ride. ing not only a set of 'Turbo' emblems but also his past two years include the Wipac reversing lights With Barry White on the 8-Track and Jens and the correct Waso fuel caps - "it's really difficult to find old English accessories like this in Denmark" - and items such as the glovebox light and switch, and a set of Dunlop Aquajet tyres.

The finished car looks a treat, enhanced by details such as the drilled cooling holes below boot badge. "I searched for a headrest for nine the grille, the dinky indicator repeaters and the years," says Lillelund. "People thought I was all-red rear lights. It's done to the highest standmad. I could have found a different one, but it ards, as a glance at W&P's emblematic adapted

had a hell of a job getting the centre join right. It wasn't very well done by Wood & Pickett." A few personal touches have been added, too, not least a leather-lined boot-board and matching leather tool-rolls. "I thought that was how Wood & Pickett would have done it," adds Lillelund.

But what's it like to drive? Suitably - and surprisingly - civilised, given the substantial power. It sounds like an ordinary nicely tuned Mini, spins as freely as a properly assembled and balanced A-series should, and then the turbo cuts in, with only the slightest lag, and you realise that this is a car with real muscle. The chassis said he might have put a set on his son's pedal car. and mated to the correct period Radiomobile mods give ultra-secure and flat cornering, with

> Christian Lillelund in his Brandt chauffeur gear - not to mention a period pack of JPS cigarettes perched on the dash - you know you're sitting in a resolutely '70s piece of history. That the car is also unique, both as a Danish-market Wood & Pickett and as a JanSpeed turbo, gives it added appeal, and takes the history forward a further decade. The Mini may have become one man's obsession, but you can understand why.







Above: stylish badge; adapted Vauxhall FD grille now sits properly inside aperture; tool rolls are in keeping; sunroof is from a later Mini; bumper deeper and slimmer Clubman item. Care needed on road, because sump sits so low

