

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Navigating Valencia's beautiful backroads with Thomas and Charlie the Green Mini](#)

Lead

There has always been an undeniable charm that radiates from a classic Mini, but when we stumbled upon Thomas Manso's Green Over Tan example dressed in full 'racing at Goodwood on Sunday, café racing to lunch on Monday' trim, we just had to find out more...



Whether it was the flashes of red, white and blue and the hum of 'Self Preservation Society' playing on a flickering television screen, the bumbling, red tie-wearing jester and his faded yellow example, or even the moment you saw one in the flesh for the first time, realising just how dinky they are compared to 'normal' traffic, the fact is, you never truly forget the first time you lay your eyes on a Mini. That captivating first glimpse can often lead to a lifetime of ownership, and Valencia-based Thomas Manso is no exception. His perfectly-styled classic Mini, famously known as [@charliegreenmini on Instagram](#), truly is a labour of love, and one he intends to enjoy to the absolute fullest for as long as possible.

Thomas' car journey started out in the same way as so many of us, being infected with the automotive bug by his enthusiastic parents. "My dad was always switching cars, and they were always cool models. He would take me to the Paris Motor Show from around the age of three, and from there I "learned" to read before starting preschool. At school, I spent pretty much all my classes designing cars instead of paying attention to the teacher until I was around 20 or 25!" While there are many cars Thomas could have drawn as he was growing up, it was the simplistic and perfectly proportioned shape of Alex Issigonis' Mini that struck a chord with him, which was further cemented after seeing old rallying clips of 33 EJB tackling the harshest terrain and mountain passes with ease.



When the time came for Thomas to purchase a classic of his own, he initially started with a few other options, such as the Citroën 2CV or the charming Fiat 500, but landed firmly on the Mini due to its ability to bring true driving enjoyment, as well as being simple to work on and relatively inexpensive to acquire (trust us, after seeing Thomas' wonderful images of Charlie, we've been hunting on the [Classic Driver Market ever since](#)). Thomas fondly recalls his thought process when buying his Mini, "At its core, I wanted something analogue and pure to drive, something with more sound, more vibrations and, perhaps strangely, a smell, all adding to the car's soul. The Mini has plenty of that, and after a brief test drive, I was completely in love!"



The Mini that stole Thomas' heart is a British Racing Green 998cc example from 1974, which is known as an 'Authi' and was constructed in Landaben in Spain, further adding to the car's heritage and charm. Thomas explains what he has done to create what he believes is the perfect mix of a Goodwood and Café racer-style classic Mini, "Despite being a 1974 model, I have backdated it to look like an early Mk1 Cooper, along with Rosepetal wheels, classic Cobra buckets seats, and a 13-inch steering wheel. To complete the classic look, the British Racing Green paint is paired with sand colour leather throughout the interior, and the roof is in Old English White."

With a car such as Charlie the Green Mini, every journey is an experience. Sure, it won't be breaking land speed records any time soon, but as Thomas explains, driving a car like this evokes so much more joy when behind the wheel, "It might sound cliché, but every drive brings a smile to your face and to anyone who sees you. The Mini has this effect of being a 'sympathy generator', it doesn't matter the age, gender, or race, whether you know about cars or not, people see it and smile. Personally, the place where I enjoy driving it the most is on any winding mountain road with elevation changes and views. If it's at sunset, we're talking perfection!"



It's clear by Thomas' fantastic images he has enjoyed plenty of sunset cruises with Charlie, a name he lovingly gave to the car in reference to the car's British heritage, paying a certain Mr Charlie Croker, perhaps? One question we always like to ask adoring owners is whether there would be room for some other machines to join the lineup. Using the Classic Driver Market, we tasked Thomas to showcase his dream three car garage, and his choices were more British-themed than a plate of bangers 'n' mash! "My first choice would be [this 1963 E-Type Lightweight for weekend fun](#), which I honestly think has the best lines ever, especially that version. Next up would be perhaps something a little more practical but still full of style, [a Defender 90 Heritage Edition](#), and my final choice would be [this wonderful Porsche 911S from 1968](#), purely for its elegance and sportiness, and the chance to drive a legend!" Thomas added, "Of course, I'd want them all in green, and since I'm keeping the Mini, that totally counts as a garage with 3.5 cars, right?"



Right before we left Thomas to explore the undulating curves that snake around his hometown of Valencia, we had to find out what his ideal journey would be in Charlie the Green Mini, and given the chance to invite anyone along with him, who he would take. "The first thing that comes to mind would be a coastal road, at sunset, with my dad as the passenger. However, if I had to choose a celebrity, dozens come to mind, but I think listening to the anecdotes and stories of Henri Pescarolo would be amazing, even though I'd probably feel scrutinized while driving!"

As this BRG beauty drives off into the sunset, we can safely say that both Thomas and his charming Charlie Mini are both true Classic Drivers!

Gallery

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