



COMPANY PROFILE

Mad4MINI's crew, from left to right: Charley Sheard, Mike Favager, Richard Heeley and Michael Tinker



Good to see a biased selection of reading material is available for waiting customers!



Mad4MINI

Celebrating five years as Yorkshire's number one independent MINI specialist, Mad4MINI is going from strength-to-strength. We pay the team a visit to find out more...

Words and pics: [Jon Cass](#)

Leads-based Mad4MINI has been at the forefront of MINI servicing, diagnostics and repairs in the north of England since its inception. Set up by Mike Favager and Richard Heeley, who both hold a wealth of experience from their BMW dealership backgrounds, they came up with the idea of starting their own

MINI-focused business back in 2008. "I noticed owners of MINIs were struggling to find an option beyond the main dealers once they'd reached the end of their TLC package," Mike explains. "On occasions I found MINI owners were being treated in a similar way to those of the prestige BMW 7-Series and X5s when it came to pricing repairs and this just seemed out of proportion to me when you looked at the difference in the values of the vehicles and ownership styles."



No turning back

Richard and Mike decided to take the big step of leaving their secure jobs at a BMW main dealership to set up on their own in 2009 and haven't looked back since, although they do still have strong links with the local main dealers when it comes to sourcing parts. "The vast majority of our work is fault diagnosis, repairs and servicing but we thoroughly enjoy the performance modification and tuning side of the business which we just couldn't do when we were at the main dealer," Mike explains. This means Mad4MINI is quite happy to carry out suspension, engine and braking upgrades just as much as it is to source a cooling or fuelling problem. Tyres, tracking and alignment along with air-con regassing are all covered too.

"We've had instances where a customer has spent a small fortune at their local garage trying to pinpoint the source of a strange noise or rattle and the garage has given up and sent the customer to us," Mike continues. "As MINI specialists, we

have come across many of the problems before, so we know mostly what's needed to put it right, although we still come across new challenges regularly."

Mike is very keen on in-house training, to such an extent that he has been known to hire the latest model of MINI when it hits the showrooms, just so he can get a feel for the car and an understanding of how it's been engineered. "I generally hire a new model for a week or so which gives us plenty of time to see what changes BMW has made since the last model," Mike says. "We want to avoid a situation where a customer brings in a MINI we haven't come across before." Incidentally, the team is also happy to service BMWs as the correct software and service parts are all readily available.

Big savings

In the past, customers have saved as much as 90 per cent with Mad4MINI when a fault has been rectified without needing to order expensive new parts. Typical of this is the gearbox bearing failures on early R50 MINIs.



Richard gets stuck in inspecting this MINI for wear and tear

FOCUS ON



As well as servicing and repairs, Mad4MINI carries out tuning and upgrades and are suppliers of K&N, Alta, Milltek, Powerflex, Eibach and Apex



Mike tells us: "At the main dealer we would simply replace the gearbox, whereas we remove, strip and replace the bearings for a fraction of the cost here." Mad4MINI tries its utmost to be consistent with pricing, using manufacturer-listed labour times to quote on repairs ensures that everybody is treated fairly and that they carry out the work to equally high standards. The independent MINI specialists' latest Snap On Verdict and Autologic diagnostic equipment uses BMW-supported software, so it's highly unlikely Mad4MINI won't be able to source a fault or problem either. Michael Tinker and Charley Sheard

complete the Mad4MINI team; Michael was a former customer and is a fully-qualified paint and body technician. As well as his mechanical knowledge, he is known for his attention to detail which borders on the obsessive. Charley has been with the team since leaving school three years ago and has just completed his mechanical qualifications and has therefore been 100 per cent MINI throughout his working career so far! Among the high-mileage MINIs the company currently works on regularly is an immaculate R50 Cooper with an impressive 180k on the clock, still with its original



Above: Charley's demonstrating the latest diagnostic equipment

Below: This Cooper is being cannabilised for spares and donating itself to a good cause!



engine and gearbox! "We also see an R56 diesel with a staggering 225k on the clock that comes to us for servicing," Mike adds. "They still have years of life left in them and depreciation won't be an issue to these owners, so I reckon they will hang on to them for some time to come." Using the correct grade Castrol oil as specified by BMW, along with OEM parts, will always help to prolong a MINI's life. Richard says: "After much research and debate into the spares we use, we can be sure of quality and correct fitment with all the replacement parts we supply."

Mad4MINI tends to see around 100-150 MINIs per month through its doors. "We're in a good position as we're always busy, but that doesn't make us complacent and we're always looking towards the future and wanting to offer more to our customers," says Mike. The team moved to larger premises in south Leeds two years ago after spending the first three years at a smaller base, although they are currently looking to move again as there isn't enough space to stock as many parts as the specialist would like. A larger range of performance exhaust

and uprated alloys would be the priority for customers to view and try out.

Customer base

Interestingly, many of Mad4MINI's regular customers are driving instructors and the lads will often burn the midnight oil to get these MINIs turned around quickly, so the instructors don't lose out on a day's work. "The MINI is still as commonplace at driving schools as it's always been and we feel we have an important role to play keeping these cars on the road so if that means working until late to get things done, that's what we have to do," Mike explains. The team also somehow finds the time to reply to queries on the MINI Torque forum where their knowledge and experience have helped out many owners over the years. Mad4MINI offers a 10 per cent discount to anyone having work carried out resulting from a forum enquiry.

Mike continues: "Every day I take a minute to have a look at all the MINIs we have in the workshop and not once have any two been exactly the same. There's always some difference in specification somewhere – there can't be many one-make car repairers that can say that!"

For now, the phones are red hot, the diary is full, yet the team at Mad4MINI can always find time for customers new and old, whether it be helping out with advice or repairing a major mechanical issue. We can certainly confirm both Richard and Mike's enthusiasm and passion for their work is just as strong as it was five years ago. ■



Above: Business has come a long way for Richard and Mike in the last five years



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