

VINTAGE MOTORCYCLE NEWS

V M N

SPECIAL EDITION N°21 • COLLECTOR SERIES



BMW Isetta

VINTAGE MOTORCYCLE NEWS
VMN

A motorcycle publication
for the vintage enthusiast.



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COVER PAGE

1955 BMW Isetta 300
by Artist Richard Clark



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NEXT EDITION

The first Nortons were produced in England by James Lansdowne Norton in 1902-1903 marketed as Energette motorcycles and powered by French Clement engines.



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



The Isetta is an Italian-designed microcar built under license in a number of different countries, including Argentina, Spain, Belgium, France, Brazil, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Because of its egg shape and bubble-like windows, it became known as a bubble car, a name also given to other similar vehicles.

Many riders among us never heard about a small car named Isetta. 70 years ago that car came alive and became very popular, to a point that Cadillac was giving this car to the wives of any purchaser of their luxurious cruiser. Talk about a gift, no manufacturers nowadays would give a competitor's car as a token of appreciation...

In 1955, the BMW Isetta became the world's first mass-production car to achieve a fuel consumption of 3 L/100 km (78 mpg). It was the top-selling single-cylinder car in the world, with 161,728 units sold. The power plant was just a 250cc single cylinder borrowed from the motorcycle production.

You won't see too many of them on the road nowadays, but if you do, take the time to talk to the owner and I'll bet you that he will not change it for any of the Smart cars zipping around today.

Our edition was blessed with the creations of 2 great artists... The cover is from Richard Clark (South Africa) whilst the back cover was done by Gabriel Cayres (Brazil). It was nice to see 2 artists, world apart, coming up with cartoonish drawings of the Isetta...

There is a lot to be said about this cute little car but nothing compare to the time and effort put by the Microcar Museum (page 56) from Madison, GA. Under one roof you can see hundreds of microcars from all around the world and from different manufacturers. Of course the BMW Isetta gets the bulk of the display but at least you can discover it dressed in multiple variations of shapes and colors...

This edition is a compilation of interesting facts, photos and stories

To close this edition, the BMW Group Classic has given us a fantastic "How to" guide: **A buyer's guide to the perfect BMW Isetta.**

Till next time... Ed.



BMW Isetta
pedal-car toy
from the
1950s

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BMW

Isetta

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Parked next to this beautiful Isetta,
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BMW Isetta

The history of a savior, icon and everyday hero

The Isetta is an icon of automotive history. But where does its name come from? And how is the iconic bubble car related to a refrigerator?

When Germans think of the 1950s, some of the most iconic images that spring to their minds are women wearing voluminous petticoats, living rooms with kidney-shaped tables and BMW's Isetta bubble car traversing – among others – the streets of post-war Germany and beyond.

Today, the BMW Isetta is a highly coveted vintage car that would probably be classified as a micro mobility vehicle now. But back in its day, the Isetta was a complete car. The little car from Munich combines a clever concept with understated charm. How it came to be is an interesting story that proves the old adage that necessity is indeed the mother of invention.

The Isetta: from stopgap to icon

BMW was on the brink of bankruptcy in the mid-1950s. Motorcycle production was declining. Luxury vehicles like the 503 and the 507 were so expensive to produce that BMW suffered losses on these models. *“So the number one priority was to put a car into production that would make us money right away,”* explains Axel Klinger-Köhnlein, an expert at BMW Group Classic.

BMW needed a new model – one that would not require a lot of development costs. BMW found its solution at the 1954 Turin Car Show. At the Iso Rivolta booth, an Italian maker of refrigerators and mini cars, there was a three-wheeled car with a huge door (which looked surprisingly similar to a refrigerator door) in the front. It was called the Iso Isetta. The BMW delegation acquired the licensing rights for the Isetta and for the production equipment as well.

What is a BMW Isetta?

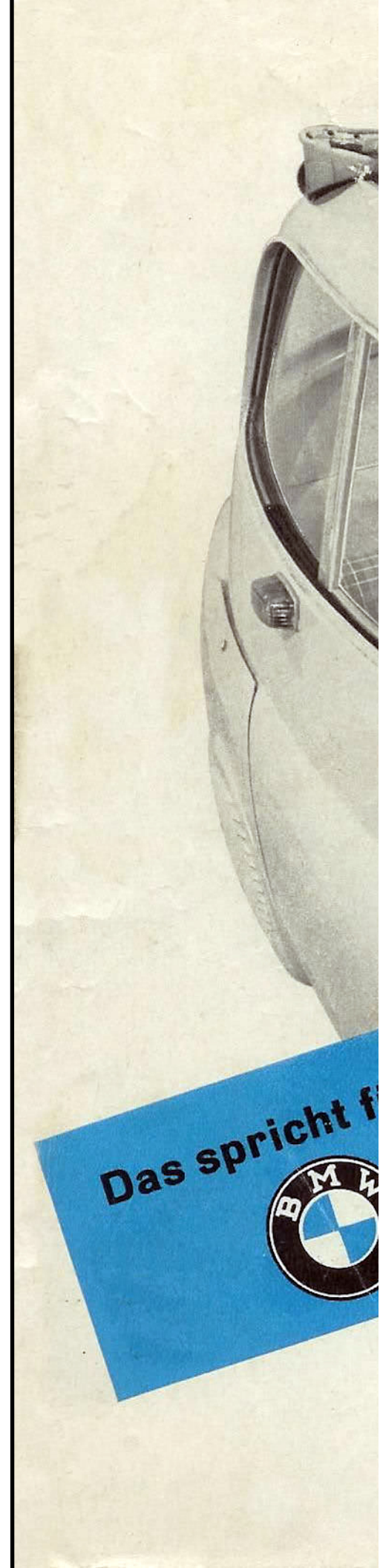
The BMW Isetta is a microcar that was produced under license by the Bayerische Motorenwerke between 1955 and 1962. The “Motocoupé” is based on a design from the Italian manufacturer Iso Rivolta and is known as a bubble car. Isettas typically had a door in the front and a single cylinder four-stroke engine in the back.

The so-called Motocoupé quickly became popular with the public. A German BMW ad for the Isetta claimed: “You’ll always be happy in the BMW Isetta – in every kind of weather.”

The German bubble car has Italian roots

First, BMW had to “refine” the motor and the chassis of the Italian bubble car, as Klinger-Köhnlein puts it. Even after it was modified by the BMW developers who were used to designing performance cars, the technical specifications seemed rather modest.

At the start of production in 1955, the BMW Isetta 250 was redesigned to take a modified version of the 250 cc four-stroke engine from the R25 motorcycle. The single cylinder generated exactly 12 hp.





ür
Fsetta

BMW kept the bubble car's original Italian name: Isetta is the diminutive form of Iso. Contrary to what the name change might suggest, they actually added another tire so that the German car had four tires compared to the Italian's three.

In 1956, the Bavarian factory put out a version with higher performance - the BMW Isetta 300 with a 300 cc engine and 13 hp. Both versions could reach speeds of up to 53 mph (85 km/h).

The bubble car as a cult car

The BMW marketing department came up with the term "motocoupé" for the bubble car. In Germany, the Isetta was affectionately known as a "Knutschkugel" (cuddle coach).

There was no better car for zipping around in a city or for short distances. Because it was 7.5 feet (2.28 m) long and weighed a mere 770 pounds (350 kg), it was more manoeuvrable than almost any other car. And two adult passengers could sit next to one another just like in a "regular" car. The Isetta was the only microcar where that was possible.

Since the door opens to the front and the steering wheel and steering column swing with it, it's easy to get in and out. Luggage goes on the outside on a luggage rack that mounts onto the back. Buyers knew what they were getting: the Isetta was no mini sedan – it was a

new kind of car. It was the right kind of car for the 1950s.

Not many changes were made to the Isetta while it was in production. The first series had a larger back window than the second, and the window that opened to the side was replaced by a sliding window. All Isettas had a canvas roof, similar to today's sunroof. Not because of customer demand, adds BMW Group Classic Expert Klinger-Köhnlein, but because an emergency exit was mandatory since you entered the car through a front door.

In 1955, BMW got the license to produce the Isetta car from an Italian motorcycle company.

The Isetta was a top seller

The motocoupé became a much-needed best seller. At only 2,550 German marks (about 1,450 US-dollars or 1,300 euros today), the Isetta was a car most people could afford. And Isetta drivers didn't need an expensive car licence, all they needed was a motorcycle licence.

With 10,000 cars sold in the first year, the Isetta was found all over Germany and then later in other countries.

Over the eight years it was in production, 161,728 Isettats were sold. Today, it remains one of the most successful one-cylinder cars in the world.



When production stopped in 1962, the era of the bubble car came to an end. By that time, the standard of living had improved and people wanted full-size cars.

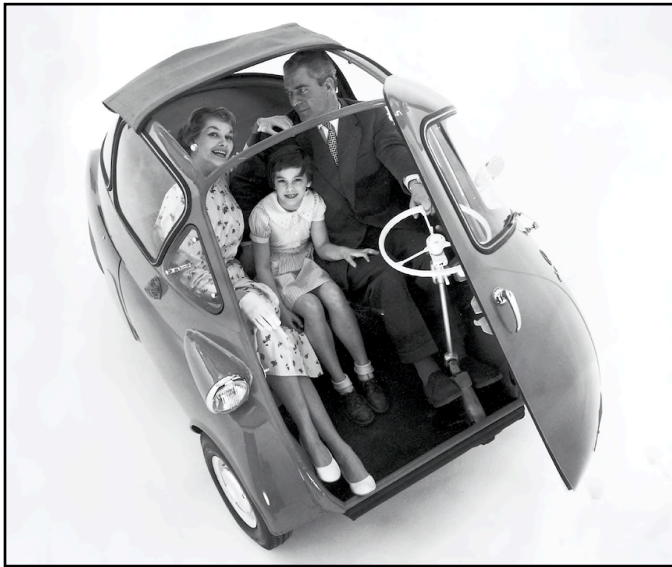
Vintage BMWs: the legend lives on

The BMW Isetta would look more at home on the narrow and ancient streets of some Italian city than on a German autobahn.

But it was actually more successful in its adopted country of Germany than in its Italian homeland, although many did find their way back to Italy when Germans went on holidays there.

They drove their little Isettas over the Alps to spend time soaking up the sun and enjoying the dolce vita.

Even today, the BMW Isetta has lost none of its fascination and still stands for a certain lifestyle. "At the BMW Welt in Munich, the Isetta is the most popular exhibit" says Klinger-Köhnlein. Quite a few visitors even take it for a spin to get the full 50s nostalgia experience.





1955
BMW
Isetta 300
Richard Clark 02/09/2013

1955 BMW Isetta 300

A stylised version of an iconic car.

Modelling, lighting and rendering done in Softimage.

Textures created in Photoshop.





The Original 1955 BMW Isetta 300



The Revised 1955 BMW Isetta 300

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1959 Jaguar MK2

The complete History of the BMW Isetta



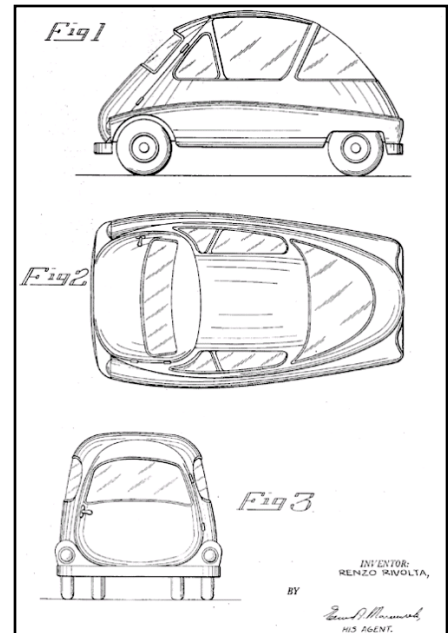
The presentation on 5th March 1955 was appropriate to the event. Without pomp and ceremony, but filled with quiet pride, the top management of BMW unveiled their latest product before the assembled press. In the opulent lake-side Hotel Bachmair in Rottach-Egern, the journalists were shown a two-seater, but one which was unlike any sports car. The configuration of the new BMW was something quite different. Fritz Fiedler, then BMW's Head of Vehicle Development, summed it up in his opening speech: *"With the BMW Isetta Motocoupe, the public are being offered an economical type of car and a concept that is quite novel in Germany."* Indeed, no vehicle like it had been seen before on German roads: a tiny, almost spherical car with windows all round – and a single door at the front.

Admittedly, the latest BMW hardly came as a surprise. The company had announced its new model back in the autumn of 1954, and six months prior to that the Isetta had been available for inspection for the first time at the factory in Milbertshofen. In the early 1950s, the Bayerische Motoren Werke

were still suffering from the after-effects of the Second World War. True, in 1948 motorcycle production had been resumed with great success. Up until 1954 sales of the single and twin-cylinder machines with shaft drive soared upwards. Nevertheless, it quickly became clear to the market strategists that the two-wheeler was only the first rung on the mobility ladder and the desire for a weatherproof vehicle was their customers prime consideration. With the big 501 Saloon, which had a pre-war six-cylinder engine under the bonnet, BMW was certainly offering a fast and luxurious car; but for a large part of the population it was several times too expensive. The company had no alternative to offer, since the resumption of car production after the war had been made extremely difficult by the loss of the Eisenach car plant. Production facilities as well as skilled staff had to be replaced. Not until the Frankfurt Motor Show in 1951 was the BMW 501 put on the road as the company's first post-war car. The prestigious and extravagantly engineered saloon had even been improved by fitting it with the world's first light-alloy eight-cylinder engine in time for the 1954 Geneva Motor Show, but the volume needed for profitable production could not be achieved.

1954 Turin Motor Show: BMW meets Iso.

At the beginning of 1954, shortly after the Board of BMW had proudly presented the new V8 on the shores of Lake Geneva, BMW's main agent in Switzerland, C.A.



Drenowatz, was visiting the Geneva Show when he discovered a "fully-faired motorcycle" called an Isetta and manufactured by the Italian firm Isomoto.

He immediately reported his findings to the head of sales, Hanns Grewenig. Since BMW's top management had already spent a lot of time thinking about a popular car that would represent the best possible value for money, they dispatched Eberhard Wolff, who headed the test division, to the Turin Motor Show which was held in late April and where Iso was again showing its Isetta to the public. There were two prime considerations: it was essential that the Isetta could be put into production a) quickly and b) at no great cost.

The first thing that struck one about the Isetta was its shape. Yet the "egg on wheels", as the little vehicle was described right from the start, was remarkable not only for its unique profile, but also for its unusual technical features. For instance, the whole of the front end



could be opened outwards – not even luxury saloons offered such a spacious method of boarding. The steering wheel and instrument panel were fixed to this door, which extended across the whole width of the car. A universal joint, which split the steering column a few centimetres above the floor panel, enabled one to move the steering column forward as well. Thus the driver and passenger merely had to clamber over the fixed foot pedals and could settle onto the two-seater bench without any contortions. Behind the seat was a generous space for the spare wheel and, if necessary, luggage. To the rear of the occupants pattered the heart of the little Italian job, a two-stroke engine with twin cylinders, which had a capacity of 236 cc and could deliver 9.5 horsepower.

BMW buys the name and the tooling along with it.

Wolff recognized that the simple and relatively easy-to-produce design of the microcar had exactly the potential that BMW was looking for. Even before the exhibition closed its doors, he got in touch with the head of Iso, Renzo Rivolta, who was already extremely interested in doing licensing deals. A partner with such a great name as BMW, moreover, seemed like a godsend. His offer was attractive: BMW could take over both the name and principal tooling for the bodywork. The BMW Board wasted little time and the then Technical Director, Kurt Donath, and Head of Development, Fritz Fiedler, drove to Milan to get down to brass tacks with Iso.

The Isetta: “It is deliberately not intended to be a saloon car...” Almost exactly one year later, the



BMW Isetta was launched. Many visual and technical details of the Italian original had been modified and improved by BMW. A first glance showed the body-work had been altered by having detached headlights fitted at the top of the front-opening door instead of the bottom, and by giving it a new engine cover. In practical terms, Fritz Fiedler had no difficulty in justifying BMW’s bold decision in favour of the Isetta to the assembled trade journalists. In order to bring down the retail price, he said, many manufacturers would previously have tried to save costs in two ways: “Some of them want to achieve this objective by a nitpicking reduction of all the dimensions, following the simplistic calculation made by a lot of people that a hundredweight of car costs so much. The other method of getting the price down is crudeness. In extreme cases I picture the design as a tubular rod,

to which some road wheels are attached which are steered by handlebars.” This kind of steering – others called it a joy-stick – was found, for example, in the Messerschmitt “cabin scooter”. “Between these two extremes,” Fiedler went on, “we now have the BMW Isetta. It is deliberately not intended to be a saloon car, but it is more than something to get you from A to B. It gives its occupants complete protection against the weather; you can get into it with greater ease than many a big car, and it can be driven with such supreme safety that even inept drivers put neither themselves nor others at risk.”

The Isetta’s five trump cards.

Fiedler summed up the advantages of the Isetta in five bullet points:

1. The cost of the bodywork is decisively influenced by the

BMW Isetta Standard and BMW Isetta Export



number of doors. You can get by with one door. The door is not hung in the outer skin of the bodywork, but stands proud of the front end and hence is accident-proof.

2. Three wheels may be cheaper, but they are not nearly as good as four. Putting the drive through a single rear wheel overstrains it. That's why we opted for two rear wheels. The narrow wheelbase saves us fitting a differential and means that one brake is enough.
3. It has been possible to locate the engine in front of the rear axle, achieving an ideal weight distribution.
4. Thanks to a transverse double cardan shaft, the suspension of the axle and the engine is independent.
5. The egglike shape of the body is taken from nature. It requires least expenditure on materials to enclose a given interior space."

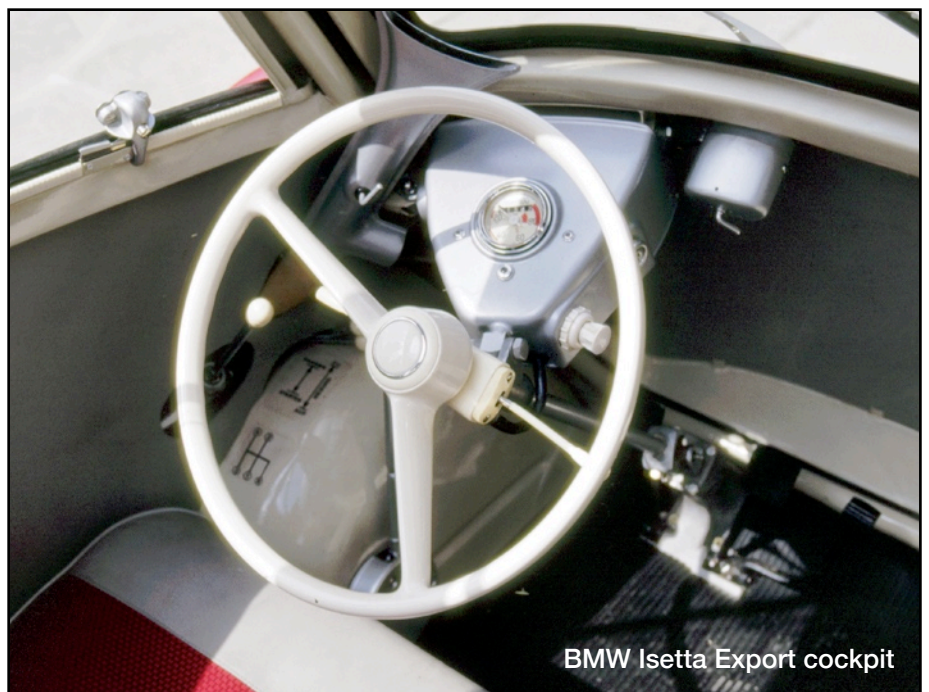
This catalogue contained numerous BMW ground rules which still apply today – passive and active safety, optimum distribution of axle weight, driving comfort. And there was something else in the new

“Motocoupé” – a BMW engine. The original noisy and underpowered two-stroke had already been available at the time of the negotiations between the BMW Board and Renzo Rivolta. If the bodywork was to be bought in, at least BMW could supply its own power unit. And anyway, in Munich there was a proven, reliable and perfectly suited power source: the single-cylinder engine of the BMW R25/3 motorcycle.

A tried and tested motorcycle engine for

the new Motocoupé: the single-cylinder 250.

This vehicle set new standards in its class: from a cylinder capacity of 245 cc the single-cylinder generated 12 horsepower at 5,800 rpm. Its construction was as robust as it was simple. The crankcase and cylinder were made of cast iron, the cylinder head of aluminium. However, the head was rotated by 180 degrees compared with the motorcycle engine. The twin-bearing crankshaft was also different in the Isetta power unit, being larger and featuring reinforced bearings. One





BMW Isetta Standard and BMW 502

of the reasons for this was the heavy Dynastart unit which combined the dynamo and self-starter. The laterally located camshaft was driven by a roller chain, and transmitted its control impulses via pushrods into the cylinder head, where the overhead V-shaped valves were activated by rocker arms. The fuel mixture was provided by a Bing sliding carburettor. In addition to further changes of detail, the BMW engineers enlarged the sump for installation in the car and cooled the engine by means of a radial fan.

Economic motoring: top speed of 85 km/h and around 3.8l/100 km.

To quote from a press release at the time of the launch: the engine “gives the BMW Isetta excellent acceleration, with help from the well-chosen ratios in its four-speed

gearbox, which also has a claw shift and reverse gear. Gradients of up to 32% can be surmounted with ease. Fuel consumption is as little as 3.8l/100 km (approx. 80 mpg). The maximum speed of 85 km/h (53 mph) can be exploited without anxiety in view of the hydraulic brakes on all four wheels.” With this braking system the Isetta set new standards in the “bubble car” class, since the competition were still fitting cable brakes as standard. Incidentally, the braking arrangement was as follows: each of the front and rear wheels had a drum brake. Admittedly, only the left rear drum was connected to the hydraulic circuit of the service brake. The right-hand drum was connected by a cable to the handbrake lever, which stuck up vertically by the driver’s foot. And in the mid-1950s, by no means every car could boast four forward

gears. With a torque of only 14.2 Newton metres at 4,500 revs those gears were sorely needed, even though with a full tank the Isetta only tipped the scales at 360 kg.

Safe roadholding despite a short rear axle.

Initially the wheelbase layout aroused deep suspicion. The two front wheels were mounted at each corner, 120 cm apart, whereas the two rear wheels were tucked in centrally with a track of just 52 cm, making the “darning ball”, as the diminutive car was sometimes dubbed, look like a three-wheeler. The power train from the four-speed gearbox to these two wheels was unusual enough: fixed to the gearbox output drive was something called a Hardy disc, which was a cardan joint made of rubber. On the other side of it was



BMW Isetta in Munich

a cardan shaft, and finally a second Hardy disc, which in turn was located at the entrance to a chain case. A duplex chain running in an oil bath led finally to a rigid shaft, at each end of which were the two rear wheels. Thanks to this elaborate power transfer, the engine-gearbox unit was both free of tension and well soundproofed in its linkage to the rear axle. This paid off in terms of a surprisingly comfortable drive and very well-balanced roadholding.

Yet at this point no journalist, let alone a customer, had ever driven the Isetta. Development boss Fritz Fiedler anticipated the scepticism and tackled it head on: "There will probably be heated arguments among experts and laymen about the rigid, uncompensated rear axle with a track significantly narrower than the front one. But there is

nothing new about this. These vehicles are said to perform particularly well in hill-climbs on bad and winding roads. We found exactly the same thing in our test drives. No-one who hasn't seen it for himself can believe how well and how safely this vehicle handles."

A succès d'estime at the Mille Miglia.

And he was able to prove it too. Back in 1954 the Isetta had taken part in the Mille Miglia – and earned its spurs: over a distance of 1,000 miles the drivers achieved an average speed of over 70 km/h (43 mph). In view of its maximum speed, which was just 15 km/h higher, this was an almost incredible figure. There is no doubt that this was helped by the fact that the front-wheel mountings and suspension moved with the

steering, which meant that the steering geometry remained unaltered even when the car tilted and rebounded – the Isetta's roadholding was exemplary. What lay behind this was the overall design concept consisting of an all-steel body which rested on a trapezoidal tubular steel frame. The front wheels were mounted individually on longitudinal cranks whose movement was checked by coil springs and frictional shock absorbers. The rear axle was fixed to the body by two quarter-ellipse leaf springs and two telescopic shock absorbers.

Parking nose-in to the kerb.

Admittedly it was in towns that the bubble car, 2.28 metres long by 1.38 metres wide, scored the highest points. Fritz Fiedler gave the journalists the perfect tip for



BMW Isetta in New York



parking: “You drive into the parking space facing the kerb, park the car and get out at the front, straight on to the pavement. After nearly 25 years, BMW might pull out their old slogan again: Bigger inside than outside.” Thanks to the overall length of precisely 2 metres, 28 centimetres and 5 millimetres, even the meter maids turned a blind eye to this style of parking.

Plenty of elbow room inside.

Indeed the Isetta did offer a uniquely spacious driving experience. To quote again from the press release announcing the Motocoupé: “Large windows made of shatter-proof Plexiglas allow an open view in all directions. There are handles to open the sunroof as well as the two quarter-lights that give draught-free ventilation. Two adults and a child can sit comfortably on the bench seat, with a full width of 1.18 metres, which can be adjusted forwards or backwards. The space between the seat and the front door is 70 cm, giving the occupants ample room for their legs and feet. Any restriction of the driver’s movements is avoided, not least by the fact that the gear lever is located on the left to save space and the remaining manual controls are

conveniently grouped on the steering column.” The steering column was between the driver’s legs, to the left of it was the clutch pedal, and to the right the brake and accelerator. “Thanks to the swivelling quarter-lights, the sunroof and the fan-heater, it is possible in all weathers and in any season to cover the longest distances in a comfortable environment.” Some people took this literally: it is on record that a married couple drove an Isetta from Sicily to Sweden in 62 hours.

Safe and considerate: a door with a knuckle-joint lock.

The characteristic feature of the Isetta, which brought it the nickname “Christmas car” (“Open wide the door...”), was incidentally not intended purely for the comfort of passengers getting in, but also designed to have environmental benefits. Development boss Fritz Fiedler argued it this way: “We even chose a special design for the door lock. No longer will people have to slam the door shut with a loud bang – the nocturnal terror of anyone living near a pub – because the door is closed silently and safely with a kind of knuckle-joint lock, which goes over a dead point. At the same

time this prevents the door, if not properly closed, from swinging open when the brakes are applied.”

On that day, 5th March 1955, a grand total of two Isettas were available to journalists for them to put these promises to the test. This they did in good measure – and were delighted. They praised the “successful synthesis of motorcycle/scooter and four-seater car” and paid tribute to the unique concept of the Motocoupé. The Isetta was clearly distinct from the competition. In Germany alone more than 20 manufacturers were offering an enormous variety of bubble cars and small cars for all tastes and almost every purse. At that time necessity mated with invention to produce some strange offspring. Some had the occupants sitting one behind the other, tandem-style, and some even back to back.

Value for money: six months’ work for an Isetta.

The Isetta was a hit. BMW had been right about its “ideal solution of the motoring problem for everyone who needs a nippy and manoeuvrable vehicle with low running costs and no difficulties in parking or garaging. This means



wage and salary-earners going to work, doctors, salesmen, skilled tradespeople, representatives travelling for big firms, the self-employed and, not least, the lady of the house when her husband has taken the big car out.” Apart from its technical qualities, a point in favour of the Motocoupé was the modest list price asked by BMW: just 2,550 deutschmarks. Good value, but not cheap. In those days a German worker earned an average of DM 90 per week, so he would have to work a good six months to buy an Isetta. The obligatory third-party insurance cost DM95, and the taxman demanded an annual road tax of DM44 for the “smooch-ball” – or “less than a dachshund in the city”, as the advertisements assured people.

1955: demand exceeds supply.

BMW had set a production target for the year 1955 of 11,200 Isettass; in the event the figure was considerably higher – but it still did not meet the demand. In the company’s annual report the Board proudly announced: “In the year 1955 the West German vehicle industry was able to increase production by a third. We shared fully in this expansion. Total sales from our plant in Munich-Milbertshofen rose by 46% to DM BMW Isetta Standard and BMW Isetta Export 138,000,000. The decline in our motorcycle business, which we had already indicated in previous years, has been halted by the timely introduction of the BMW Isetta Motocoupé, though the launch costs are being charged to the year just ended. With the

increase in the Isetta s production volume, the breakeven point was passed as early as the beginning of 1956 and so it was already contributing to the profitability of the factory. The BMW Isetta s extraordinarily favourable reception in the market led to a rapid increase in output. Overall, since the start of production in April, which then rose to a volume of 2,000 units per month, no less than 12,911 units had been manufactured and sold by the end of 1955.” BMW produced as many Motocoupés as was physically possible – sometimes under the most adverse conditions. For example, workers would be assembling the bubble cars on the production line while, a few steps away, bricklayers were still busy repairing the war-damaged workshops. Even so, purchasers usually



had to wait a month before they could take delivery of the Isetta they had ordered.

The finest car under DM4,000: the Isetta.

It soon turned out that the overwhelming majority of proud Motocoupé drivers were very satisfied with their choice: “And if anyone has had the slightest thing to complain about, up to now he has always been torn to pieces in an avalanche of readers letters,” reported the journalists in a trade magazine of the day, “Rollermobil und Kleinwagen”. The quirky profile of the Italian-born creation was even considered chic. So it was that in summer 1955, at the Bad Harzburg motor rally, the Isetta

won the beauty contest in the under DM 4,000 price category. By the middle of 1956, however, it seemed that the sharp rise was already being followed by an equally steep drop. The blame for this lay with two rumours. According to one, BMW’s competitors were planning new small cars – larger but just as good value. This was unsettling for potential Isetta buyers: BMW had in any case raised the Isetta’s price to DM2,750, and the market reacted by holding on to their wallets. The second rumour did not improve things either: it was that BMW intended to cease production. In June the company went out of their way to deny this in the press: “A rumour has

recently surfaced to the effect that manufacture of the BMW Isetta is going to be closed down due to the expiry of the licence and the appearance of a new and larger car. Exactly the opposite is true. The BMW Isetta assembly plant in Munich is currently being considerably enlarged, in order to increase still further the current daily output of 200 vehicles.”

More performance: the Isetta with a 300cc engine.

The customers accepted the statement, the competing cars failed to materialize and sales picked up again. At the same time, in 1956, work began on expanding the range: the engi-

7½ FEET of Thrill-Packed DRIVING

in the Sensational



Isetta

(PRONOUNCED I-SETTA) '300'



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first with these revolutionary features:

- ★ 60 MILES to a Gallon... regular gas
- ★ HEATER-DEFROSTER included
- ★ CONVERTIBLE SUN-TOP ROOF
- ★ Unobstructed 4-WAY VISION
- ★ SWING-AWAY STEERING WHEEL
- ★ 4-WHEELS... safest drive ever
- ★ AUXILIARY GAS TANK, never runs dry
- ★ 4-cycle AIR COOLED ENGINE
- ★ Rigid TUBULAR STEEL Frame
- ★ 55 MILES per Hour

neers enlarged the single cylinder to a 72 mm bore and 73 mm stroke, which yielded a cubic capacity of exactly 298, and at the same time they raised the compression ratio from 6.8 to 7.0:1. In this way the engine now generated 13 horsepower at 5,200 rpm, and the torque rose to 18.4 Newton metres at 4,600 revs. True, the maximum speed remained at 85 km/h, yet there was a marked increase in flexibility, chiefly

noticeable on gradients.

In addition to the desire for more performance, a part in the choice of this engine variant was played by factors which lay quite outside BMW's purview. Firstly, it was then still possible to drive the 250 cc Isetta with the old Class IV driving licence. Quite a number of Isettas were lovingly maintained by their owners for years and even decades, precisely because they possessed no other licence. On the

other hand, from 1956 onwards, first-time drivers had to pass the test for Class III if they wanted to drive a car. True, the Class IV licence continued to be issued, but it was only valid for small motorcycles. A second, similar reason for fitting the larger engine was the prevailing tax regime. The 250cc engine did not take full advantage of the tax class, which then went up to 300 cc.



1956: export version with improved fittings and technology.

In autumn 1956, BMW went on to introduce export versions of both variants. Externally they differed from the standard models by having a full-width front bumper, large sliding side windows, a collapsible soft top and chrome drip rails. But underneath the body even more had changed. In order to improve the ride, the swinging arm on the front axle had been lengthened, the springs enlarged and the frictional shock absorbers replaced by modern telescopic ones. In parallel with this the rear axle suspension was also new and adjusted for a softer ride. Both the earlier model, now called the Isetta Standard 57, and the new Isetta

Export 57 were available with either the 250cc or the 300cc engine. Linked with the launch of the upgraded variant was a reduction in the price of the basic model to DM 2,490, whereas the export version cost DM 2,750.

The “Export” label was indeed entirely justified: as early as 1955, the Isetta’s resounding success in Germany was followed by a growing interest in the little bubble car not only in continental Europe but also overseas. BMW were not about to let this business slip away. Among others, export versions with the designation “Overseas model” and “USA model” were developed. The former was essentially distinguished by additional ventilation for the occupants and power unit as well as so-called

“tropic-proof enhancements to all body, chassis and engine components”. This boiled down to “protection from attack by fungus and termites”. On request, BMW additionally offered overseas customers several special options: right-hand instead of left-hand drive, a cabriolet hood and a removable platform for a 200-kilogram payload, as well as strengthened suspension. These extras were so attractive that they were immediately offered to German customers as well.

Bubble car instead of boulevard cruiser: 12,787 Isettias for the USA.

BMW also put together a special Isetta package for prospective



BMW Isetta as rolling advert for the Stern (magazine)

**Der Stern (German for "Star") is an
illustrated, weekly current affairs magazine
published in Hamburg, Germany**



KB 154-928

KB 153-600

Alte Filiale

GLORIA

GLORIA

Der Stern

Der Stern

Heute 300

Heute 300



buyers in the USA, mainly with changes necessary to meet legal requirements in that country. Thus the American version was given parking and side lights, different headlights, more powerful wipers and larger rear lights. There were also fold-out side windows and modified ventilation. If required, US buyers could also order a cabriolet roof and twin wind-screen wipers instead of one. By September the first Isettas were on the high seas bound for the land of gas-guzzling limos, and by the end of the year some 1,200 units had been shipped out. Over its whole production life the Isetta found 12,787 buyers in the USA.

Even in 1957, a good two years after the launch of the Isetta, BMW was still garnering a great deal of

praise for the bubble car. For example, one leading motor trade commentator of the day wrote of the 300cc export model: "It is far easier to follow well-trodden paths and build a medium-powered car on proven lines for the well-heeled citizen than a runabout that will put no greater strain on the wallet of the man in the street than a motorcycle and sidecar might have done up to now." Finally, he wrote of the Isetta: "This unconventional vehicle represents an unusually apt way of performing the tasks it is intended for, and a lot of hard development work has yielded something of great practical value." In that year BMW built nearly 40,000 units – the greatest annual volume in the Isetta's production history. Along with the Goggomobil, the "smooch-ball"

had become the most successful vehicle of its kind in Germany, and many local me-too equivalents of the BMW Isetta appeared in Britain, Spain and even Brazil.

Competition from under the same roof: the BMW 600 and BMW 700.

Along with Germany's Economic Miracle, by the end of the 1950s the demands of car buyers began to grow. The spartan microcars had passed their zenith, and customers were demanding proper automobiles. In 1957 BMW initially reacted by launching the 600, an Isetta with a longer wheelbase and a rear-mounted twin-cylinder horizontally opposed engine. By 1958 the tubby four-seater with its 19.5 bhp engine had ousted the Isetta from its place as the



company's number one revenue earner. With sales worth 75.5 million marks, the BMW 600 accounted for 39 percent of BMW's turnover; the Isetta only managed DM53 million or 27%. However, in 1959 the BMW 600 was replaced by a distinctly more modern design whose bodywork was created for the first time using a monocoque construction method: the BMW 700.

The two new product lines were now eating into the Isetta's sales. In 1958 barely 22,000 Motocoupés rolled off the Munich production line, and a year later the figure was down to around 20,000. But as the BMW annual report stated: "The decline in domestic sales of the Isetta is balanced by a significant rise in shipments of CKD Isetta

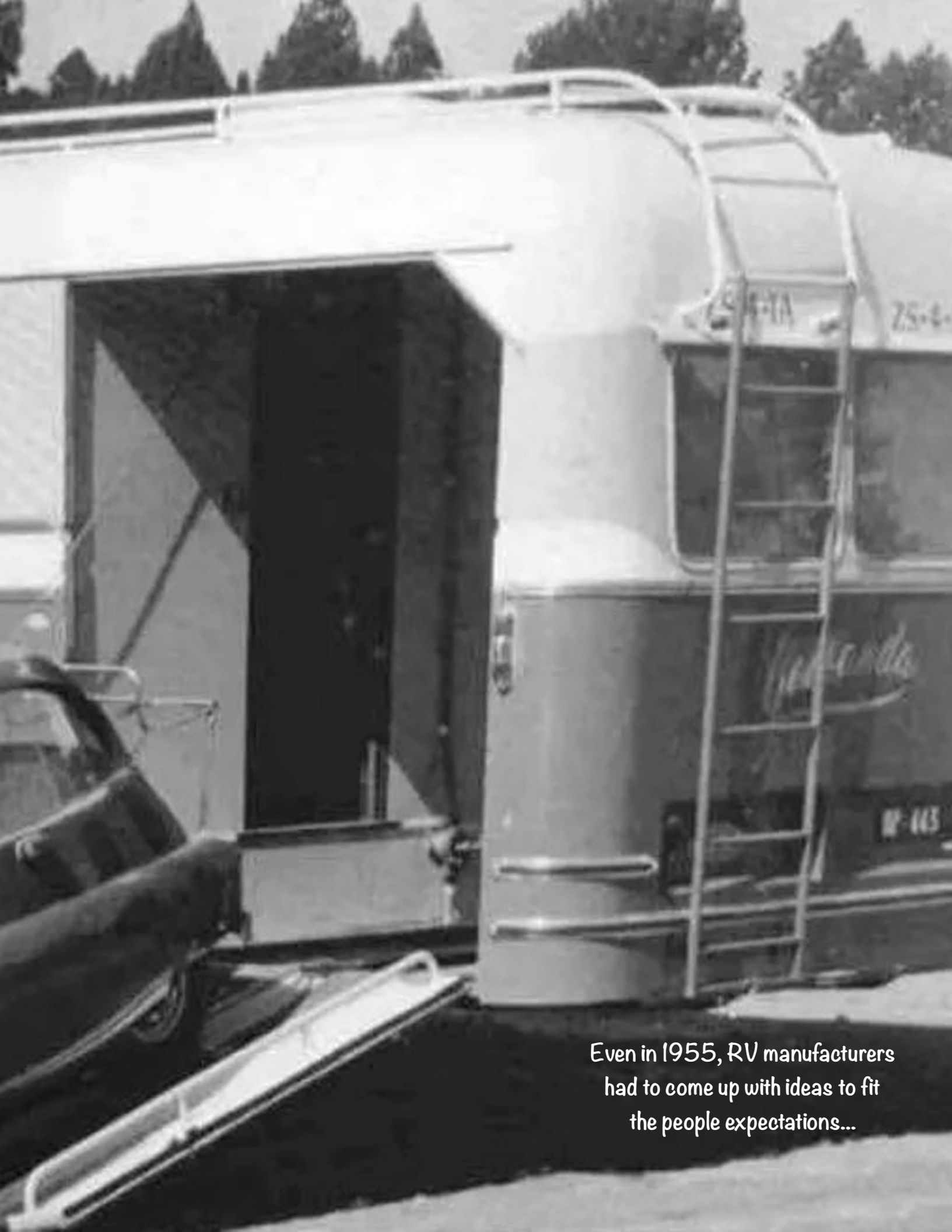
kits for assembly abroad." Whereas in 1958 a mere 825 Motocoupé kits had been shipped worldwide, in 1959 the figure was 6,900.

The end of an era: production closes down in May 1962.

Nonetheless, the "egg on wheels" put up a brave fight against competition that was growing ever greater and more modern. This was chiefly due to its attractive price combined with high quality. At DM2,650 for the 250cc Isetta in 1960 and DM2,710 for the 300cc version, the little car was almost unbeatable on price. Even its tough competitor, the Goggomobil, was asking no less than DM2,947 for its basic T250 model. In any case, the price review in a motor trade magazine in 1960 noted on the

Isetta: "Price supplement for heater: DM45, sliding roof is standard" – in those days it was the only German car that offered this extra on all production models. Only one vehicle in that list was even cheaper than the Isetta: the Messerschmitt KR 200 cabin scooter, at DM2,395, heater included. But it didn't help. In 1961 a motoring magazine put it like this: "However you look at the Isetta, it has had its day." A year later BMW ceased production of the Isetta. A total of 161,728 units had been built. The report by the Board for 1962 noted succinctly: "After running down parts stocks, manufacture of the Isetta came to an end in May as planned."

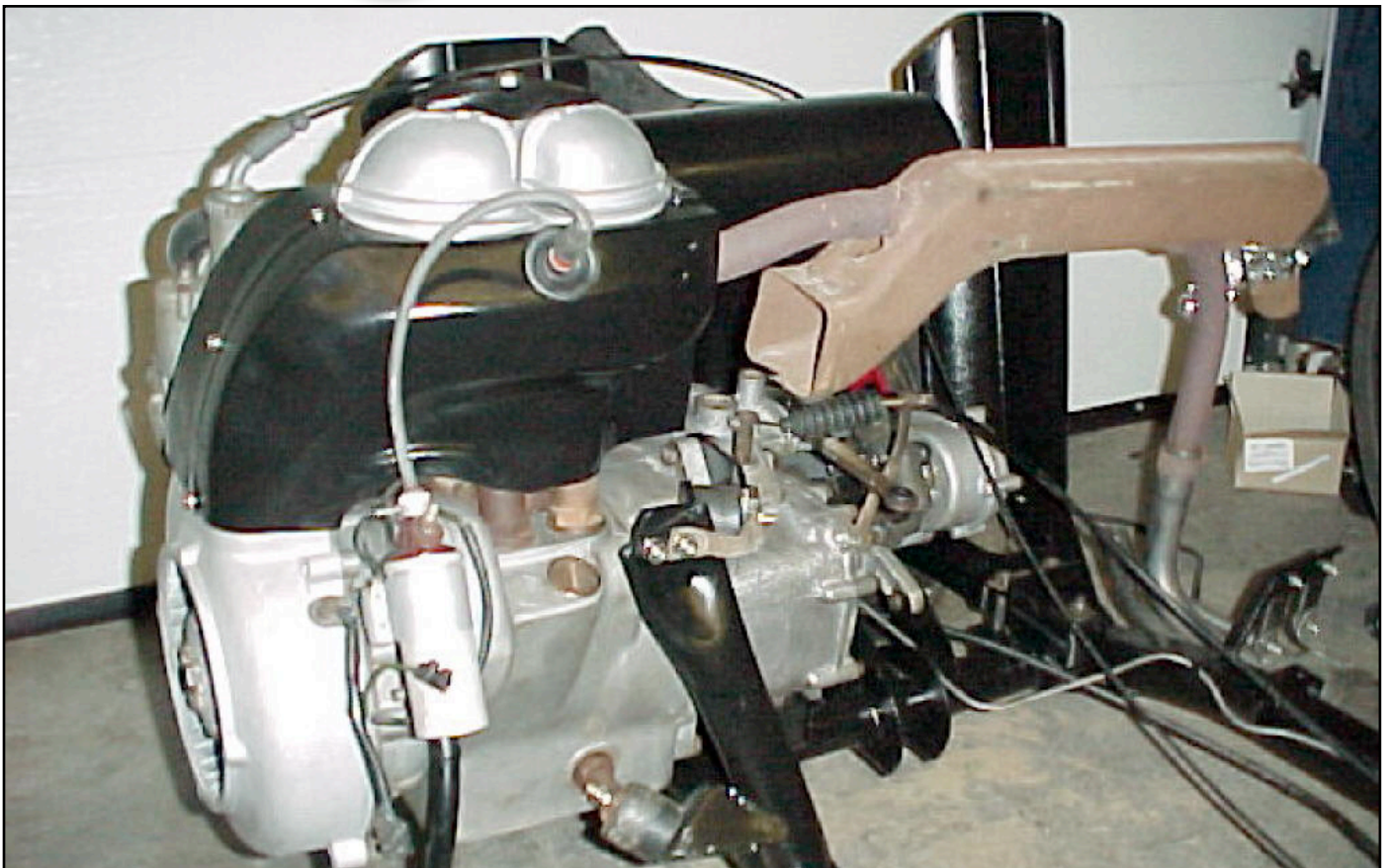
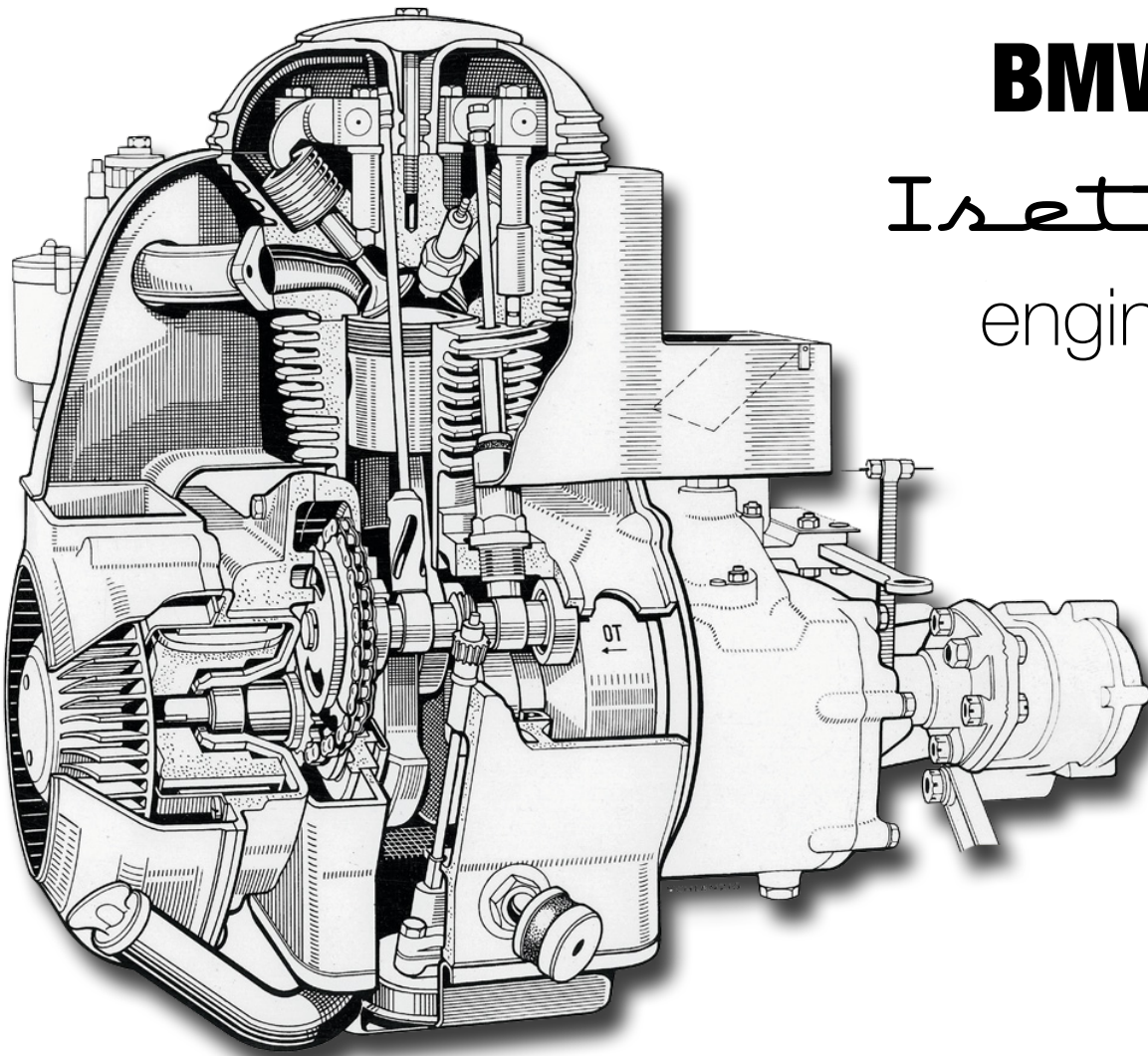


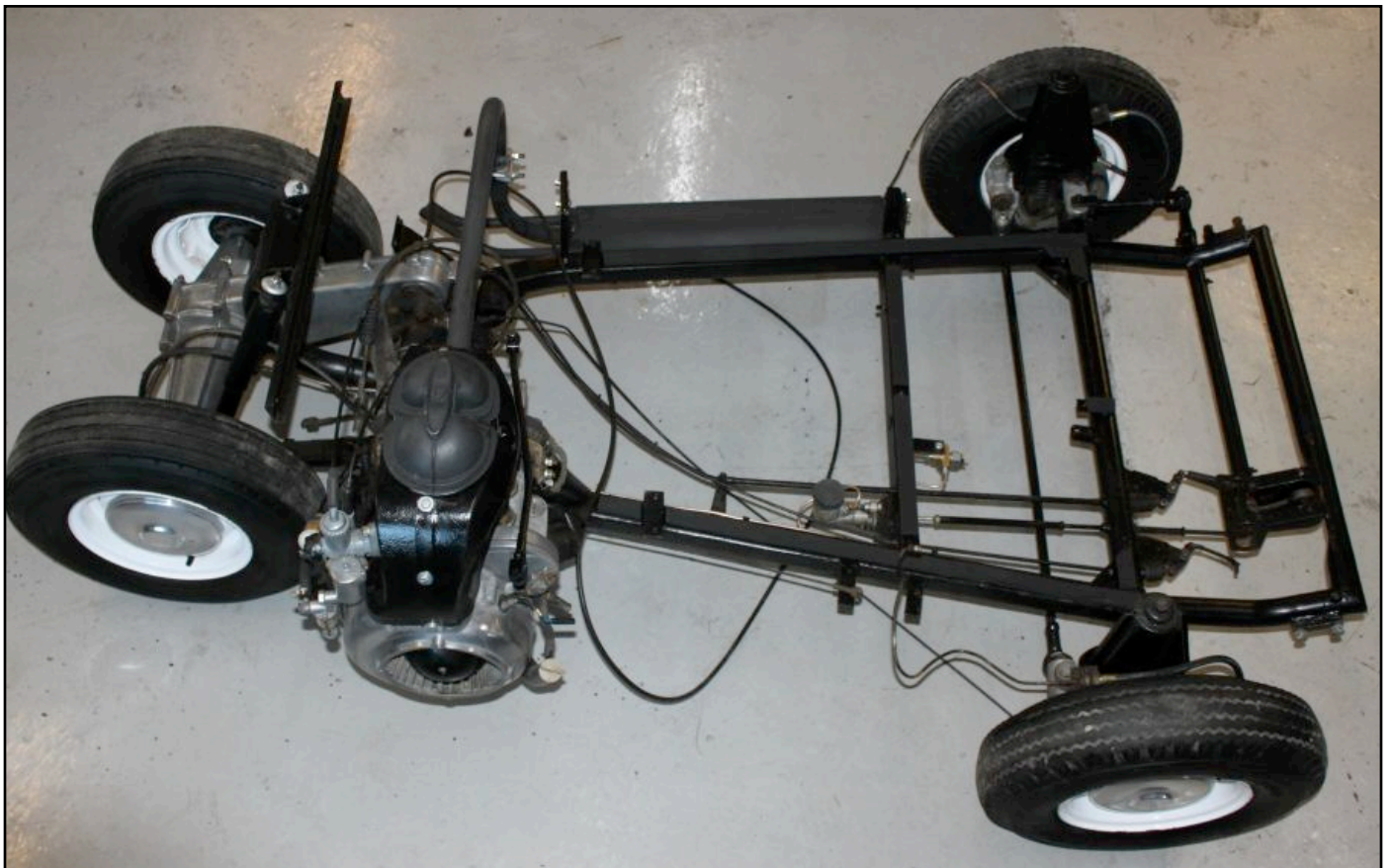
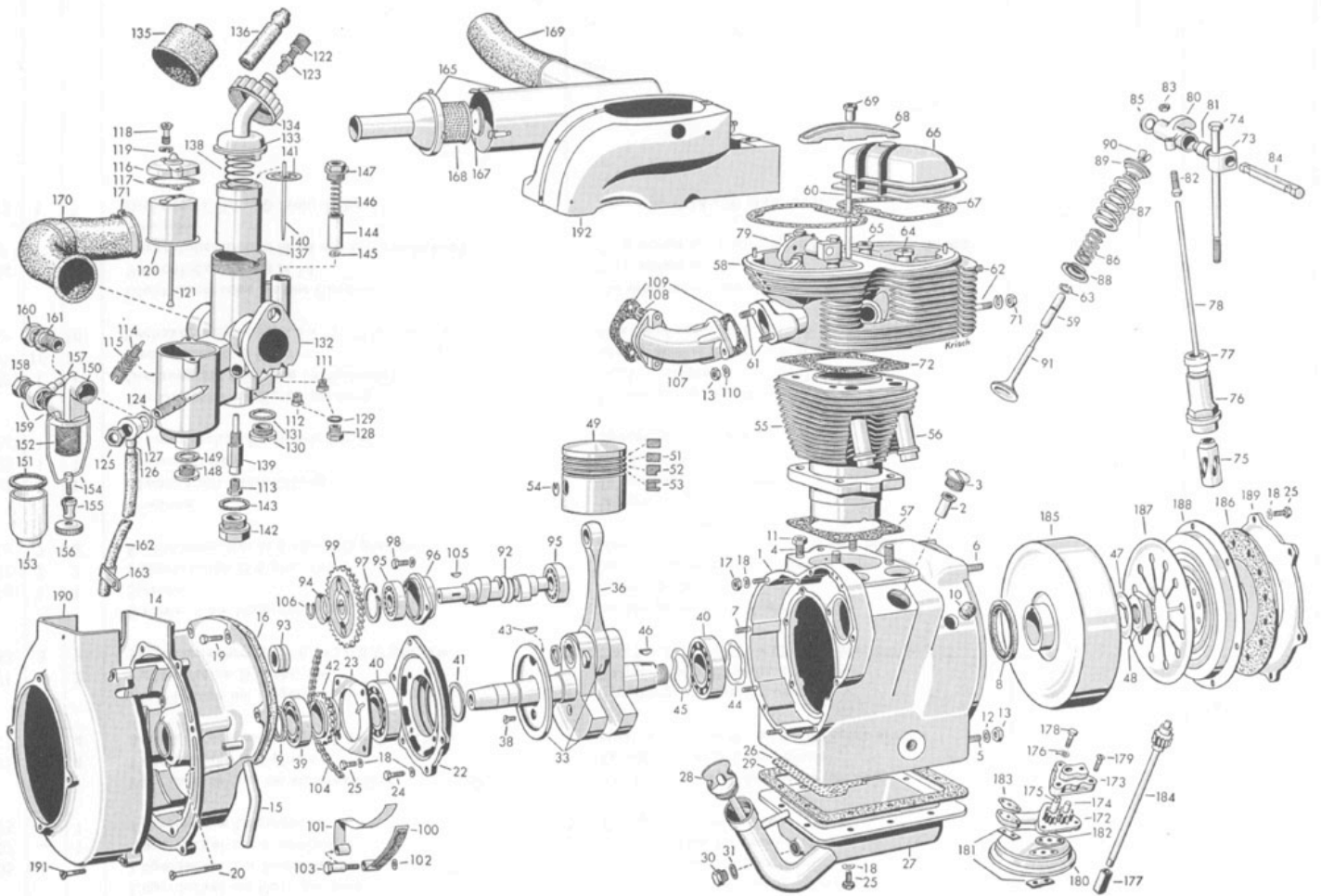


Even in 1955, RV manufacturers
had to come up with ideas to fit
the people expectations...

BMW

Isetta
engine

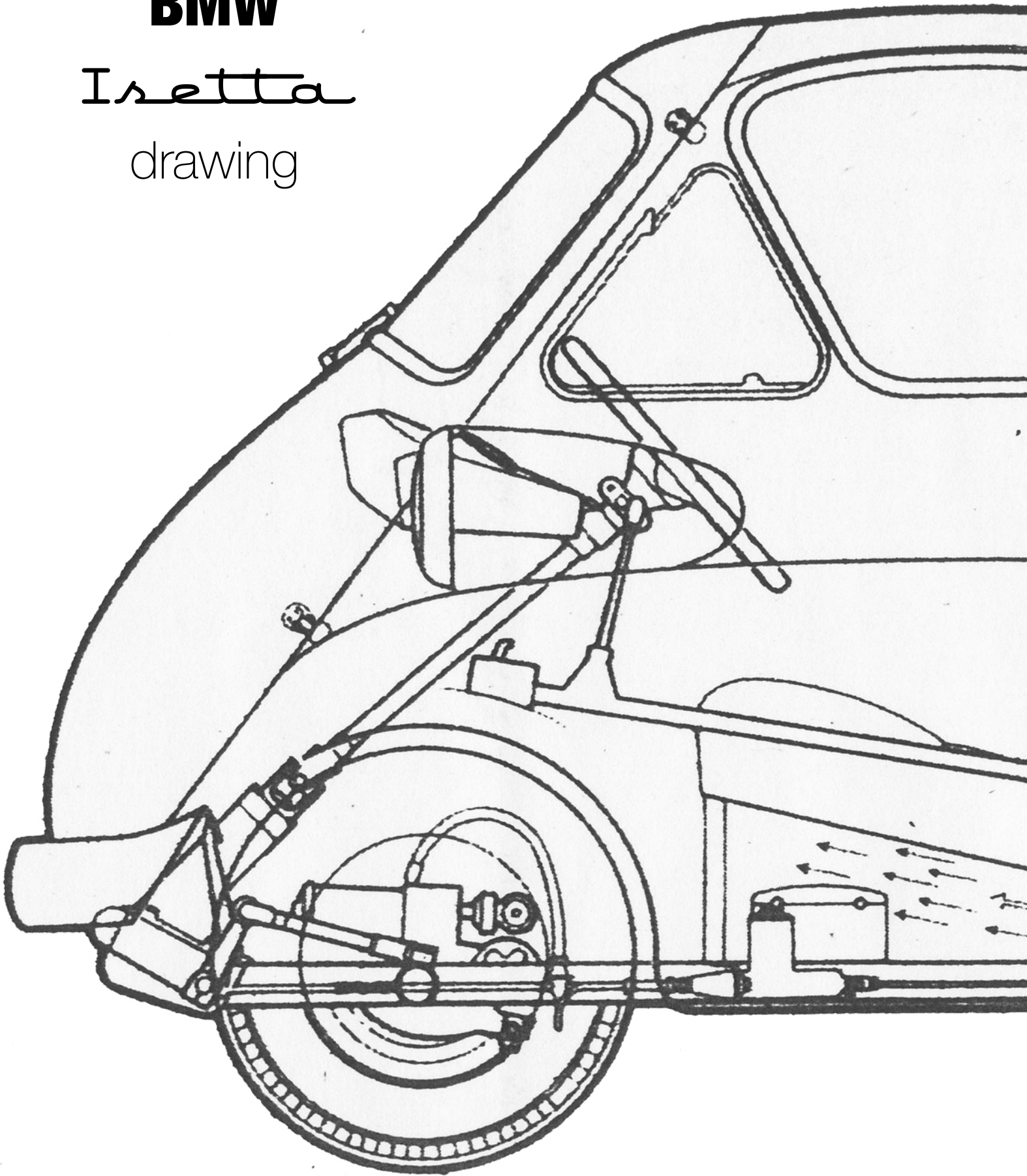


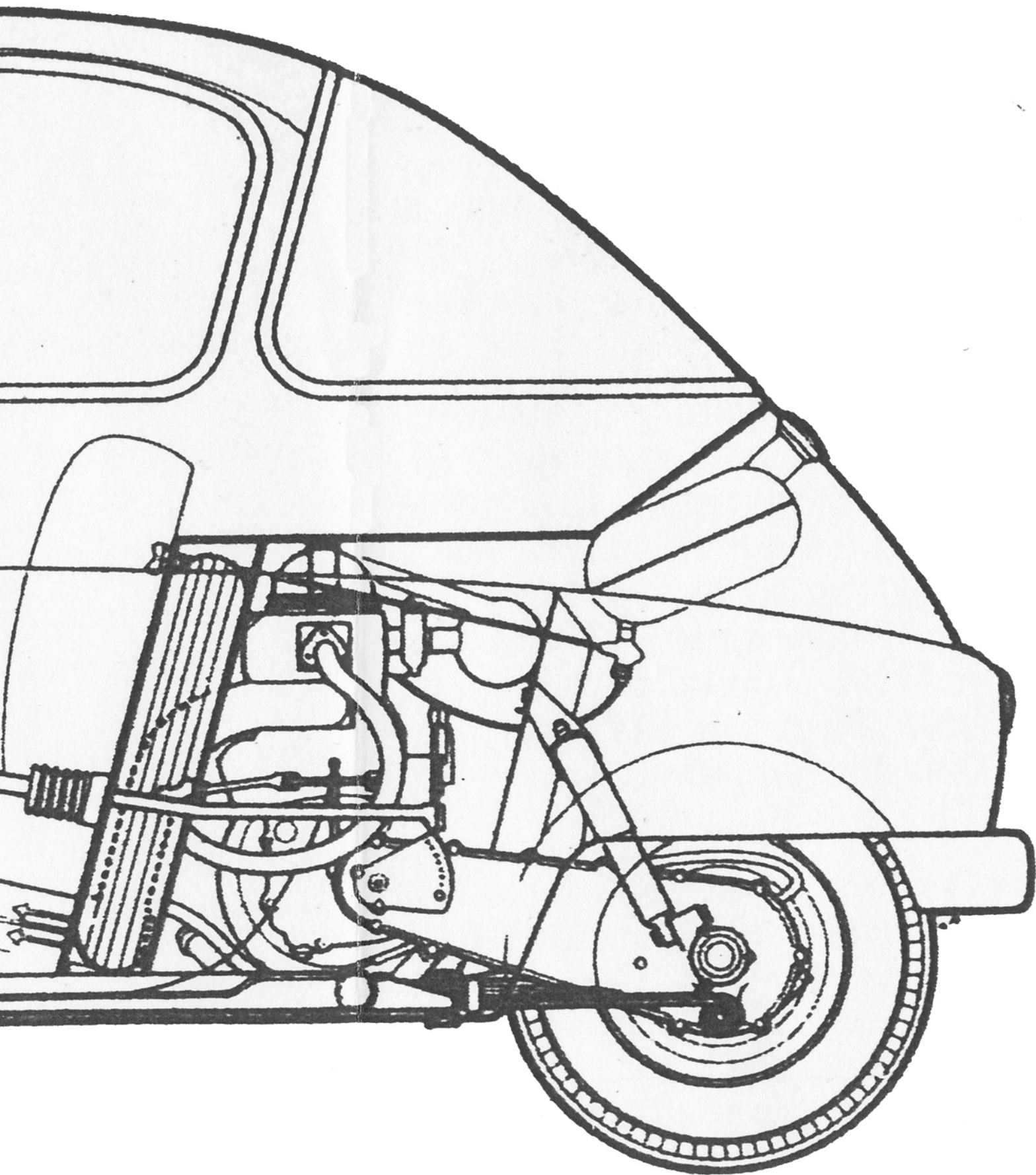


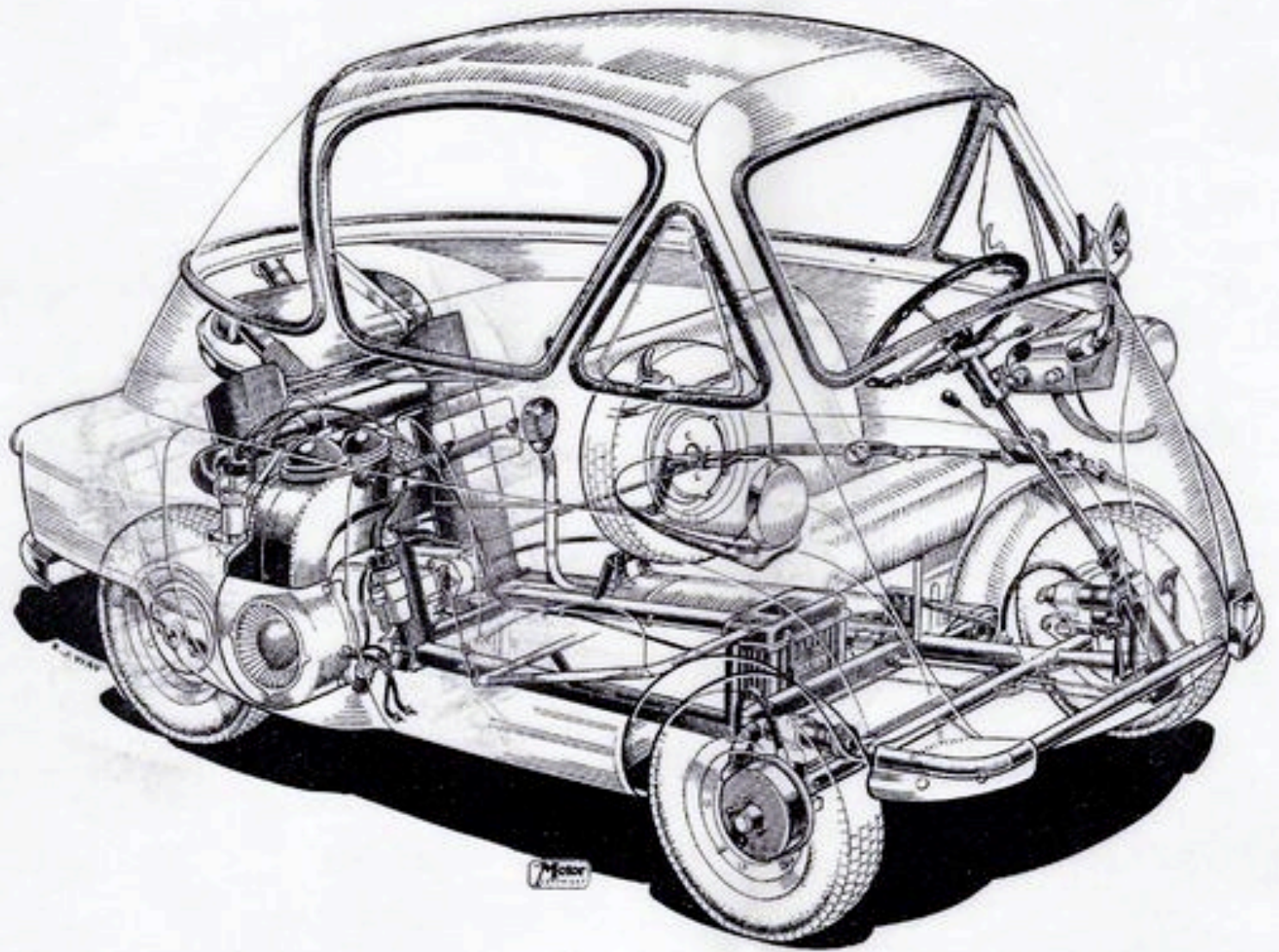
BMW

Isetta

drawing



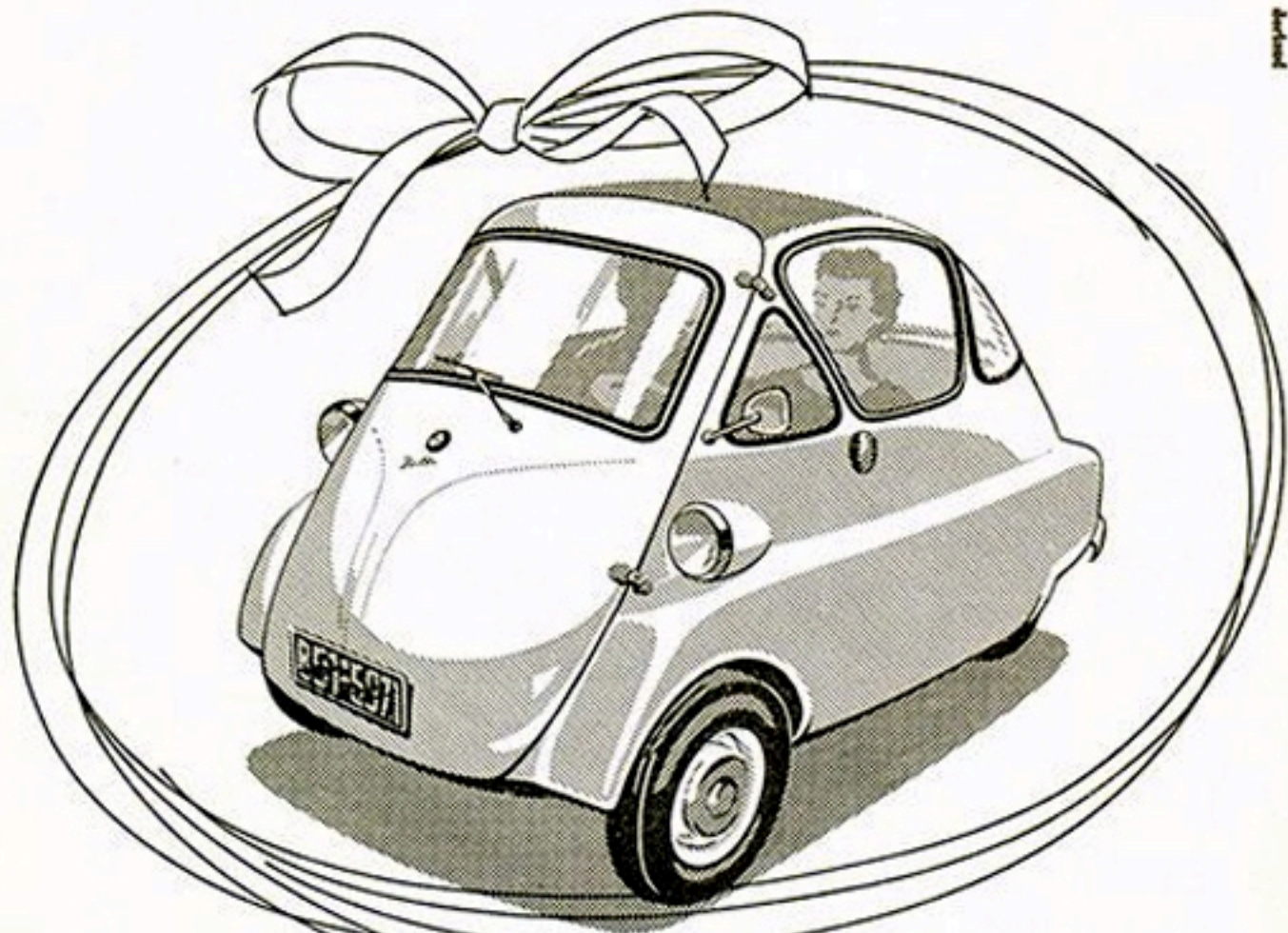






BMW Isetta Assembly Line





Zum Thema »Osterei« sagt jeder:

Mein's heißt *Isetta*

hat 4 Räder!

Denn das weiß heut' schon jedes Kind:

Was das Auto wenigen ermöglicht, gewährt die »Isetta« als preisgünstiges und wirtschaftliches »Ei des Columbus« im neuzeitlichen Fahrkomfort allen – beruflich und privat: die Annehmlichkeiten und Freuden eines geräumigen, allseitig geschlossenen Fahrzeuges auf 4 Rädern.

Freude haben – Kosten sparen – BMW Isetta fahren!

Motorcoupé



Isetta

Wetterfest

Allseitig geschlossen

Platz für dreiköpfige Familie mit Gepäck

Bequemer Ein- und Ausstieg durch Fronttür

Robust wie der zuverlässige BMW Motor

Höchstgeschwindigkeit 85 km/st

Steuerermäßigung für Arbeitsweg

Jahressteuer DM 44,—

Bequeme Teilzahlung

8 reasons why the



Isetta is in such demand



(Plus model)



(Basic model)

It is the world's cheapest car to buy and run.

It costs £60 less than the next cheapest.

It does 70 miles to the gallon at 50 m.p.h.

It has tubeless tyres lasting up to 40,000 miles.

It has a robust, smooth-running 4-stroke air-cooled engine.

It seats 2 adults and a child in comfort.

With its front-opening door, it is the easiest car in the world to park (nose to kerb).

It gives 4-wheel motor-car safety with motor-cycle economy.

(Prices include Purchase Tax)

Standard Saloon £383.19.6

* Plus Model (Front Bumper Horns, Rear Bumper with Overriders, Side Mirror, Pocket on Door, Grab Handle, and Hub Caps) £399.19.6

* Plus Model fitted with Smith's * Selectroshift * 2-pedal only transmission £424.19.0

At the Motor Show!

STAND 171—The most sensational family economy car since the war—the 4-5 SEAT ISETTA.

When you visit the Motor Show, be sure to see the world-beating 4-5 SEAT ISETTA—585 c.c. flat-twin engine—65 miles per gallon—62 m.p.h.—seats four adults and a child in normal comfortable seating—and all for £479.17s. inc. P.T.!

BMW ISETTA 300 CONVERTIBLE

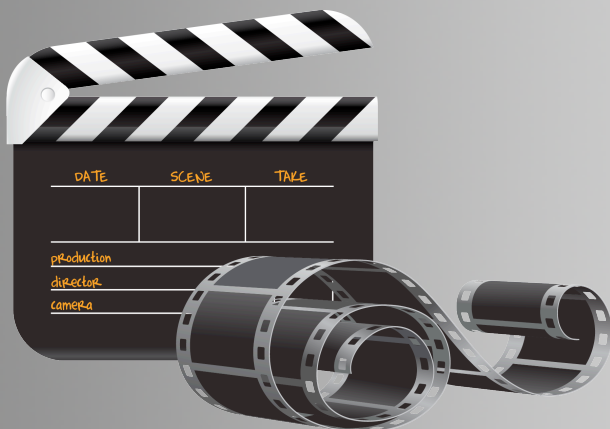


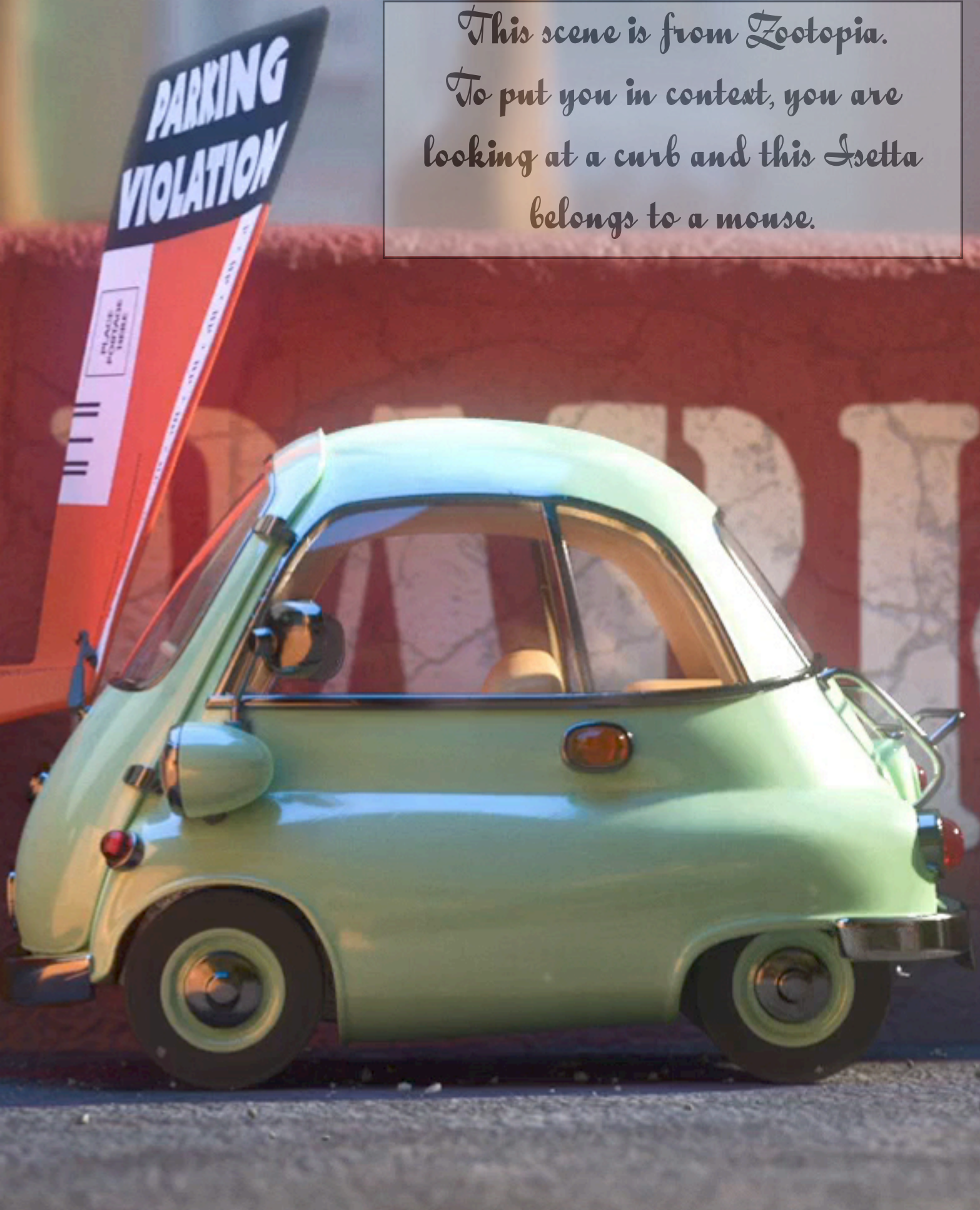




Isetta
has been seen
a lot in Hollywood!

A total of 171
appearances
in real & cartoon
movies.





*This scene is from Zootopia.
To put you in context, you are
looking at a curb and this Isetta
belongs to a mouse.*

BMW opens new doors to space economy



BMW's ingenious engineering principles now give you elegance and versatility in a big way! More room front and back than cars selling for hundreds more! Space and comfort for a family of five, protected by the special safety tubular steel frame. Greatest economy in parking and turning space, too. And BMW's air-cooled, German-made, 2-cylinder rear-engine gives you up to 68 miles an hour . . . up to 58 miles to the gallon . . . never needs anti-freeze . . . always gives trouble-free performance. Complete with heater and defroster as standard equipment, BMW is the biggest small car buy in America. Drive it today and see! U. S. Importer Fadex Commercial Corp., 487 Park Avenue, Dept. PB-6 New York 22. **FROM \$1398 P.O.E. N.Y., HIGHER WEST COAST.**

BMW "600" 2-DOOR



BMW MODELS FROM \$1048 TO \$11,900 P.O.E. N.Y.

Courtesy BZ's Isetta Site

Specifications

BMW Isetta	250 cc	300 cc	
Engine	BMW fan-cooled single cylinder four-stroke engine	48 mm (2.7 in.)	72 mm (2.8 in.)
Bore	48 mm (2.7 in.)	72 mm (2.8 in.)	
Stroke	48 mm (2.7 in.)	72 mm (2.8 in.)	
Capacity	245 cc	295 cc	
Compression	4.8:1	7.2:1	
Power	13 hp	13 hp	
Valves	overhead valves, push rod operated		
Lubrication	Circulating system with gear type pump		
Beater	12 Volt starter		
Elect. Equipment	12 Volt, 150 Watt Generator		
Engine Position	Right hand side, transverse behind the seat		
Clutch	Single plate dry clutch		
Transmission	BMW four forward speeds and reverse gearbox attached to the engine		
Rear Drive	Rearward mounted drive shaft and totally enclosed fully adjustable drive drive in oil bath		
Chassis Frame	Rigid tubular chassis frame		
Wheel Suspension	Independent front wheel suspension, swinging arms, coil springs and hydraulic shock absorbers. Rear wheel suspension, quarter elliptic leaf springs and telescopic hydraulic shock absorbers		
Wheels	Split rim disc wheels. Spare wheel with tire		
Tire Size	4.80-10		
Steering	Steering wheel, reduction steering gear, swaifeed turning circle approx. 24 feet		
Brakes	Four wheel hydraulic brakes. Brake diameter 7 in. Total brake lining area 49.9 sq. in.		
Dimensions			
Track, front	47.2 in.	Overall length	89.9 in.
Track, rear	35.4 in.	Overall width	34.3 in.
Wheelbase	58 in.	Overall height	53.7 in. (sunroof)
Weight			
Kerb weight	approx. 770 lbs.		
Carrying capacity	507 lbs.		
Performance			
Max. Speed	52.8 miles per hour		
Climbing ability	First gear 1 in 3		
Fuel consumption	200 c.c. engine: 40 miles/imp. gal. = 47 miles U.S. gal. 250 c.c. engine: 70 miles/imp. gal. = 83 miles U.S. gal.		

Modification to details and specification without reserve
Body design licensed by the U.S. Motor Italy

Printed in Germany MC Price 1.07

BAYERISCHE MOTOREN WERKE AG MUNICH



Isetta EXPORT MODEL 57

BMW Isetta Specifications

Engine	BMW fan-cooled single cylinder four-stroke engine		
Bore	72 mm		
Stroke	72 mm		
Capacity	295 cc		
Compression	7.2 to 1		
Power	13 hp		
Valves	overhead valves, push rod operated		
Lubrication	Circulating system with gear type pump		
Beater	12 Volt starter		
Elect. Equipment	12 Volt, 150 Watt Generator		
Engine Position	Right hand side, transverse behind the seat		
Clutch	Single plate dry clutch		
Transmission	BMW four forward speeds and reverse gearbox attached to the engine		
Rear Drive	Rearward mounted drive shaft and totally enclosed, fully adjustable drive drive in oil bath		
Chassis Frame	Rigid tubular chassis frame		
Wheel Suspension	Independent front wheel suspension, swinging arms, coil springs and hydraulic shock absorbers. Rear wheel suspension, quarter elliptic leaf springs and telescopic hydraulic shock absorbers		
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Tire Size	4.80-10		
Steering	Steering wheel, reduction steering gear, swaifeed turning circle approx. 24 feet		
Brakes	Four wheel hydraulic brakes. Brake diameter 7 in. Total brake lining area 49.9 sq. in.		
Dimensions			
Track, front	47.2 in.	Overall length	89.9 in.
Track, rear	35.4 in.	Overall width	34.3 in.
Wheelbase	58 in.	Overall height	53.7 in. (sunroof)
Weight			
Kerb weight	approx. 770 lbs.		
Carrying capacity	507 lbs.		
Max. Speed	52.8 miles per hour		
Climbing ability	First gear 1 in 3		
Fuel consumption	approx. 47 miles/U.S. Gal.		

Modification to details and specification without reserve
Body design licensed by the U.S. Motor Italy



BAYERISCHE MOTOREN WERKE AG MUNICH/GERMANY

INTRODUCING



Isetta USA model

It is a delight to own the BMW ISETTA.



a new conception in vehicle design



Large roof and ideally convertible four door

"If European car makers can produce an auto efficient enough and cheap enough for Europe's markets, a gigantic new market can be opened up." These were the lines quoted by a popular American Economic Review.

Meanwhile the appearance and outstanding performance of the BMW Isetta has favorably influenced the problem of generally maintaining Europe's population.



No parking problems, parking possible anywhere



Enjoys the convertible design with remote fold. The BMW Isetta can also be supplied with a convertible hood - in a few minutes the hood can be opened or closed



The well-known BMW four stroke engine

We are sure that it will also arouse a wide interest in America, especially an account of the traffic problems which demands new ideas in vehicle construction and which is in bad want of versatile, room saving and economical motor cars: the BMW Isetta is indeed apt to fulfil all these requirements.

After its big success in Europe the BMW Isetta is now being introduced in the U.S. and there are its special features of design:

- The spacious and aerodynamically favorable body has been developed from the somewhat modified shape of an egg. It offers sufficient space for two grown up persons and one child, as well as luggage.
- Large windows offer an all-round view, the practical chrome hood can be opened in a second.
- The ideally comfortable front door has replaced the traditional and expensive side door.
- Four wheels guarantee safe driving in every situation and due to the fact that the rear wheels do not have a differential, the BMW Isetta can cope even with the most difficult road surface.
- The responsive BMW four stroke engine and its easy steering make the BMW Isetta an ideal means of communication in the crowded traffic situations of our days.
- Every single technical detail is a proof of BMW precision and craftsmanship the finishing characteristics of which follow the lines distinguishing BMW cars.



Safety by rear wheel transmission without differential



The latest product of the well-known German company Bayerische Motoren Werke AG Munich, is short called BMW, who has occupied a great name during several decades by its activities in the field of aircraft engine, automobile and motorcycle construction, proved to be the ideal solution in modern design of motor cars. The BMW Isetta is an entirely new type of vehicle. Due to its special features in design, its low price and its economy, it is predestinated to be the all-purpose vehicle for everybody. Many thousands of Europeans have enthusiastically welcomed it.

We are sure you want to know some more details, therefore please contact our BMW Isetta sales agents in the U.S., who will take pleasure in offering you a test drive.

Isetta USA model



Courtesy BZ's Isetta Site



Dubbed “**Whatta Drag**” the Hot Wheels model was first designed and released in 1998 by Phil Riehlman, the model was hugely popular and was included in seven different Hot Wheels series.

Microcar collector Bruce Wiener had a spare BMW Isetta and in

2005 he decided to commission a real, fully functioning, 730hp Isetta – following the Hot Wheels model down to the smallest detail.

It’s fitted with a 502-cubic inch Chevrolet “big block” crate engine, a BDS supercharger, twin Holley 750 CFM double-pumper

carburetors and Zoomies exhaust headers rigged to blast flames 4 feet into the air.

In keeping with the car’s heritage all the suspension elements are from a BMW M3 as are the logos on the front wheels, the transmission is a drag-race specific

730HP BMW ISETTA “WHATTA DRAG”



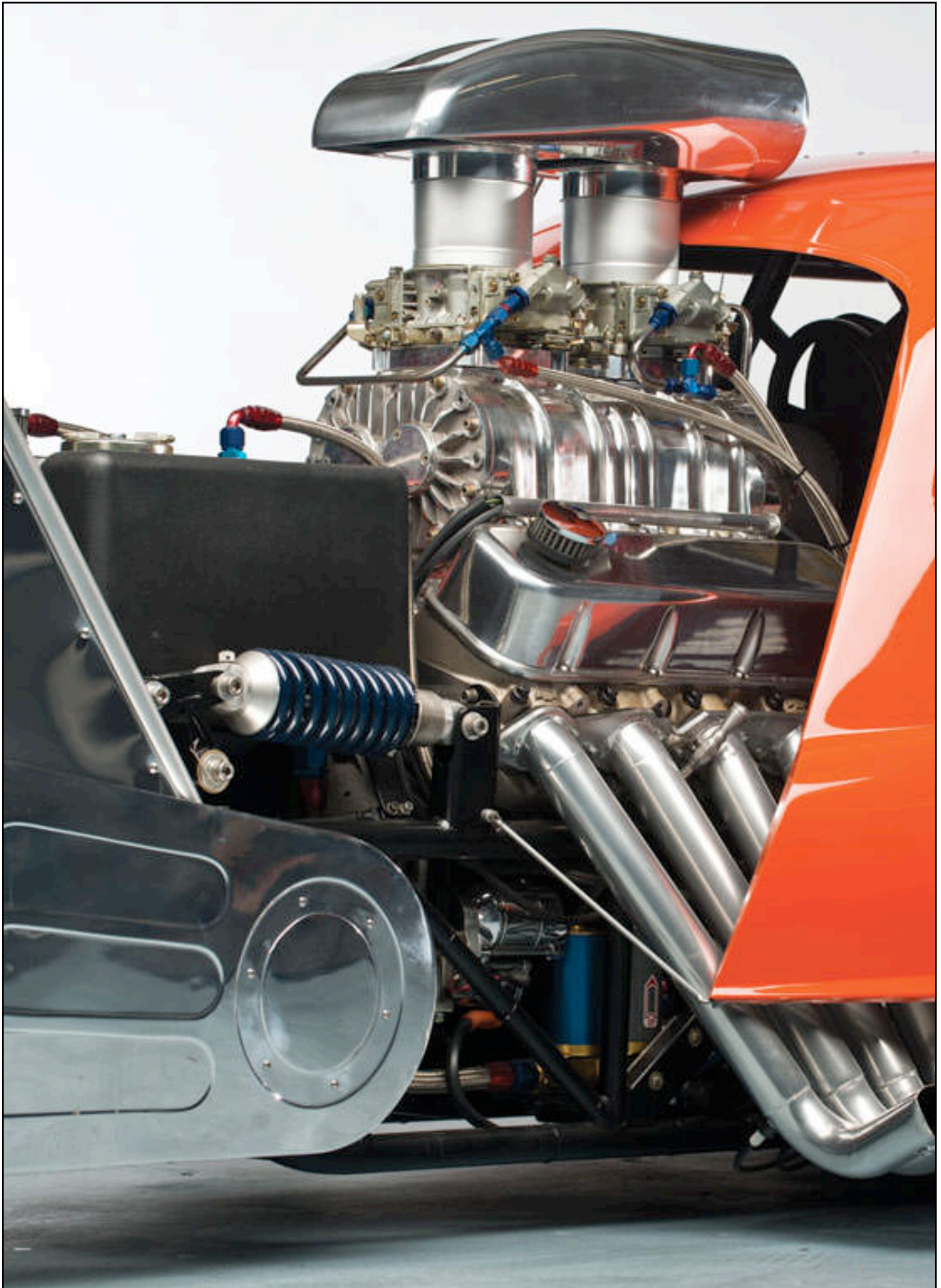
unit with 2 gears and the rear suspension and sub frame is bespoke as not surprisingly, no one in the world is producing tricycle drag racing frames.

On display at:



“Whatta Drag” was auctioned in 2013 at the Bruce Wiener Microcar Auction run by RM Auctions, the car was listed with no reserve and has an estimated price of \$75,000 – \$100,000 USD

Images courtesy of RM Auctions 2013





2 UTTERLY WILD BMW ISETTA ENGINE SWAPS

By Brandan Gillogly | Source: Hagerty.com



Although it has Italian roots, the funky Isetta is inexorably linked to BMW. The German company produced the vast majority of the diminutive bubble cars with single cylinder 250- and 300-cc engines that produced a whopping 12 and 13 horsepower, respectively. They are certainly not the “Ultimate Driving Machine” sport sedans on which BMW later built its reputation, yet the Isetta developed a loyal following because it so well fulfilled its role as an economical city car.

For collectors, the Isetta offers an iconic, quirky classic that, while not cheap, does offer a different sort of value. After all, how many other cars can fit three to a parking spot without a lift?



If you're a fan of the strange Italian/Bavarian microcar but need a bit more gusto than 13 horses can provide, here are two examples of Isettas that toss originality aside. Engine swaps here mean far more power, not that the bar was terribly high.

How about an engine swap that keeps things Teutonic with four times the cylinders and four times the power? This 1957 BMW Isetta 300 recently sold on Bring a Trailer for \$14,500 and packs an air-cooled VW 1600-cc



four-cylinder. The rear suspension and drivetrain are all VW and, with the factory 10-inch wheels up front, the stance is almost like a mini gasser.

Just like a drag racer, the engine is on full display because it's just too big to fit under the factory bodywork. This car appears to be fully functional and the listing has a video that you may want to check out, as this froggy little grocery-getter is always one clutch dump away from a wheelie.

eBay user Stonehenge223
Keeping things air-cooled, the Corvair-powered Isetta above ups the grunt even more. Unlike



the previous, VW-powered pod, this "Corsetta" features custom bodywork to cover the engine, but the stance is quite similar. Again, the Isetta's rear wheels and suspension were tossed in favor of the donor car's running gear. If the rear camber is any indication, this swap is likely from a first-gen Corvair.

The car was built in the 1970s by a high school shop class and featured in the March 1977 issue of Hot Rod magazine. Its sculpted fenders and rear deck are surprisingly well integrated with the rest of the micro muscle car's lines. It's no surprise that with an even larger, more powerful engine out back and a still-short wheelbase, this thing is practically made to do wheelies.









ISETTA GONE WILD *by Cipriani*





ISETTA GONE WILD *by Cipriani*





FLYING ISETTA OVER CURBOROUGH, ENGLAND

The Flying Isetta is powered by twin 9.5 hp Rotax engines of 185cc each with 24" long propellers. Although 9.5 hp each may sound measly, its all the Flying Isetta needs to achieve excellent flight performance.

We have plans to use turbocharged engines for increased performance. For road use, the original single cylinder 298cc engine is retained.

With both Rotax engines purring away the performance of the aircraft is quite good. It can easily cruise at 95 nmh burning a combined two gallons per hour.

The aeroplane takes off in 150 feet or less and lands in about the same.

It has a very slow sink rate (333 feet per minute) and the Flying Isetta can be soared like a sailplane if you have strong enough lift conditions.

The prototype has now received certification.

To me, it looks like a hoax. Where is the rudder... Ed.



Chinese Firm Revives Isetta As EV This isn't your classic BMW Isetta.

By: Anthony Alaniz

Chinese automakers are still mining the designs of other automakers when it comes to producing new vehicles. It's a practice that is surprisingly common, with Chinese firms not only mimicking the likeness of other mainstream brands but sometimes even mimicking nameplates.

Another Chinese automaker taking the design of a more-popular car isn't news. However, this latest compact car from the Chinese automaker Eagle is quite "unique." And by unique, I mean heavily resembles a certain classic BMW runabout – the Isetta and 600.

CarNewsChina.com is quick to point out the Eagle EG6330K, which is a far less iconic name than the Isetta, more closely resembles the styling of the BMW 600. Both

the Isetta and 600 are similar. Eagle didn't follow the Isetta's single nose-based door. Instead, the automaker added four conventional doors and another wheel at the rear. Apparently, China has a market for low-speed electric vehicles, which is ripe with compact copycats.

Also different is the powertrain. The Eagle sports a 5.3-horsepower electric motor and a 7.2-kilowatt-hour lead-acid battery. Top speed is a claimed 60 kilometers per hour (37 miles per hour) with a range of 120 km (75 miles). The car seats four and weighs just 750 kilograms (1,653 pounds). CarNewsChina.com estimates price should start at around \$4,000.

While the exterior is clearly inspired by BMW's classic design,

the inside of the EG6330K is quite modern. There's a plethora of black plastic, big vents on the dash, HVAC controls, an MP3 player, and overall simple controls.

This isn't the first time Eagle has copied a German automaker. In 2015, the company unveiled a Porsche Cayman knockoff. Thankfully that car never entered production.

The copying of mainstream brands by Chinese automakers likely won't slow anytime soon. The designs may not make production or hit a broad audience outside of China, but that won't stop automakers in the country from trying to copy from sells well.

Source: CarNewsChina.com via CarScoops.com



The Bruce Weiner
**MICROCAR
 MUSEUM**

EST. 1997

The microcar, a vehicle born out of need, was a child of its time and became the symbol of a people's spirit.

World War II came to an end in 1945 and Europe lay in ruins. A shell-shocked population came out of the bomb shelters and faced an unimaginable scene of devastation and ruin.

As if the seemingly endless task of clearing away the rubble wasn't enough, there were crippling shortages of food, raw materials, electricity and gas. Value and worth were measured in Chesterfield cigarettes.

The population collectively rolled up its sleeves and went to work. The astonishing rebuilding of an entire continent over a period of ten years was accomplished through a unity of spirit and purpose unimaginable today. Bright, talented engineers, many out of the former aircraft industry, put their minds to the problems of mobilizing the population under adverse conditions.

It's said that the true master reveals himself within limitations and so this focusing of energy and talent resulted in an enormous variety of small vehicles; some successful, others less so - but all of them interesting!

The microcar or "bubble car" came to symbolize this period of renewed energy and pulling together.

The bubble car boom lasted only a decade, but the period left a lasting impression even on those who abandoned their Kabinenroller for a "real" car.

The cars continue to be found in barns and collections throughout the world but are particularly meaningful to the Europeans, whose lifestyle was, in part, made possible by these tiny cars.

The Bruce Weiner Microcar Museum seeks to pay tribute to the people who built and loved these wonderful vehicles, some of which achieved lasting fame, others sinking into obscurity.

It hopes to bring this brief, colorful flowering of talent and ingenuity to the attention of a new generation of automobile enthusiasts.

What is a "MICROCAR"?

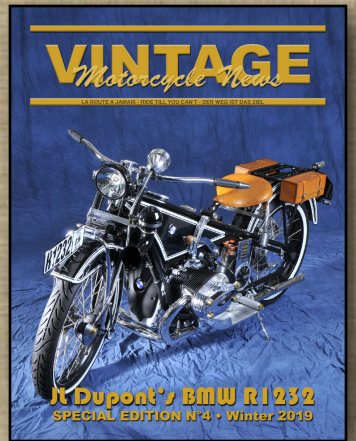
The Museum Collection is primarily focused on Microcars in the late 1940's- pre-1964 range with Engine sizes of 700cc or less (many are 250cc and 50cc) and 2 doors or less.



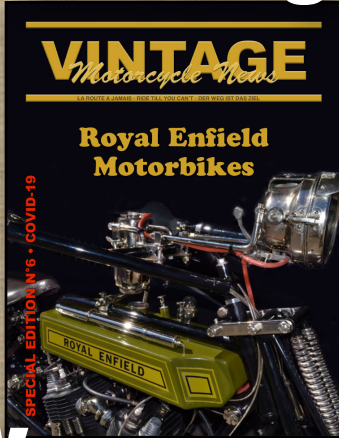
**THE BRUCE WEINER
 MICROCAR MUSEUM INC**

**2950 Eatonton Road
 Madison, GA 30650**

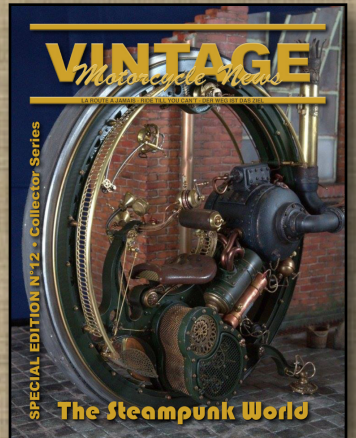
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 bweiner@gmail.com**



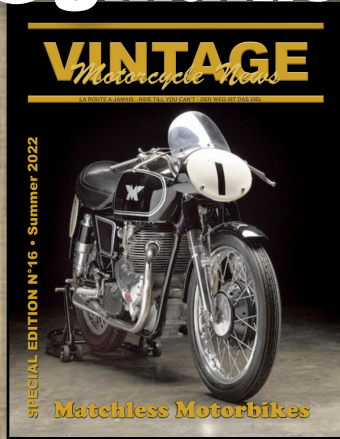
Missing an issue?



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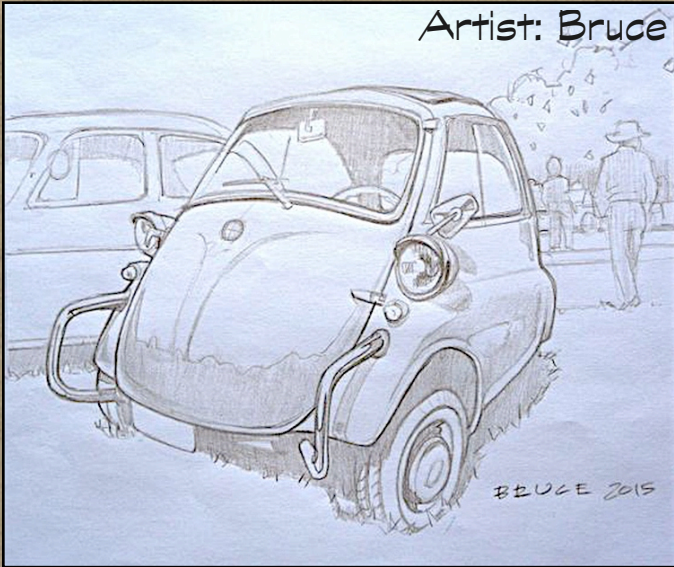


Forgotten Isettas



ARTWORK

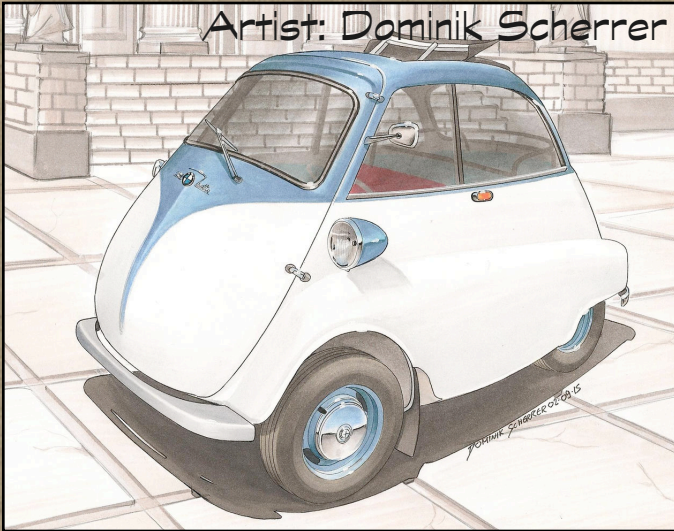
Artist: Bruce



Artist: Kokillo



Artist: Dominik Scherrer

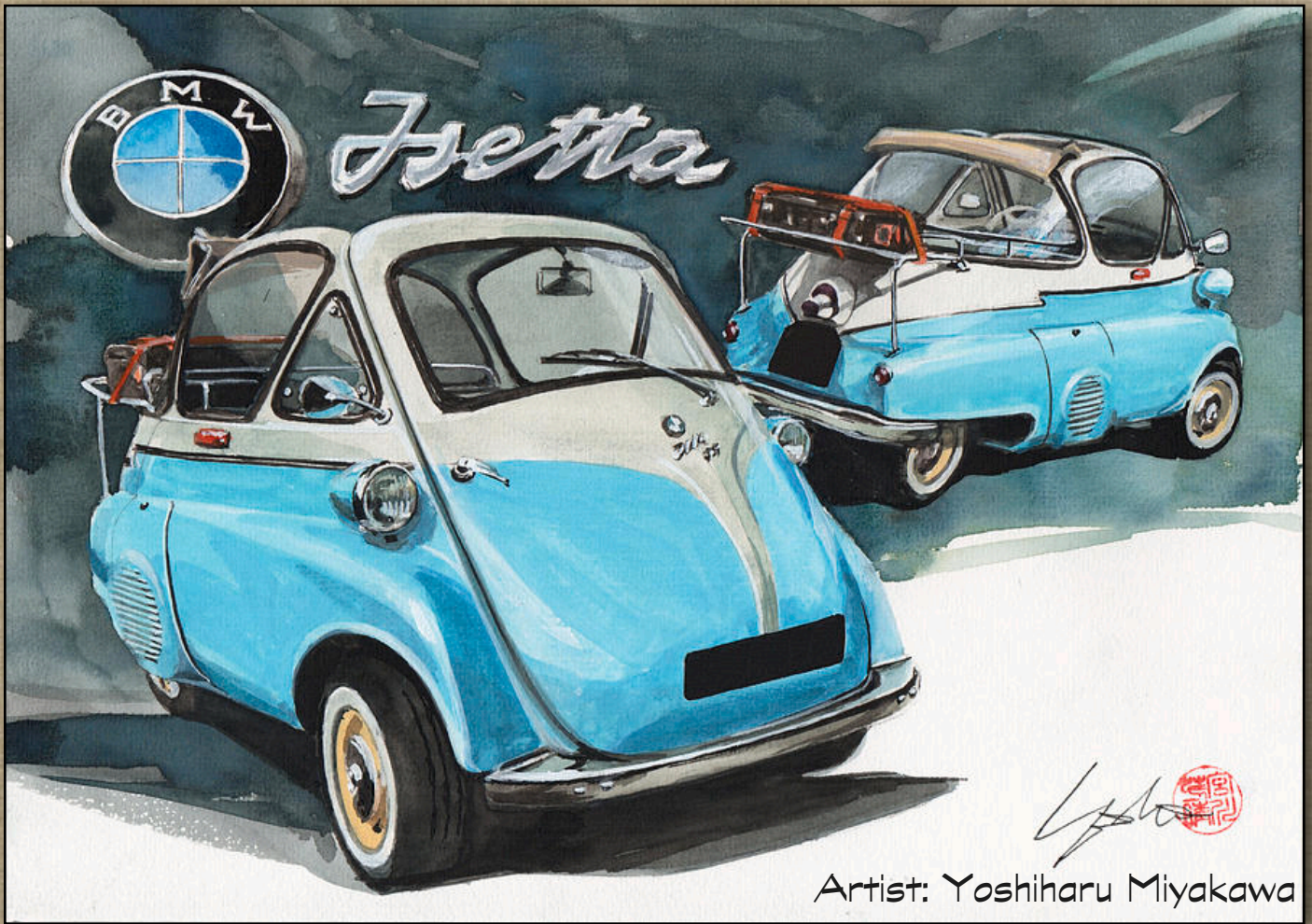


Artist: Sven Sellik



Artist: unknown





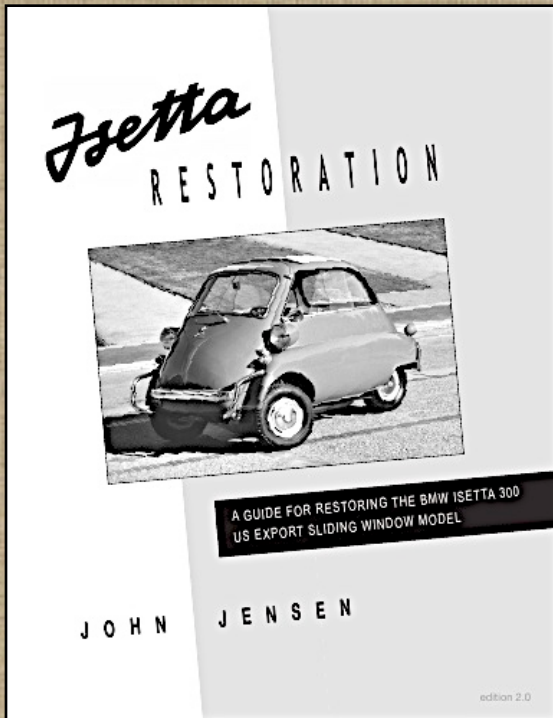
Artist: Yoshiharu Miyakawa



Artist: unknown

BOOKS

Isetta Restoration



Isetta Restoration by John Jensen ©1991 is a guide for restoring the BMW Isetta 300, US export, sliding-window model.

With 200 pages of text and over 50 line drawings, Isetta Restoration is a comprehensive guide to accompany you through the restoration of your Isetta.

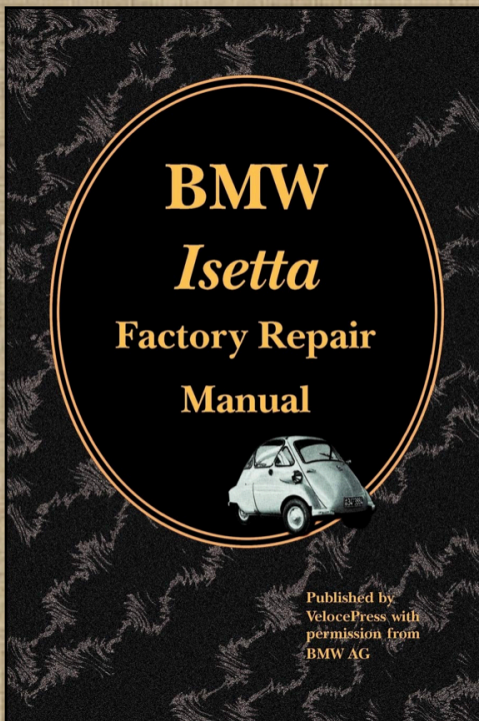
Whether you simply want to make it driveable again or restore it to “like new” condition, this book will help you accomplish the task.....”no more excuses”.

From: www.lulu.com

Price: \$87.00

Paperback

BMW Isetta Factory Repair Manual



The BMW Isetta holds a special place in the hearts of micro car enthusiasts around the world.

VelocePress has published this English-language version of the original 1957 four-language BMW Isetta Factory Manual to help you keep your Isetta on the road and in good repair.

From Amazon.com

Price: US\$38.00

Paperback

BOOKS

BMW Isetta und BMW 600/700

The BMW Isetta was one of the most original car to trundle along the streets of the young Federal Republic. The cute ball on wheels presented in 1955 became a symbol of the years of the economic boom.

In 1957, the Munich car manufacturer extended the knobby single-door model with two and a half seats to the four-seater BMW 600. However, front entry was no longer up-to-date.

As early as 1959, the much more comfortable BMW 700 rolled off the assembly line. With around 140 lovingly selected illustrations, this book describes the story of the three legendary cult companions. A must for all automotive nostalgics.

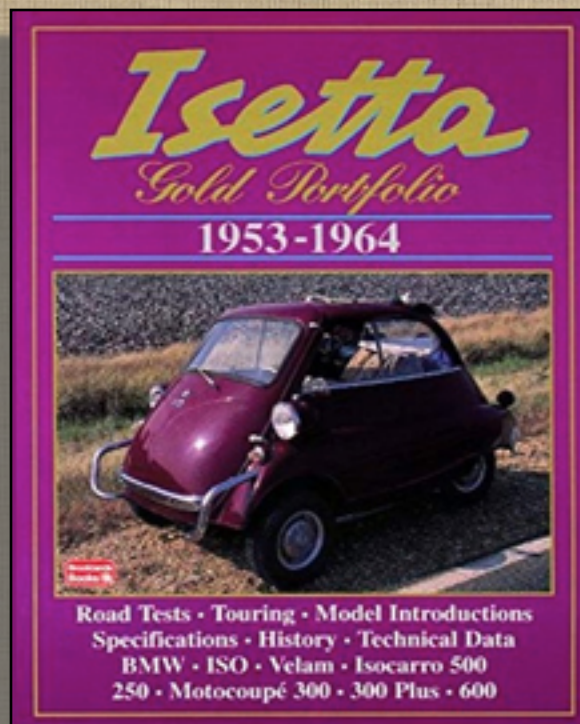
From Amazon.de
Language: German
Price: €17.00
Paperback



Isetta Gold Portfolio 1953-1964

The Isetta first appeared in Italy in 1953. Manufacturing licenses were sold to BMW in Germany and Velam in France. The first BMW appeared in April 1955 and the French car was imported into Britain in 1957. Isetta of Great Britain had a license from BMW and made their own car slightly differently. BMW broadened the range with the 600 model, a four-wheeler launched in December 1957, but it was not a success and was withdrawn two years later, the 700 taking its place. Once the Mini was introduced in 1959 BMW stopped Isetta production in 1962 in Germany and in Britain it stopped in 1964. This is a book of contemporary road tests, technical and specification data, new model introductions, driver's impressions, history and buyer's guides. Models covered include: ISO Isetta, Surburbanite, Motocoupe, Kleinwagen, 300, Velam, convertible, 600.

From Amazon.ca
Price: \$32.00
Paperback







MINIATURE COLLECTORS LOOK OUT!

The BMW Isetta was also available in miniature format.

This collector's toy was available from your local BMW dealer years ago...

The BMW Isetta

The 1:18-scale miniature loses none of the charm that makes the BMW Isetta – both then and now – so incomparable. The model was manufactured based on the original plans using the die-cast zinc method, thus recreating perfectly the finish and attention to detail of the originals: The characteristic Isetta front door, the large, panoramic windscreens, the chrome-plated luggage rack and the rain strip, together with the all-round bumper are all there in the miniature version. The steering and wheels can be turned.

The anniversary model was available in a limited edition of just 1,955. The miniature had a very special exterior design: the Munich skyline is printed over a royal-blue background. The roof and the upper halves of the doors are painted in white. The base plinth is designed with an attractive wood grain. One interesting detail is that the original model of this miniature Isetta was unveiled at Techno Classica and is a unique piece!

The unknown side of the Isetta's story



The Isetta was incubated in the post-war economy of Europe. After

the war, many people did not have the money to afford large automobiles and instead moved about on scooters and motorcycles. Renzo Rivolta, who made Iso S.p.A. refrigerators in Milan, Italy, entered the market at this time with a line of scooters, motorcycles, and three wheeled trucks. After some success with these vehicles, he decided to move into the automobile business.

Iso got its start in 1939 making refrigerators. In the post-war years, company founder Renzo Rivolta (1908-1966) recognized there were many people who could not afford an automobile, so he developed a line of scooters, motorcycles and small three-wheeled trucks that were sold under the Iso name.

In 1952, Count Rivolta asked Ermenegildo Preti, an engineer in Iso Rivolta's technical department,

to begin developing a new car. Working with Pierluigi Raggi, Preti developed a small car powered by a 236cc two-cylinder, two-stroke motorcycle engine.

Designed and developed during 1952-1953, Iso presented the first Isetta (literally, little Iso) at the 1953 Turin Motor Show. Looking like the result of a high speed collision between a refrigerator, a scooter, and an airplane at a Lawrence Welk show, the Iso Isetta was only 4.5 ft wide and 7.5 ft long. The car had a single door at the front, rear wheels that were only 19 in. apart, and gas mileage of over 50 miles per gallon. The two-cylinder, two-stroke engine allowed a top speed of 45 mph and could propel the Isetta to 30 mph in 36 seconds. Iso began production in Italy and in Belgium for domestic sales and limited export.

Iso entered four or five Isettas into the storied Mille Miglia (1,000 mile) race of 1954. The Isetta finished 1, 2 and 3 on the index of performance. BMW scouts

witnessed the impressive showing of the little car. At the time, BMW was producing the 502 and the 507: cars that few Germans could afford to buy in the post-war economy. Therefore, the company was on the lookout for an inexpensive economy car, and the Isetta fit the bill. Iso licensed the car to BMW in 1955.

Iso also licensed the car to Isetta Automobiles of Brazil and the cars manufactured there for five years beginning in 1956 were christened Romi-Isetta. These Brazilian Isettats kept the Iso design and used Iso engines until 1958, when they switched to the BMW 300 cc engines. In addition, Iso licensed the car to VELAM in France. The car was also built by Iso in Spain and Belgium.

BMW made the Isetta its own. They redesigned the powerplant around a more reliable BMW one-cylinder, four-stroke, 247 cc motorcycle engine with 13 hp. Although the major elements of the Italian design remained intact, BMW re-engineered much of the car, so much so that none of the parts between a BMW Isetta Moto Coupe and an Iso Isetta interchange. The first BMW Isetta appeared in April, 1955. BMW introduced the restyled Isetta Moto Coupe DeLuxe (sliding-window Isetta) in October 1956 with the larger 298 cc motor for export. Legend has it that BMW would not be here today if not for the success of the little Isetta.

Under license from BMW, Isetta of Great Britain also began producing cars (the sliding-window variety) at Brighton in 1957 with selected

The original Iso Isetta of 1954. Most of the engine was under the seat. Notice the faired-in headlights, a feature that disappeared on the BMW versions. Photo courtesy of The Isomillennium Group.



domestic parts. The Isetta was initially not popular in Great Britain until a three-wheeled version was introduced. The three-wheeled version was taxed at a much lower rate than the four-wheeled version. Isetta of Great Britain continued to produce four-wheeled Isettass, but only for export to Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. BMW began exporting Isettass to the U.S. (to a lukewarm response) in 1957. Overall, the Isetta was successful enough to encourage BMW to produce the 600, which shared the Isetta's front door and a two-cylinder flat twin motorcycle engine (600 cc) and the more car-like 700 (also powered by a motorcycle engine).

Due to competition from faster and more car-like mini-cars (specifically the BMC Mini), BMW stopped production of the Isetta in 1962. Isetta of Great Britain also stopped production of the little cars but continued to produce Isetta engines until 1964. Romi-Isetta in Brazil continued to manufacture the original Italian Isetta until 1959 and produced spare parts until 1961..

Thanks to BMW, the Isetta was the most successful of the bubble cars. BMW built 136,367 Isettass. Isetta of Britain produced about 30,000 cars. Romi-Isetta manufactured about 3,000 of which an estimated 200 remain. Velam produced about 5,000 cars. Iso itself only made about 1,000 Isettass. Of the cars made by BMW, about 8,500 were exported to the U.S. of which it is estimated 1,000 still survive.

In 1980, there was a brief attempt to bring the Isetta back into production as the 'Diaseta.' The Diaseta was the Isetta with several minor modifications

Note: Research on this car has been problematic. Different articles offer different dates and oftentimes contradicting information. For example, one states that Isettass were not produced in Belgium.

Another says they were. One says Romi-Isettass were produced until 1961, another states Romi produced them for a few years after BMW stopped production.



Romi-Isetta is still alive and well

This Brazilian manufacturer has been around since 1956 and is bringing back the Isetta in a modern electric version of the so love bubble car.

Romi-Isetta is 67 years old.

Romi-Isetta was the precursor of national Brazilian automobile production and made 3,000 Isettass during its 5 year production.

On September 5, 1956, the Romi-Isetta company was launched in Brazil. Exactly 67 years ago, the country received a compact-sized urban vehicle, which was born in Europe in the early 1950s. For Brazil, it was the first car to be produced in series.

The company *Indústrias Romi* was famous for the production of tractors, in Santa Bárbara D'Oeste (SP). Thus, the model was made in the country until 1961. In total, around 3,000 units hit the Brazilian streets over the five years of production.

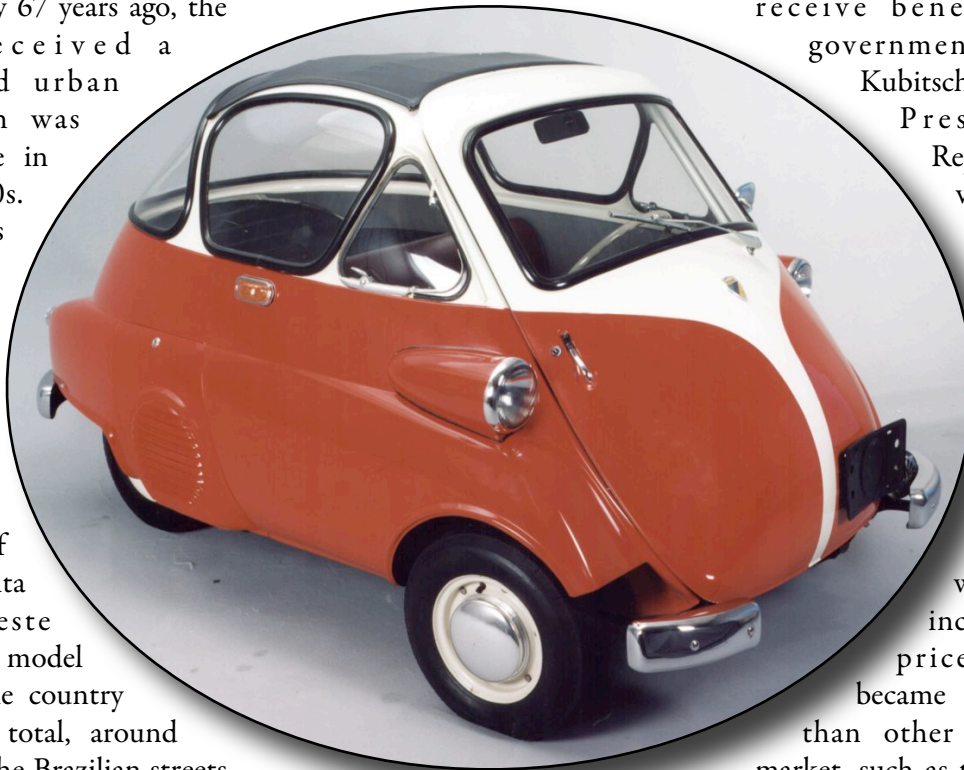
History

It was in 1955 that Carlos Chiti and his partner, Américo Emílio Romi, arrived in Turin (Italy) to negotiate the national production of Iso Isetta with their creator. After a long negotiation, the license was finally released to manufacture the stroller in Brazil.

The manufacturing plant was ready to go to work but due to delays created by Iso the supplier, the negotiations dragged on for

another year to finally resolve in 1956.

1956, everything was ready to manufacture the Romi-Isetta, whose bodies came from Tecnogeral, a company from São Paulo.



At the time, the nationalization rate reached 72%. Its launch, on September 5, 1956, stopped the capital of São Paulo, with a caravan and even a parade at the Pacaembu Stadium.

However, after a successful start, the Romi-Isetta car was caught in the middle of a controversy. Was it or was it not automobile or?

According to Claudio Romi, grandson of Américo Emílio Romi and director of the Brazilian

Federation of Old Vehicles (FBVA), yes.

An early end

"At first, Brazil had no regulations. However, the Executive Group of the Automobile Industry (GEIA) created new rules. Thus, in order to receive benefits from the government of Juscelino Kubitschek (sworn in as President of the Republic in 1956), vehicles needed to have two doors and two rows of benches. And we didn't have them", he explains.

It was in this way that the Romi-Isetta, when losing its incentives, had its price doubled and became less advantageous than other models on the market, such as the DKW-Vemag, which was the second series production car in the country. But the Romi-Isetta could not resist ostracism and was discontinued in 1961.

According to Romi, there were plans to return to production during the Itamar Franco government (1992 to 1995).

But it was just dream. The economy, the politics, the many studies and the will made it impossible to return to the market.

Microlino is the electric version of the Romi-Isetta

The subcompact vehicle will compete in Europe with Renault Twizy and Smart EQ. Inspired by the Romi-Isetta, Microlino maintains design but adopts electric motorization

In 2016, the Swiss Micro Mobility Systems, also known as Micro, presented a compact electric car inspired by the BMW Isetta. The model was also made in Brazil and sold under the name Romi-Isetta.

After several delays, the start-up finally launched the production version of the two-seater, dubbed the Microlino. The debut would be at the 2020 Geneva Motor Show (Switzerland). The fair, however, was cancelled.

Almost a year later, the Microlino 2.0 finally entered the market. And it was competing with the Renault Twizy and the Citroën Amik, for example.

Micro wanted to homologate the new vehicle by August 2021 and start in September a production series at the Ccomp plant in Turin, Italy.

Like the Isetta, the Microlino 2.0 has room for just two people. In addition, there is a 300 liter luggage compartment. That is, 10 liters more than the trunk of a Fiat Uno.

While the weight of the car is 513kg, mainly because of the batteries. On a full charge, you get 200km of autonomy. The microcar can go up to 90km/h.

Among the novelties the new car receive a wider rear to increase stability. The chassis is made with a press-steel monobloc frame and aluminum parts giving the car a safer ride without significantly increasing the weight.

Minimalist design and equipment list: The car gets a retro/modern design equipped

with an LED light bar below the windshield wiper and two daytime running lights on the front bumper.

On the front of the outside mirrors will be the rounded headlights and LEDs. And of course, as in the Isetta, the Microlino has a single front door.

Although the model comes with a digital display, it will not be setup for any type of entertainment system. Various information about the car will be displayed such as battery level, odometer, etc.

Returning to Microlino, several problems caused a delay in the release of the definitive version. Among them, Tazzari, which would initially produce the cart, was bought by Artega.

This, in turn, decided to launch a

competing model, called Karolino.

However, Micro made an agreement with Artega to produce Karolino.

However, Ccomp would already have the approval to manufacture the Microlino. In other words, the Micro model will be made in Italy.





Cary Grant



Curd Jürgens

Famous People



Sterling Moss



Elvis Presley

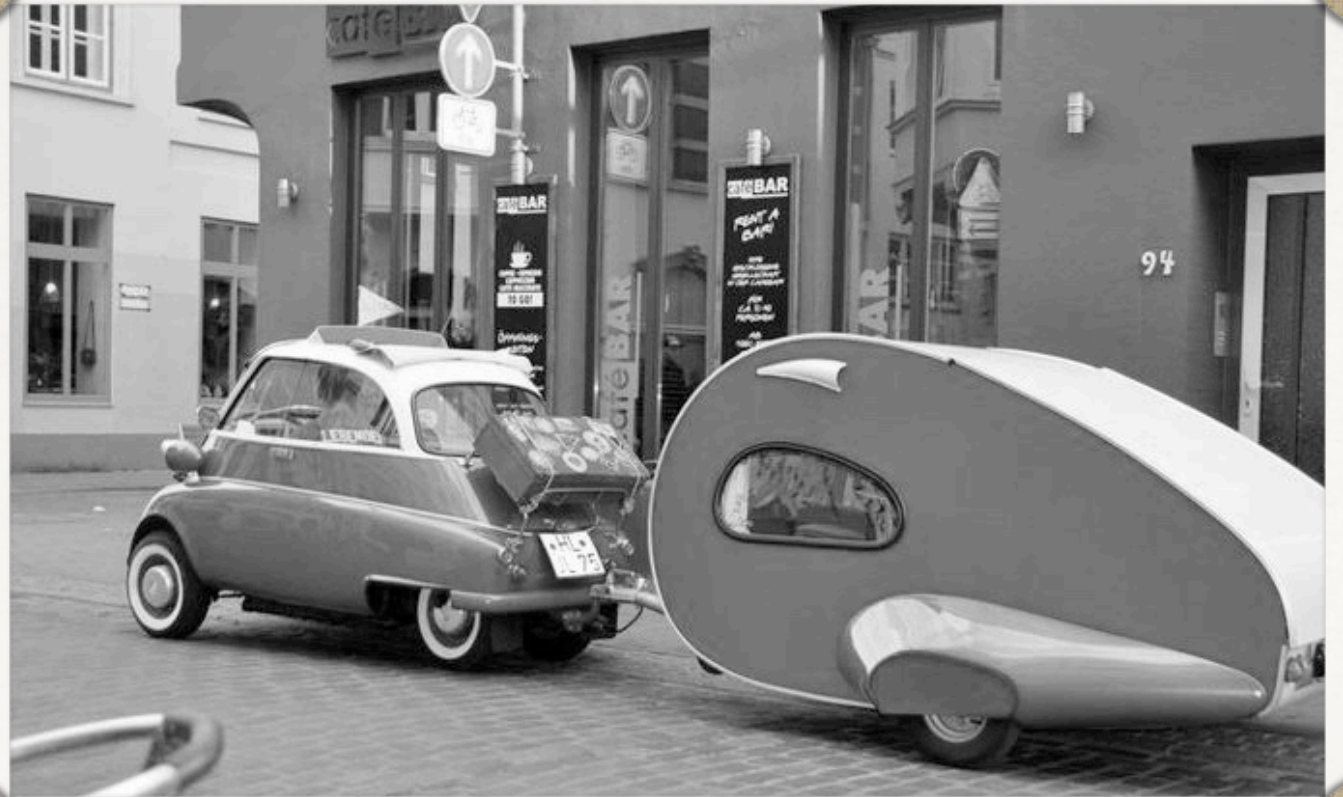


Memory Lane



Memory Lane





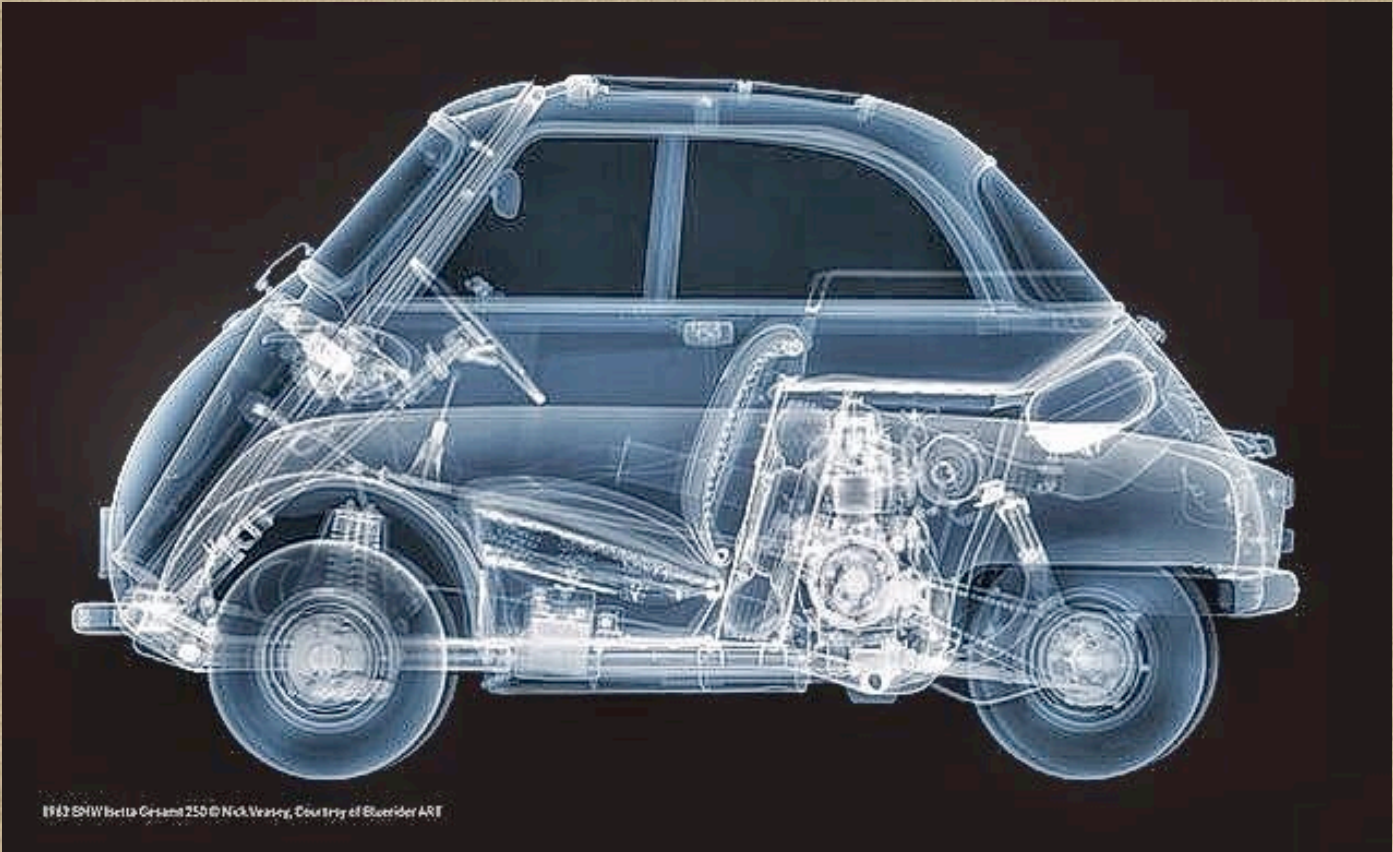
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Fire Department

Miss Tacoma Home Show of 1958
Marilyn Ganes






1963 Fiat 500 Cutaway © Nick Vesley, Courtesy of ElucidAR ART







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ISETTA HOARD IN CANADA

By Joshua Mortensen

Source: <https://barnfinds.com/>

During college I spent many hours exploring the small town of Laramie, Wyoming. I was actually on the hunt for a good storage unit, but that's a whole other story.

As I was pulling into a storage facility on the south end of town, I spotted the most unusual of cars to be hiding in Wyoming. As I started to look closer, I discovered there wasn't just one odd ball, but an entire field full of them! There before me was the single largest collection of BMW Isettas I had ever seen – I counted 15 in total.

I didn't have my camera with me, but I figured I would be back a few months later and I could get photos then. That was a bad choice,

because when I returned all but two of the Isettas were gone. I just assumed I would never see such a sight ever again, but that was until I

had a look at Dimitris K's latest submission. This collection of BMW Isettas might not be as large as the one I witnessed in Wyoming,



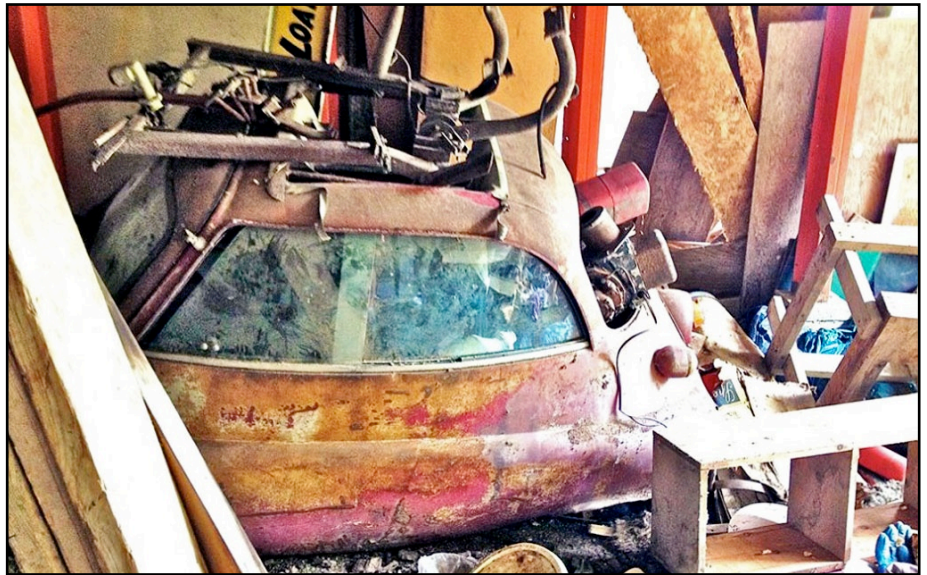
but there are certainly plenty of these tiny oddballs in there. The collection is located in Canada and is listed for sale here on TooToo.

I still remember the first time I saw an Isetta, it was driven by the tv character Steve Urkel on Family Matters. I was fascinated by that odd little car, mostly because of the usual swing open front end.

Until I spotted the collection in Laramie, I had never actually seen an Isetta in person and they turned out to be even odder than I could have imagined. The overall shape and size is something you just have to see in person to fully appreciate.

It appears that these cars are all in need of restoration, but given the amount of parts, I'm sure a few complete cars could be built from this stash.

Most of the cars are the small and popular 300 model, but the seller also has the larger 600.



I can't imagine there are many of the four seater 600s left. This one is going to need a complete restoration, but would make for an interesting project.

Part of me has always wondered what happened to all those Isettas I found, but I hope they all went to good homes and didn't just ended up in a collection like this one.

I actually wouldn't be surprised if a few ended up in this collection. I'm not sure what will end up happening to all of these cars either, but hopefully someone will at least put some of the parts to good use!

So who here would like to have this hoard of Isettas in their backyard?





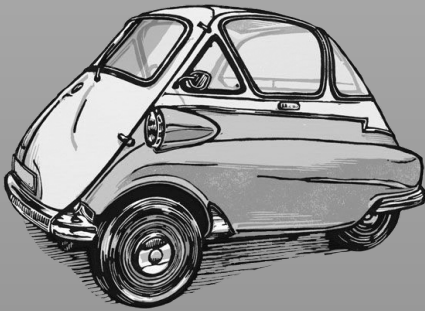
ISETTA OWNERS CLUB OF GREAT BRITAIN

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ISETTA CLUB E.V. GERMANY

Contact Info:
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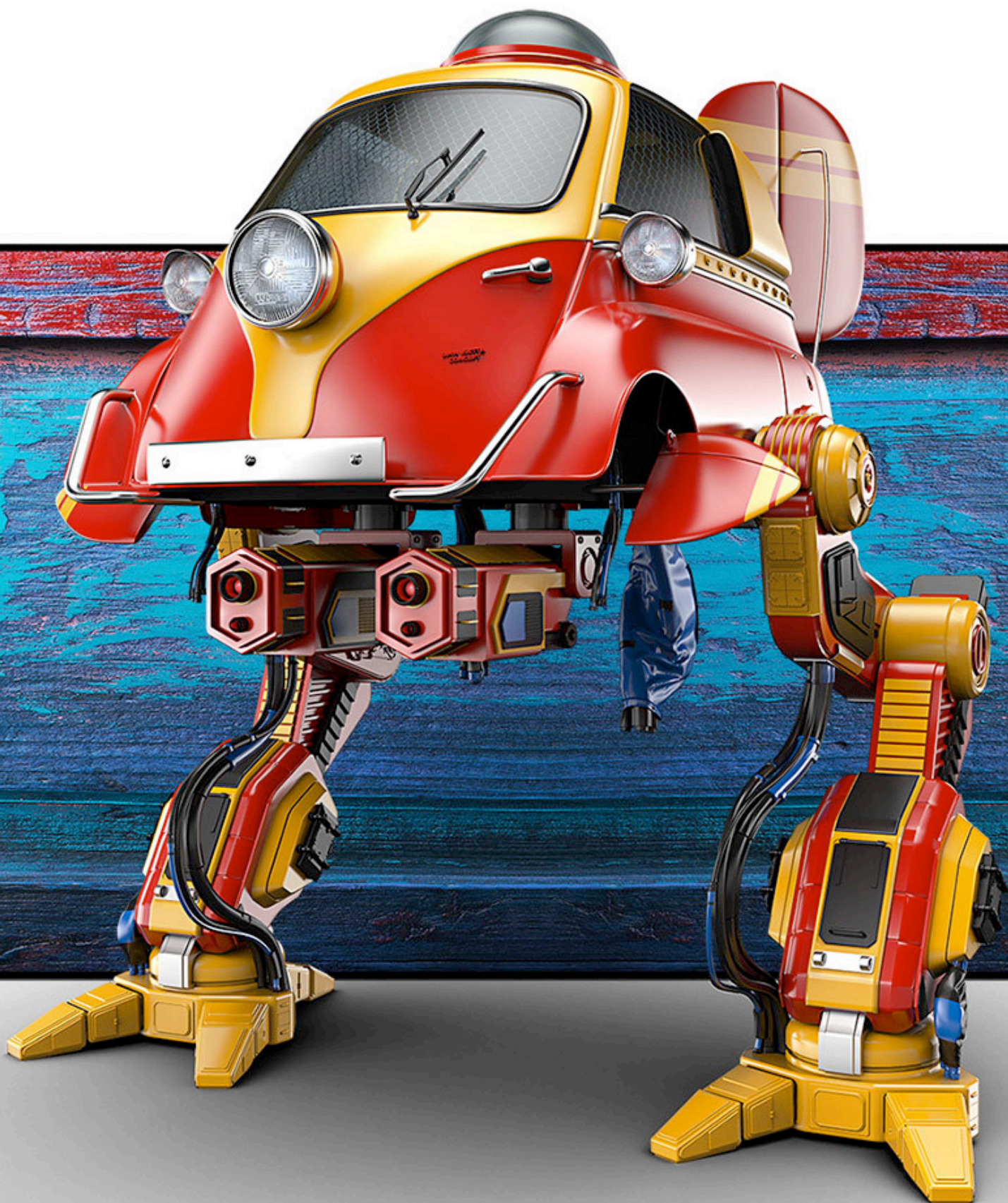
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<http://blog.scottiesharpe.com>

THE NEW TRANSFORMER



A BUYER'S GUIDE TO THE PERFECT BMW ISETTA



Source: BMW Group Classic

Are you looking for a BMW Isetta for sale? It's not surprising that you've fallen in love with the famous bubble car. The Isetta is a BMW icon and a coveted collector's item, after all. If you are considering buying one, our expert from BMW Group Classic can tell you what to look out for when you're shopping for your Isetta.



Even legends have minor flaws. Nobody knows that better than Axel Klinger-Köhnlein. He is a chartered engineer and Isetta expert at BMW Group Classic, the department for classic cars based in Munich. Read on for his most important tips for everyone who wants to buy an Isetta – or who are simply fans of this classic gem.

Read before you buy: The way to your own perfect BMW Isetta

1

Do it yourself

The Isetta is the ideal classic car for restoration hobbyists. The technology is not too complicated and easily accessible and the Moto Coupé doesn't need much room. It can be taken apart in a single garage with no problem, with room to spare for restoring the chassis and the body.

2

Original parts are important

You can get spare Isetta parts directly from the factory or from the BMW Group Classic [Online Shop](#), from [Certified BMW Classic Partners](#) and from model specialists like the [Isetta Club](#).

You can purchase less commonly needed parts, like interior fittings and rubber gaskets, from [Isettas R Us](#), a partner of BMW Group Classic based in the US.

Unfortunately, bolts from the local hardware store are often used for restoration instead of original ones.

Or the chassis number doesn't match the installed engine.

That's why you should always ask an expert for advice when you're looking at a car.

The signature rear end of a BMW Isetta.



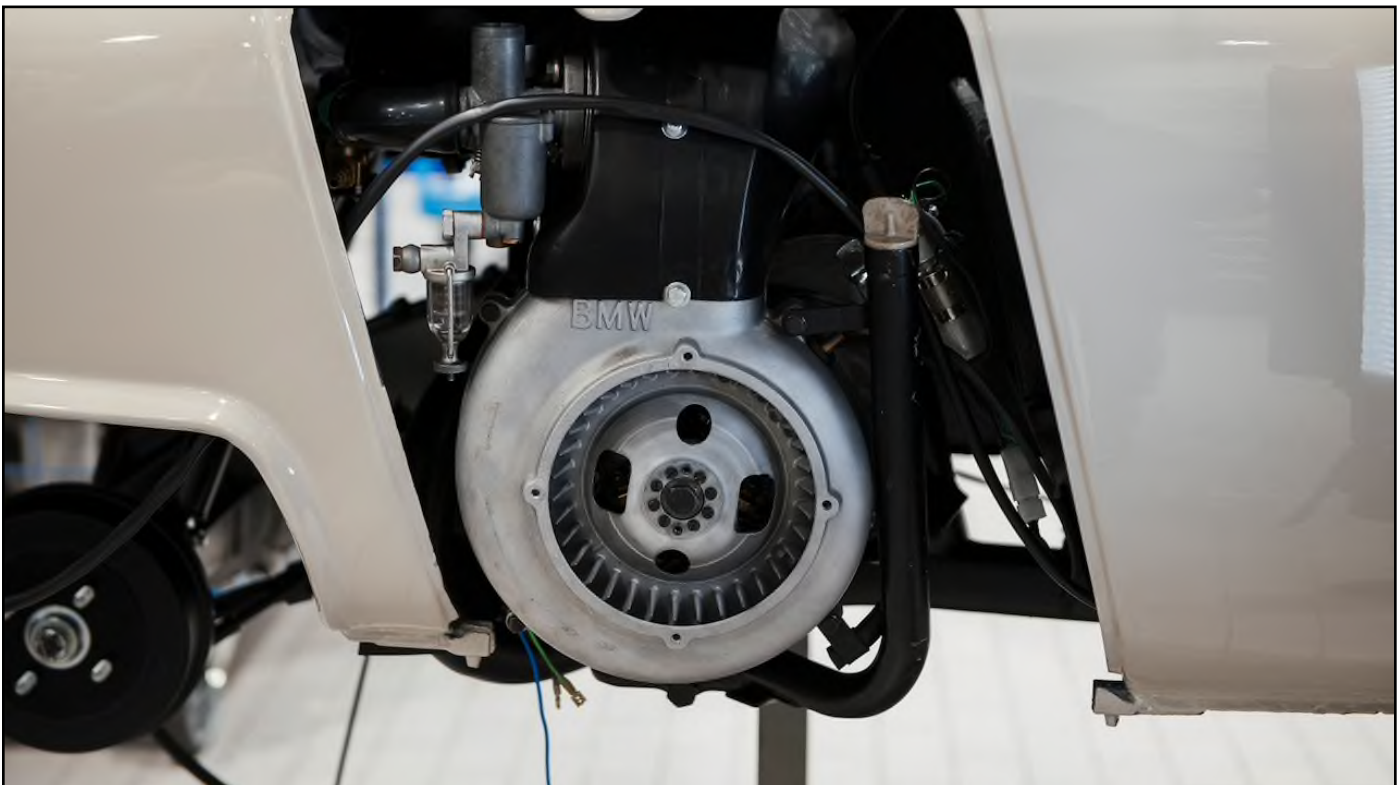
3

Check the engine and gearbox

Due to the low horse power of this one-cylinder, four-stroke motorbike engine, most Isetta car drivers only had one driving mode: full throttle – and this applied equally to the BMW Isetta 250 and the BMW Isetta 300.

That's why a thorough overhaul of the engine is often unavoidable. Here, you should pay particular attention to the crankshaft, crankshaft bearings, pistons and cylinder head. Put the gearbox on your checklist, too, along with the shifter box and drive chain.

The Isetta's engine was originally taken from a BMW motorcycle.



4

Check the chassis

The kingpins are most prone to having problems here. This is because Isettas were often literally driven into the ground.

On the other hand, the pivoting door with an integrated steering wheel is exposed only to a normal degree of wear.

In all models, you should always take a look at the pedal block, as well as the steering and brake systems.

You should always keep an eye on parts relevant to safety, such as the brakes.



5

Tracking down rust

Rust is fond of the Isetta, too.

Pay special attention to folds in the body. If you can no longer see these folds on a restored Isetta, this ought to ring alarm bells. It means that the holes were simply filled in.

You should have a closer look at chassis members. With extremely rusty Isettias, you often can't even read the chassis number any more.

You should also check the floor pan because moisture can collect under the carpet – which leads to the kind of outcome you would expect.

You should also inspect the battery compartment and wheel wells.

Body folds: This is where rust likes to hide.



6

Be realistic with your calculations

Currently (in 2019), you would have to invest between 45,000 and 55,000 US-dollars (34,000 – 42,000 pounds sterling) for an Isetta in top condition, restored to its original glory.

28,000 dollars (21,000 pounds) is a realistic sum for DIY fans just starting out, and can get you a fairly well-maintained Isetta, depending on the model year.

And if you only have about 17,000 dollars (12,900 pounds) to spend, in most cases you can expect a bubble car in average condition – and a lot of work.

Do your calculations first: Planning the purchase of your BMW Isetta.



7

Follow your heart

People don't buy an Isetta to be sensible!

You shouldn't speculate on this little BMW classic car increasing in value.

The price is already really high, the market is saturated, and restoration will drain a lot of cash.

Buying an Isetta: Heart over head.



8

Ask the experts

The [BMW Group Classic](#) and the official [Isetta Club](#) can help you with any questions you may have.

On the whole, the Isetta scene is alive and kicking, with drivers still taking their bubble cars on long drives.

However, experienced Isetta owners avoid highways, since they're not much fun given the low horse power of this classic car.

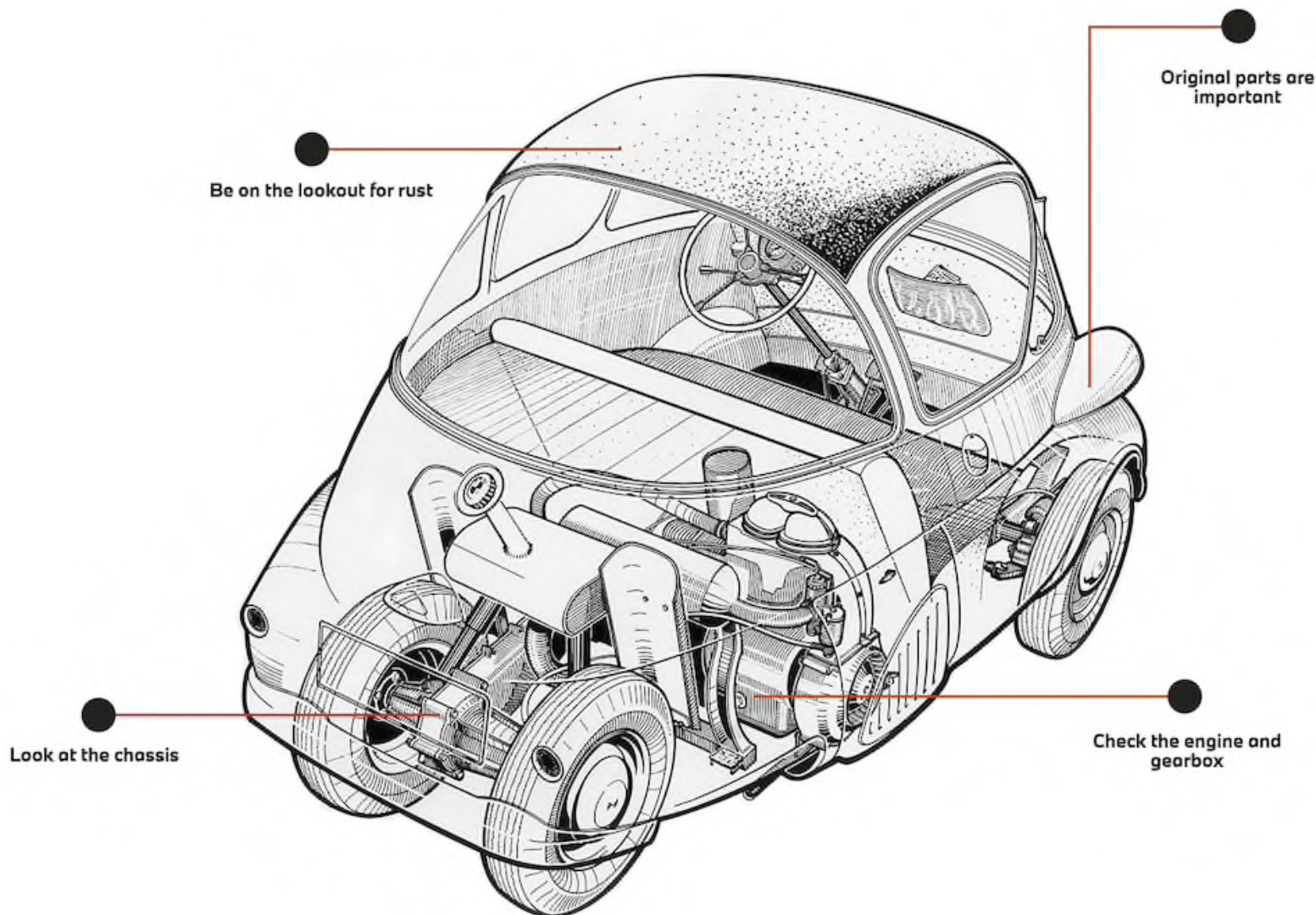
Isetta experts: Your first port of call for all questions about BMW's bubble car.



Bubble car with charm

The theory can be a little dull. But things brighten up when you are actually driving your Isetta. Or as Axel Klinger-Köhnlein puts it: "Part of the Isetta's appeal is experiencing a style of driving that we're no longer familiar with today." This original charm is as much a part of the Bavarian bubble car as its unusual design with door that opens in the front. And since you now know all there is to know, nothing can come between you and a lasting love affair with the Isetta.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BASICS



This is what to look out for if you want to buy a BMW Isetta.

Photos: Dirk Bruniecki

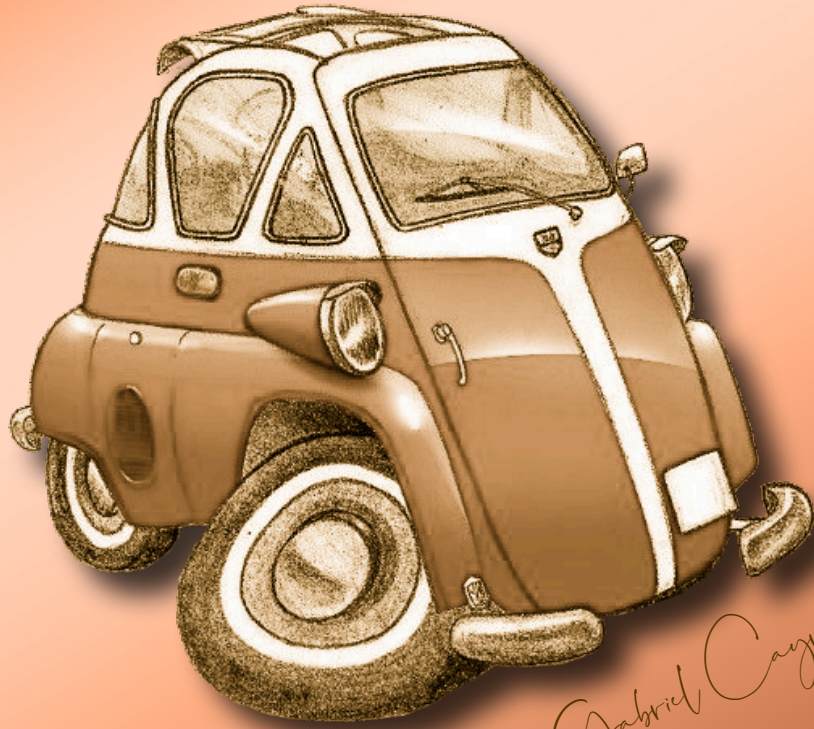
YOUR CHECKLIST

TO PRINT AND TAKE WITH YOU: PAY ATTENTION TO THIS IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN A BMW ISETTA.

8 tips for buying a BMW Isetta:

1. **DIY:** The Isetta is pretty much the perfect car for DIY fans. The technology is not too complicated and you don't need a lot of space to take it apart.
2. **Make sure the parts are original:** Isetta drivers can get spare parts directly or from the BMW Group Classic Online Shop, from Certified BMW Classic Partners and model specialists, such as the Isetta Club. You can purchase less common parts from Isettas R Us, a partner of BMW Group Classic based in the U.S. Unfortunately, restorers don't always use original materials. For example, the chassis number might not always match the installed engine. In this case, you should get help from an expert.
3. **Check the engine and gearbox:** Because of their low horsepower, Isettas were mostly driven at full throttle. So the engine often needs a complete overhaul. You should pay particular attention to the crankshaft, the crankshaft bearings, the pistons and the cylinder head. The gearbox probably also needs an inspection, along with the shifter box, drive chain and brake system.
4. **Check the chassis and the surrounding parts:** You should always take a look at the kingpins. And check the pedal block and the steering system.
5. **Track down rust:** Pay special attention to folds in the body. Check chassis members thoroughly as well, plus the door pan, battery compartment and wheel wells.
6. **Be realistic with your calculations:** You would have to invest (in 2019) between 45,000 and 55,000 US-dollars (34,000 – 42,000 pounds sterling) for an Isetta in top condition, restored to its original glory. For around 28,000 dollars (21,000 pounds), you will get a fairly well maintained Isetta. If you only have about 17,000 dollars (12,900 pounds) to spend, you will have a lot of work on your plate.
7. **Buying for love:** If an Isetta is your heart's desire, go for it. But don't speculate on its value increasing. Prices are already relatively high, and restoring it will use up a lot of cash.
8. **Ask an expert:** BMW Group Classic and the official Isetta Club can help you with any questions about the bubble car.

NOTES



Gabriel Cayre



MMXXIII