

By  
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# BABY YOU CAN DRIVE MY CAR

In the old days she used to go off on spontaneous jaunts in the Mini with her husband George. Now, Olivia Harrison is auctioning a modern replica of the Beatle's favourite car.



POP HISTORIE: Olivia Harrison's Mini as seen in the Beatles' film *Magical Mystery Tour*.

Friar Park in Henley-on-Thames west of London, on a morning in the middle of March. Before he died of lung cancer at the age of 58, ex-Beatle George Harrison occupied this imposing Victorian mansion. Protected by high walls and security systems, he lived in complete seclusion and liked nothing better than pottering around his garden.

*My Sweet Lord.* On the lush green lawn stands a monument to the great age of the hippie: an Austin Mini Cooper S, built in 1965, and decorated with numerous sacred Indian motifs. The figure on the radiator grille symbolises George Harrison in meditation. Down the middle of the bodywork you can see a vertical line of seven *chakras* – the energy centres, each of which stands for a particular sphere of life and gives strength to it. The geometrical symbols on the doors are *yantras*, which – as a bridge between the gods, the cosmos and the self – can change

negative energy into positive. All around are texts in Sanskrit (the language of classical Indian literature and scholarship), lotus blossoms (symbols of purity) and fish (the 22nd incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu). On the car roof, in a characteristic dancing pose, is Shiva, who with Vishnu and Brahma forms the trinity of supreme deities.

"Shiva embodies preservation and destruction simultaneously and through his dance symbolises the cycle of the seasons," explains George Harrison's widow, Olivia. She manages her husband's musical estate and runs the Material World Foundation, which was founded by George in 1973 and since then has supported over 70 charitable organisations. That is why, today, the publicity-shy Mrs Harrison is allowing us to photograph her

MODELLED ON THE "ENLIGHTENED" ONE:  
The MINI which is to be auctioned in June.



beside this cult carriage. A new MINI in the style of the "enlightened" original will be auctioned in June to raise funds for the foundation. Olivia Harrison will never part with the original. As she says nostalgically, "We had such fun in it. It was perfect for spontaneous jaunts." George was an uncomplicated person, she adds. "He was never very interested in material things. But he loved this car."

The Austin Mini Cooper S was a present from the Beatles' manager Brian Epstein. In 1968 the "Fab Four" travelled to the pilgrimage city of Rishikesh in the Indian state of Uttarakhand in order to find, in the ashram of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, inspiration for their *White Album*. Thus began George Harrison's lifelong devotion to Indian philosophy that is so clearly expressed in the Mini. "No other country has such spiritual strength as India does," Olivia comments. "You find there a kind of equanimity, and an innate wisdom which leaves scarcely any western observer unaffected." In India, she says, George learned simply to accept every unexpected turn of fortune in life. The Beatles summed it up: *Let It Be*. ☺