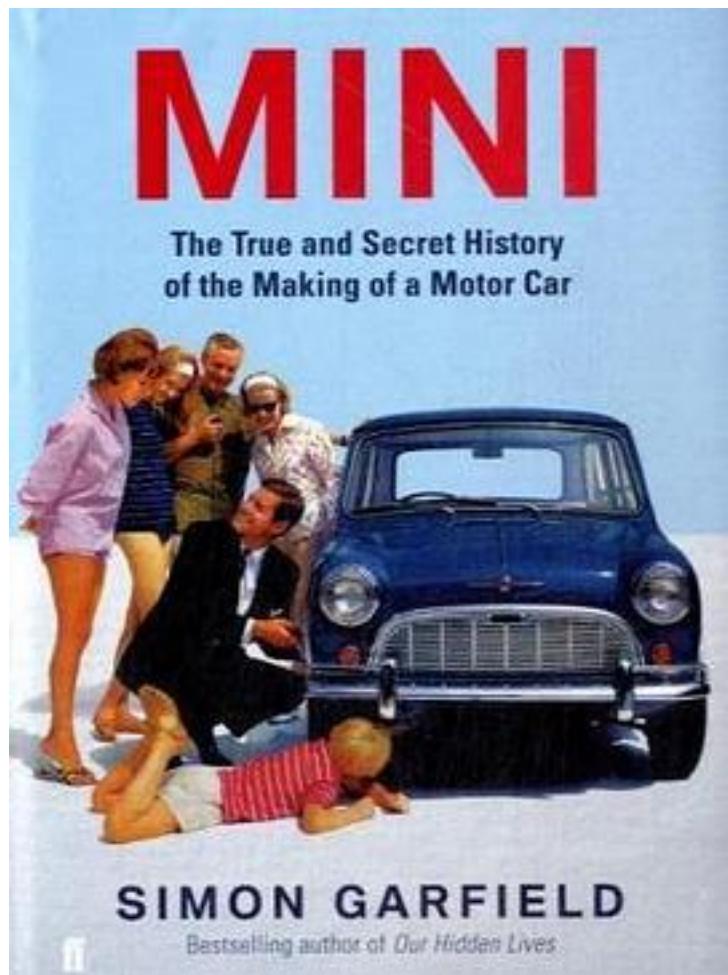


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著者:Garfield, Simon

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How do you make an object that changes the way people think about travel, a small metal box that inspires huge devotion in those who own it, a car that continues to

make headlines fifty years after its launch? In May 1959, the first Mini was produced on an assembly line at Cowley, near Oxford. It would take a team of supremely talented designers, draftsmen, engineers and production-line workers to build a car that was unique in appearance and construction. They would clash frequently over an uncomfortable and unsafe prototype, and the public had to be convinced to buy a car that let in two inches of water when it rained. But somehow the Mini became an icon. Originally designed for austerity and efficiency, the car soon came to represent individuality and classlessness. Today, the car is still produced at Cowley - it is now owned by BMW and called the Mini. A great British manufacturing story, it is more popular throughout the world than it has ever been, a symbol of the age that created it. But who makes these things, and what do they think about their work? By meeting the people behind the Mini, Simon Garfield uncovers a fascinating story of British endeavour, ingenuity and masterful marketing. The modern Mini has come a long way from the leaky floor and sliding windows. But throughout its history, the people behind it have always known that they have been making something rare - a car with soul.

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