SUHNER®

Stepping on the gas

MBE Race Engines track success

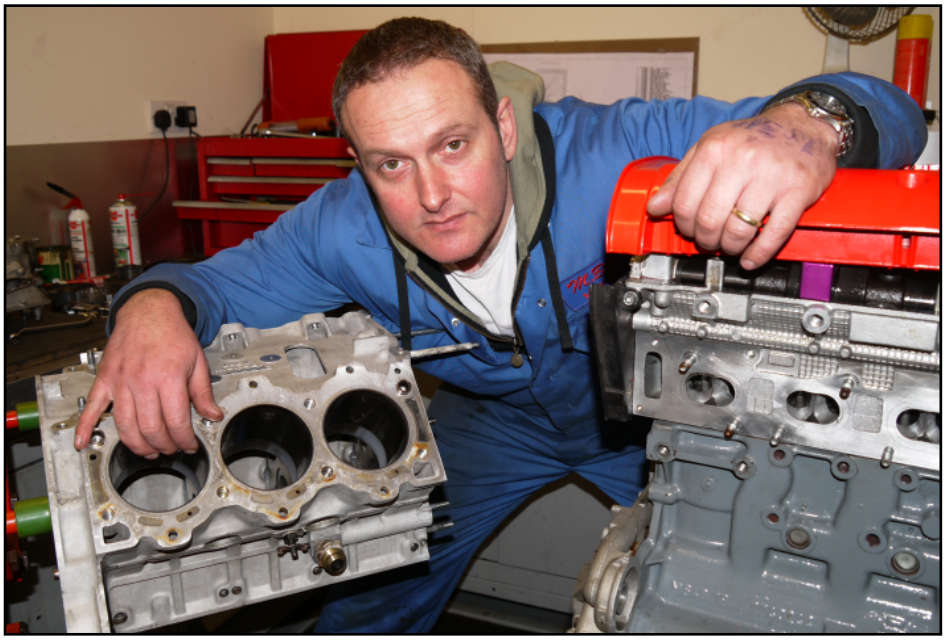
THE golden age of the motoring industry brought with it a whole range of now-legendary cars such as the iconic Mini.

The Sixties Mini re-wrote the rules about car design. The Cooper twice won the Monte Carlo Rally, the oldest rally in the world, and four decades on one Lincoln firm has become an important force in developing the A-series engine for more competition success in the British championships.

These engines are tuned to deliver far more horsepower than standard and the near bespoke nature of the engines Mike Barratt builds shows that his company is far nearer to the motor sport sector than to mainstream automotive.

This isn't a one-man band in a shed, far from it. MBE Race Engines based on Allenby Industrial Estate has specialised in developing and building motor sport engines for 20 years.

Although Minis, the biggest tuning market in the country, are their speciality, they effectively hand-build engines for other marques including the more modern Duratex and Vauxhall VE with its Cosworth designed cylinder.



"We trade on the cachet of providing something exclusive, which is far away from the way that mass-produced cars are put together.

"In my opinion you can't put the skills we use into mass production," says Mike who takes an uncompromising view on the quality of their engineering.

"It's all about getting more horsepower. Our customers are looking at stretching the limits of the engine because that's what they want to use it for – performance gains," he adds.

He designs engines to the extent that he was a consultant for the re-engineered cylinder head now stocked by classic Mini supplier specialists Minispares. He spent a great deal of time and money designing a diesel engine for a world touring car. But the company planning to go into production pulled out and soon after the milestone SEAT model came off the production line.

He is currently working on a rallying phenomenon of the Eighties for this year's British Tarmac championships. The Metro 6R4 is a completely different car and was born when car makers would stick huge amount of power into small cars for spectacular results.

Powering the 6R4 is a three litre V6 engine mounted behind the front seats developing 300bhp and with acceleration from 0-60mph in around three seconds makes it one of the world's fastest road-legal cars.

Where high performance is the norm, his work is simplified by the SUHNER Rotostar flexible shaft machine.

Says Mike: "It's got tremendous advantages over air grinders which tend not to be as quiet or easy to use.

"I grew up with air grinding tools but as the compressor runs longer, your hand becomes very cold because there is air passing through the hand tool. The other thing is that it doesn't put the same amount of torque through the cutting tool as the flexbile shaft does.

"With the hand tool of the Rotostar being so small it allows me access deep into the ports and because it's portable I can put the machine into my car and take it wherever I'm going.

"Previously I would have to rely on having a compressor or carting around an air line."







ROTOSTAR FACTFILE:

- This German-built SUHNER 1,700W flexible shaft machine has a high torque and three speed gear box producing 3,000, 6,000 and 12,000 rpm.
- SUHNER Rotostar is the most versatile portable power tool on the market. It uses the widest variety of hand pieces, including belt grinders and drum sanders and works off 230V and any single-phase 110V power outlet.
- Ideal for difficult to reach areas and with a double insulated drive motor, applications include cutting, roughing, grinding, brushing and polishing.

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