

SHOP NOTES King Midget Maintenance and Restoration

A-20 How Many Midgets—2019 *By Bob V.*

In writing my latest King Midget book, I've again assembled more evidence to update my assumptions and estimates of how many King Midgets were built. Additional serial numbers have helped, along with significant new insights into Midget Motors history. This table includes many changes and a correction, but still includes much guesswork. Keep supplying those serial numbers!

Production Estimates by Model Year

Year	SC kits	SC	JR	Spec.	M1	M2	M2 Kits	M3	M4	Total
1945		0								0
1946		25			10					35
1947		40			25					65
1948		50		2	50					102
1949		40		2	80					122
1950		50		4	210					264
1951		12			120	34				166
1952	100	8				173	120			401
1953	120	6		1		346	120			593
1954		6	75	20		195				296
1955		5	85			169				259
1956		5	55	2		180				242
1957		5	35					288		328
1958		5	30					411		446
1959		5	20					373		398
1960		5	20					349		374
1961		4	20					260		284
1962		3	20	1				172		196
1963		3	25					239		267
1964		3	25					299	M3	327
1965			30					156	Sales	186
1966			10	1				215	40	226
1967								478	378	478
1968								25	127	25
1969				2				237		239
1970									2	2
Total	220	280	450	35	495	1097	240	3502	2	6321
Domestic Cars					495	1097		3502	2	5096

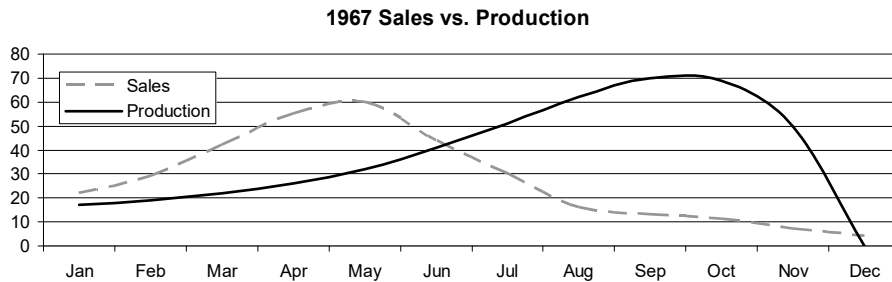
The preceding chart is by model year, and is my best guess as of November, 2019. If you compare this chart with the one from 2017 (*Shop Notes*, page A-16 and earlier, page A-2), you'll see that most of the numbers have changed and the total is between the two previous estimates. When the chart is calculated as annual sales in dollars, there are also changes in estimated vehicle prices, netting little change in total sales and a less volatile sales curve. Following are some reasons for the changes.

1. Digging into the data for my upcoming book on Midget Motors, I found that the Mexican order for about 500 vehicles included both M2s and Super-Cycles, spread over two years. I've assumed half and half, built as kits over 1952 and '53 and that the Super-Cycles were built at the old plant. That explains the lower Super-Cycle domestic production shown here and why so few serial numbers have turned up. It also suggests a steadier buildup of Model 2 domestic production while filling the Mexican order. I also assume Midget Motors got half the cash for the order up front to buy the material with the balance paid on delivery.

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2. There's a big gap in known serial numbers between 1951 and '52. I assume since the Mexican car kits were to be finished and assembled in Mexico City they would have Mexican serial numbers applied there. That would limit Midget Motors' liability for those cars, and make it sensible to starting a new number series for 1952 M2's.
3. Dale said they produced about 500 Super-Cycles. The U.S. scooter market went to pieces in about 1950, with Cushman as one of the few survivors. I'm thinking all Super-Cycles were manufactured at the Richland plant and the last few sold were assembled from parts.
4. Also that all M1s were built in the old Richland plant; then assembled in the new factory, facilitating a smoother factory startup.
5. Scarcity suggests a prototype Railroad Special was built in 1953 and just 20 in 1954.
6. We know some '57 M3's were produced in the fall of '56. My guess is there were 40 of them plus two prototypes (Claud told me four, but I'm guessing just two were finished for sale) boosting sales for the 1956 calendar year. They'd planned to start the new Model 3 earlier, but got behind and thus switched to "fall model introduction".
7. Juniors apparently started about 1954 as a low margin item to keep the team busy in late fall. The new Driver Trainer was introduced in '63 or '64 to buck up sales, but apparently had little impact and was discontinued by Joe Stehlin to get a quicker start on his new dealer program, building the 40 1967 M3s instead to help reach his ambitious 1967 sales plan.
8. I made an error on the A-16 chart, shorting 1960 production by about 100 cars.
9. I've assumed the 40 '67 M3's built in 1966 were sold before year-end. Joe's 1967 sales program started strong but in spring outpaced production by about a hundred cars. Then when new dealers didn't get cars until late for the spring market, sales plummeted.
10. Then production outran sales, leaving about 125 unsold Model 3s in inventory, causing Midget Motors to run out of cash and Stehlin's dismissal. This graph sums up the problem:



11. It appears all (or almost all) of the recorded 1968 models were built in the fall of '67.
12. And in late 1968 or 1969, Vernon Eads presumably talked Midget Motors' local backers into opening the plant long enough build a few '69 models before he retreated to assemble a few more in the small building in Gloucester. Perhaps he lacked the tooling there to build some crucial parts such as frames or M3 bodies and thus developed the M4 commuter. It appears he was only able to complete two of them before again running out of operating funds.

As with previous updated estimates, additional information has suggested a few additions and deletions, but overall the count remains about the same. Engine numbers and original titles or invoices proved very helpful this time, so send any you have or can find. This is still just an estimate, and I'd appreciate any information that could challenge my assumptions or estimates. When people ask, "How many of these cars were built?" the best answer remains, "About 5,000—but nobody knows for sure, because the records were lost in a flood."

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