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Classic car resurgence driven by millennials turning them electric

Classic Mini, Fiat 500 and Land Rover Defender among cars getting the green treatment

By Helena Horton

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Environmentally conscious millennials are driving a classic car resurgence by converting Minis, Fiat 500s and VW Beetles into electric vehicles.

Specialist companies set up to refurbish classic car and [give them a new lease of life with electric batteries](#) say they have had increased requests from under-40s who want "the

perfect city car".

Owning a classic car has traditionally been a very labour-intensive pursuit, mostly because their engines need constant care.

Now, with the Government planning clampdowns on diesel and petrol cars and [Ultra Low Emission Zones](#) cropping up across city centres, many are deciding to convert classic cars to electric.

Civil servant Angus Barry, 27, has always loved Minis and recently bought a cherry-red classic. While he enjoys the "roar" it makes, he is saving up to buy a conversion kit and give it electric power.

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He estimates that this will cost him around £10,000, and told The Telegraph: "Classic Minis are basically the ultimate tinker car with a community to suit. Plus their go-carty handling make them suitable for electric."

Mr Barry said that although there will be no need to fiddle with the engine, there is a need to commit to upkeep for the cars, explaining: "Classic Minis require bodywork care so they don't rust.

"Of course they are super Mini and don't come with modern features – mine doesn't have a radio. But you get a lot of fun in return."

Young celebrities have been driving the trend, with the actor Dev Patel getting his petrol-blue Fiat 500 converted to electric, and Ellie Goulding riding off in an electric Volkswagen campervan after her wedding.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge also chose an electric classic Jaguar for their wedding car.

Professional companies charge £20,000-£80,000 to refurbish and electrify a car, depending on the size, which makes it an option out of the price range of many younger people. However, they warn that doing it yourself can be highly dangerous.

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Alexander Bavage works at Oxfordshire-based [Electrogenic](#) and has converted all manner of classic cars to electric. He said celebrities are bringing these models to a more mainstream audience, and younger city dwellers are increasingly interested in revamped retro cars.

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"We have definitely seen a new market developing with celebs making electric look cool and the infrastructure always improving, the market is seeing great growth," he explained.

"In my personal opinion, older cars' styling looks a lot better, the cars are much sexier and have a character about them. So combining that with the latest 21st-century technology makes for an amazing car and experience."

The Classic Mini has seen a particular resurgence, he said, adding: "I can think of nothing better than a hot summer day with the roof off in a British sports car driving through London going about my day. It is the perfect way to keep classic cars relevant and up to date with technology without losing all of their character."

Dev Patel entrusted his Fiat 500 to Jon Peck, who runs Electric Classic Cars in Powys, Wales.

Dev Patel's electric Fiat 500

Mr Peck is currently converting a Classic Mini, and said that electrification brings these cars to a new, urban audience as they can match a busy, urban life.

Although many of his clients are older, wanting to give their treasured motors a new lease of life, he has had many urban customers in their 30s.

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He explained: "The Fiat 500 and VW Beetles are the easiest for us to convert. They are fairly simple cars – the Fiat 500, although small, has enough space and they are a city car so range is not a big issue.

"Some people do the DIY conversions but we would always advise having a specialist do it, because it could be dangerous to do it. We are seeing an increase in inquiries, most definitely due to the announcement by the Government of phasing out petrol and diesel cars.

"We get lots of inquiries from London and if they want to drive in ULEZ zones they will have to change their car, so they are converting it instead."

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