



106 – Prisoner Mini-Moke

The real-life Austin Mini-Moke was conceived in 1959 as a jeep-like military vehicle, but problems in its development (including an attempt to employ two separate engines in 4-wheel drive) caused it to be marketed for civilian use. The name "Moke" was British slang for donkey or mule, implying that the vehicle was a sturdy beast of burden.

The Mini-Moke achieved wide popularity as a "fun car" and it was this association that probably suggested its role as a taxi in *The Prisoner*, a cult classic TV series about a secret service prison camp disguised as a holiday resort (next page).

Dinky introduced two Mini-Moke toys in 1967, a green civilian model (no. 342) and military "Para-Moke" (no. 601). In 1968 Dinky brought out a Prisoner version (no. 106). This one was manufactured in Hong Kong between 1968 and 1970.



In response to competition from rival toy makers like Corgi and Mattel, Dinky gave the Mini-Mokes opening hoods, detachable roofs, and in some cases "Speedwheels," Dinky's answer to Mattel's Hot Wheels.

Dinky was not nearly as successful as its rivals in achieving TV or movie tie-ins, and their clumsy handling of the tie-in with *The Prisoner* may partly explain why.

The Dinky version of this Mini-Moke had a red and white striped roof, contrary to the TV version with its yellow-brown-white combination.

Some of the Dinkies had the TV version's brown side panels and some did not. Where they existed, the brown panels were often so badly painted that in the words of one critic, the plain Mini-Mokes were "better lookers."

In a blatant effort to make a connection with the TV show, the toys sported a decal on the hood representing the show's unofficial logo, a penny farthing bicycle with a sun awning. The bike appears frequently in the show.

Whatever the reason, Dinky wound up with a surplus of unsold Prisoner Mini-Mokes. These were spray painted green and offered up as No. 342's. The tell-tale hole where the Prisoner version's radio aerial used to be identified the ex-Prisoner models.

The Prisoner

Set in the Welsh seaside resort town of [Portmeiron](#), *The Prisoner* ran for 17 episodes from September, 1967 to June 1968. The Mini-Moke taxi makes its debut in the very first episode ("Arrival", right).

Having angrily resigned from the British secret service, the unnamed agent who becomes "Number 6" is gassed in his home and abducted by the top-hatted crew of a funeral hearse.

Waking in a replica of his apartment in what seems to be a resort village, his first instinct is to call the police. The blandly uncooperative villagers thwart his efforts to use a telephone, but he discovers a "free information" kiosk that allows him to summon a taxi.

Soon a woman pulls up in a Mini-Moke. He asks her to drive him to the next town but she tells him she only does "local service."

"Drive me as far as you can," he says but she merely takes him to the village centre.

She tells him the fare is "two credit units" but when he clearly doesn't know what she's talking about she tells him the ride is free this time and drives away.

Near the end of the episode, having learned the sinister truth about the village, he overpowers two wardens and makes a bid for escape in their Mini-Moke.

As he races along the beach he is inter-



cepted by Rover, the lethal balloon-robot that patrols the village.

Rover smothers him into unconsciousness and a medical team arrives in yet another Mini-Moke to take him into custody.

Tiny's Mini-Moke

A much more successful tie-in was with the popular BBC TV children's program *The Enchanted House* which ran for 39 15-

minute episodes from 1970 to 1972.

This version of the Mini-Moke (No. 350) was introduced in 1970 and was driven by Tiny the giraffe (next page).

"Tiny's protruding neck had a habit of being snapped off during over-exuberant play, and as a result, it is now something of an unlikely holy grail for Dinky collectors and fetches ridiculous prices at auction."



Picture Sources

Page 1 left top and middle – Prisoner Mini-Moke no. 106. Neet-thirtyjp (Japan) via ebay ([Link](#)).

Page 1 left bottom – Austin Para-Moke (no. 601). Jérôme Hadacek via Milinfo.org ([Link](#)).

Page 1 center – *The Prisoner* Mini-Moke (no. 106). DinkyTVSpace.com. Includes comment about the bad paint job on side panels and repainting of surplus Prisoner mini-mokes as the no. 342 Mini-Moke ([Link](#)).

Page 2 center – *The Prisoner* season 1, episode 1 (“Arrival”). Shout! Studios via YouTube ([Link](#)). These stills are captured from the YouTube video. The full episode is available at the link above.

Above – Tiny’s Mini-Moke. Nostalgia Central. This site provides information about *The Enchanted House* and the quote about Tiny’s neck snapping off ([Link](#)).

Other Notes

More information on *The Prisoner* and the Mini-Moke:

- “The Prisoner,” Wikipedia ([Link](#)).
- “Mini Moke,” Wikipedia ([Link](#)).
- “The Mini Moke: Probably The Most Fun Car (Pound-For-Pound) Ever Put Into Production,” Silodrome Gasoline Culture ([Link](#)).

The number 106 was also assigned to the Austin Atlantic, produced in England from 1954 to 1958; to the Opel Kadet, produced in France from 1956 to 1969; and to Thunderbird 2, a kind of spacecraft from a popular British children’s science fiction TV show.

