

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, but still includes much guesswork. Keep sending in those serial numbers!

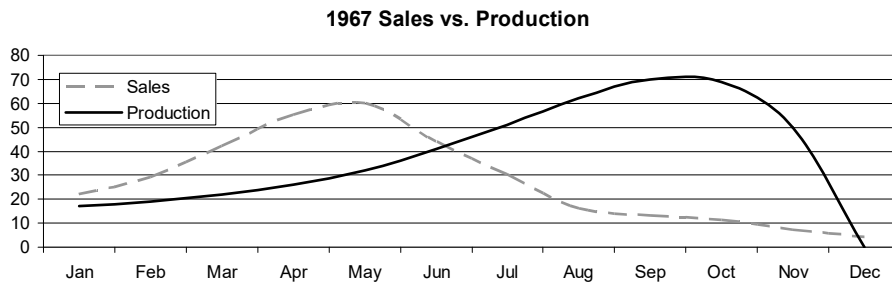
<i>Production Estimates by Model Year</i>										
Year	SCkits	SC	JR	Spec.	M1	M2	M2 Kits	M3	M4	Total
1945		0								0
1946		25			10					35
1947		40			25					65
1948		50		2	50					102
1949		40		2	80					122
1950		50		4	210					264
1951		12			120	34				166
1952	100	8				173	120			401
1953	120	6		1		346	120			593
1954		6	75	20		195				296
1955		5	85			169				259
1956		5	55	2		180				242
1957		5	35					289		329
1958		5	30					413		448
1959		5	20					374		399
1960		5	20					348		373
1961		4	20					261		285
1962		3	20	1				174		198
1963		3	25					239		267
1964		3	25					167	<i>M3</i>	195
1965			30					157	<i>Sales</i>	187
1966			10	1				216	<i>40</i>	227
1967								478	<i>378</i>	478
1968								27	<i>127</i>	27
1969				2				238		240
1970									<i>2</i>	2
Total	220	280	450	35	495	1097	240	3379	2	6198
Domestic Cars					495	1097		3379	2	4973

The preceding chart is by model year, and is my best guess as of October, 2019. If you compare this chart with the one from 2017 (*Shop Notes*, page A-16), you'll see that most of the numbers have changed and the total vehicle count is down significantly while the count of domestic cars is up. As a result, when the chart is calculated as annual sales in dollars, it shows little change in total sales but 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. The few sold after the 1951 were probably assembled from parts built at the Richland plant. It also suggests 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 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 scooter market went to pieces in about 1950, with Cushman as one of the few survivors. I'm thinking the last few Super-Cycles sold were assembled from parts built at the old plant.
4. Also that all M1s were built in the old Richland plant; then assembled in the new factory, facilitating a smoother startup of the new operation.
5. Perhaps 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 45 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 workers 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 45 1967 M3's in the fall of '66 to help reach his ambitious 1967 sales plan.
8. I've assumed the 45 M3's were sold before year end. In 1967 Joe's sales program started strong but outpaced production by about a hundred cars. Then as new dealers didn't get cars until late for the spring market, sales plummeted.
9. Then product outran sales leaving about 125 unsold Model 3s in inventory, causing Midget Motors to run out of cash and Stehlin's dismissal. This chart sums up the problem:



10. It appears the factory was closed through all (or almost all) of the calendar year 1968 and the few recorded 1968 models were the ones built in the fall of '67.
11. And in 1969, Vernon Eads presumably talked Midget Motors 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. But perhaps he lacked the tooling 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.

Once again, additional serial numbers have suggested a few additions and deletions, but overall the count remains about the same. But it's 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."

A. Identification