

The New Mazda MX-5 RF

by Ian Lynas

The MX-5 in a way almost identifies the brand, a car that has been tremendously popular with car enthusiasts around the world with sales approaching the one million mark.

The fourth-generation soft-top model delivered pure driving pleasure in a lightweight sports car, however the hardtop model, with its fastback styling and a new open-top feel, has a personality all its own.

It has been quite some time since I took the wheel of an MX-5, for me it is not so much a car for me but for a younger generation, that is not to say I did not like driving this Mazda in its latest guise, it still delivers fun motoring, something which it has been able to maintain down through the generations.

RF, a name that denotes the model's retractable hardtop and fastback styling, and I have no doubt it will resonate with

enthusiasts and drivers who have become firm followers of the MX-5 and no doubt it will bring new faces to the club.

I have to admit the fastback styling with a smooth line joining the roof to the rear end did not really appeal to me, purely a personal opinion. The Mazda design team worked hard to give the cabin the perfect teardrop shape and it features the same compact packaging as the soft-top model, including overall length, width and wheelbase, while there is a modest increase in height.

The soft touch of real Nappa leather adds a feeling of even higher quality and contributes to the relaxed, sophisticated ambience of the interior. In terms of overall quality this is the best MX-5 to date.

The retractable hardtop consists of a front roof, middle roof, rear roof and back window glass.

Synchronising and overlapping the various movements of the roof sections enables MX-5 RF to achieve one of the fastest opening/closing times of any retractable hardtop. When the roof is open, the front and middle roof sections





are stowed together with the back window glass in the space behind the seats.

A new power top lock makes it possible to open and close the roof with the simple flip of a switch and a new control system enables the roof to be opened or closed, even when in motion at speeds of 6mph or less. This is particularly useful if it suddenly begins to rain.

At 130 litres boot capacity is the same as the soft-top model, just about okay for a weekend away.

My test car was finished in a dark grey shade which added a certain touch of richness and you could also describe the handling with the same word. Right from the very first MX-5 took to our roads it excelled in one area – handling and the RF carries that on with added refinement.

However when it comes to performance it is more than adequate, the two litre engine with 160PS allied to a slick manual gearbox simply delivers very enjoyable driving. Okay the performance is not mind blowing it simply does not need to be.

In a way the MX-5 is a unique set of wheels and throughout its history it has become something of a cult car with a dedicated group of followers. I seems to go on for ever and for me it is certainly a little jewel in the Mazda crown.

driven June 2017