

Mazda MX-5 Roadster-Coupé

By Jim Mc Cauley

Mazda continues to develop what is now the world's best selling sports car, the MX-5. Offered only as a soft top convertible until recently, the test model was the premium addition to the current range, the Roadster-Coupé with the added security and relative comfort of a solid folding roof.

The test model featured the larger of the two engines on offer, the 2.0 litre unit, neatly shoehorned and located as far back as possible in the engine bay. Although the capacity advantage over the 1.8 litre car is a mere 200ccs, the performance figures show a significant difference with the 0-62 mph time shaved by a full two seconds to 7.9 seconds and top speed gaining a 13 mph advantage to 136 mph.



However, performance is achieved with a purposeful sweep of the right foot when engine sound adds to the considerable tyre noise to dominate the tranquillity of the cabin and drown out any other entertainment you might be seeking on the car's radio. A firmer suspension on this model also moves it away

from the traditional comfort ride of the 1.8 litre soft top, so overall there is a significant crossover between the characters of the two cars which differ considerably in expectations.

However, the historic appeal is present, teased out over a quarter of a century's development and the car provides the classic driving experience associated with the MX-5 including the beautifully engineered location of all six gear ratios.

A quick folding two-piece solid roof stores neatly in the hood bin with surprising room left aft to provide a very useful boot. But the cabin is snug and retains an old-world feel with the occupants neatly divided by the substantial transmission tunnel, and the only concessions to modern tastes are the cruise control, auto dipping rear view mirror and climate control. The steering column retains tilt-only adjustment, and the flasher unit does not have the one-touch option for lane changing mode.



Styling-wise, the car immediately identifies its heritage but with a more aggressive front end adding to its presence and increased performance ability. Mazda has also retained sensible pricing for the car to help its popularity and retain its title as the best selling sportscar.



Finished in 'Sport Tech' trim, the test vehicle ran on low profile (45%) 17-inch Bridgestone Potenza tyres and had the cossetting extra of heated leather seats, as well as front fog lights, limited slip differential and Bilstein dampers.

The model tested is listed at £23,095 and is in Group 26E for insurance purposes. With a CO2 emissions of 181 gms/km, it is in Band L for road tax purposes and is covered by the company's 3-year / 60,000 mile warranty.