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THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE MAZDA MX-5 CLUB OF VICTORIA & TASMANIA





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Cover image:

The Australian media drove the new MX-5 ND at a special release in Spain. *Photo: courtesy* motoring.com.au



Find us at: MX-5 Club of Victoria

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Don's Drive(l) ...

■ Don Nicoll – President president@mx5vic.org.au

February already. No sooner had we finished celebrating New Year than the month has gone!

Towards the end of January, VP Murray Finlay and I met with Ben Rounsefell and Steve Maciver from Mazda Australia. The meeting was arranged to pass the baton, so to speak. Steve is taking over from Ben, while Ben is off to Mazda North America to assist with their customer loyalty program. While we took the opportunity to thank Ben for all his efforts to assist our Club and all the other Mazda MX-5 Clubs in Australia, I think it is appropriate to record some of the things that he achieved while in the role.

For starters there's NatMeet which benefitted from some hefty cash injections over the years to ensure that participant costs were kept at a reasonable level. Mazda's contributions have made a big difference to the programs and we look forward to their continuing support.

For our Club, three things stand out.

The first has been the invitation to assist Mazda in the "celebrity challenge" at the Australian Grand Prix by providing our cars for the celebrity parade lap. With the invitation came free entry tickets for each driver and a partner to each of the four days of the grand prix as well as lunch and drinks. Although Mazda will not be supporting the grand prix this year, we have still received an invitation to show our cars at this year's AGP, an offer no doubt aided by our past participation.

The second standout was Ben's offer to allow the Club to use Mazda's merchandise supplier, TPF, to look after our Club merchandise. This has been a huge burden off the committee's shoulders as well as a major solution to "dead" assets. Thanks to this arrangement we no longer have to carry stock and we have a simple despatch system. This may not sound much but when you consider that two years ago we had over \$4000 in old stock filling Steve Dunlop's garage and now we have none, it has made life for the Merchandise Officer and the Treasurer a lot easier.

The third standout was arranging for Ben Sale to attend the launch of the ND in LA. It was a win/win all round. The photos and stories that Ben Sale was able to send to the Clubs as well as the material he provided to Mazda was just marvellous.

On top of that, we have enjoyed the use of

Mazda's head office facilities for awards lunches, plenty of free merchandise and, most recently, some greatly appreciated financial support for the maintenance of our website.

So, we wish Ben Rounsefell and his family all the very best on the next stage of his career. As someone who has dragged his family overseas twice for work commitments, I can say with some certainty that the new job will be easy compared with ensuring that the family are happy.

All of which brings me to welcome Steve Maciver as our new contact man at Mazda. Most of the Club Presidents met Steve at the NC Series 3 launch in Sydney a couple of years ago. Locally, Steve was very much a part of Mazda's involvement in the AGP, so already known to those of us who participated in the AGP events. I'm very confident that Steve will ensure that the good relations between the MX-5 Clubs and Mazda will continue in the manner that we've enjoyed in recent times.

While I remember, a warm welcome to those members joining the Club to benefit from the Club Permit Scheme for cars 25 years and older. This is a new experience for our Club, never having had cars old enough to qualify until recently. I would like to make a special mention of Peter Dannock, our secretary, who has shepherded us through the establishment of our system for Club Permit eligible cars and with very few hiccups. On 1 January this year, new rules were introduced by VicRoads for cars to qualify. To Peter's credit, we had to make very few changes as our system already meets the new requirements.

Finally, a warm welcome also to Peter Ferguson who is now formally named as Eastern Victoria Chapter Captain. Peter's offer to take over from Alan Laine was unanimously accepted by the committee at its January meeting. I would like to thank Alan for all his efforts to establish the Eastern Chapter and we wish him well while he deals with some important family matters. We wish Peter much success in his new role in the Club.

Must go – the driver's seat is getting

Remember ... Safety fast first!

Don



Mazda MX-5 Club of Victoria & Tasmania

For your diary ...

See the full calendar for details

February

- 22 Central: RACV Classic Showcase
- 22 NTas: Roger's Roaming Ramble
- 28 NTas: Cranbourn Airfield Fly-in

March

- 6-9 South Australia/Vic-Tas biennial weekend, Robe SA
- 7-8 NE Vic: Snowy Mountains run
- 8 NTas: Driver training, Baskerville
- 15 Eastern: Chip run to Inverloch
- 21 Central: Midnight MX-press GOR run
- 21 Western: Ballarat-Anglesea-GOR run
- 22 NTas: Devonport motor show
- 29 Sprints 2014-15 Rds 9/10: Winton
 Double Header!

April

- 4 Central: Bendigo run
- 12 NE Vic: Tastes of the North-East
- 12 NTas: Kelly's Ladies' Day
- 12 Sprints 2015 Rd 1: Calder Park
- 17-20 Central: 4-day high country run
- 19 Eastern: South of the Highway run
- 25-26 NTas: West Coast Overnighter
- 27 NTas: Targa Tasmania optional viewing trips

May

- 2-3 NE Vic: Jamieson Loop run
- 9 Sprints 2015 Rd 2: Sandown
- 10 Club: gathering to commemorate first mass gathering of MX-5s (TBC)
- 23-25 Eastern: 3 Peaks run

June

- 14 Eastern: Leongatha-Wilsons Prom
- 14 Sprints 2015 Rd 3: Broadford
- 28 Eastern: Khanacross @ Bryant Park

Scene about ...

■ Photos: Bronwyn Roche, Kelly Berggren, Caz Timbrell, John Waldock, Daniel White, Karen Bradshaw







555
and growing!

■ Will Campbell – Membership Officer membership@mx5vic.org.au

G'day again!

As a student of numbers, I find it Interesting that approximately 20% of our members are now, or soon will be, eligible to register their MX-5s under the VicRoads Club Permit scheme.

VicRoads places stringent requirements on both car owners and the Club, but there is no doubt that the scheme is attractive to members with older cars. I own a 1991 NA and will certainly participate when the car reaches 25 years of age early in 2016.

If you drive an early NA and you've not yet caught up with Club Permit registration, I suggest you check it out on our website!

I would like to welcome the following new members:

Central Chapter

Travis Bawden	1996 Black NA
Benjamin Gahan	1990 White NA
Christopher Keramidas	2004 Grey NB
Cameron Marks	2010 Metropolitan Grey

David McConville	1990 Red NA
Kevin Moriarty	1990 White NA
William To	1990 Neo Green NA

Western Victoria Chapter

Jason Collins	2001 Blue NB

Northern Tasmania Chapter

Southern Tasmania Chapter

Eddie Podolski	2008 Blue NC

Enjoy your MX-5 and I'll see you out and about ...



Trading Post



For Sale 1989 Classic Red Eunos Roadster

For details of this and other items to buy, swap, sell or borrow, see the "Trading Post" section in the "Clubroom" section of the Club's website, *mx5vic.org.au*

Burson automotive products at trade prices

Current financial Club members can purchase automotive parts, tools, accessories and car care products at trade prices from **Burson Auto Parts** stores.

Simply ask for your discount when you purchase, present your current membership card and quote account number **112558**.

Burson Auto Parts have more than 100 outlets on the east coast. Check out the range at www.burson.com.au

Repoo

Repco VIP Club retail discount

Financial MX-5 Club members may join the **Repco VIP Club** for 10% off full retail at any time, and up to another 30% off full retail with advertised offers.

Enter your details at http://vip.repco.com.au/registration/register/1160.

You'll receive a temporary "VIP" card via e-mail, with a plastic barcoded card and key tag following within 14 days.

Repco will e-mail you online catalogues and offers.

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... are proud to offer all Club members a big discount (up to 15%) off their full range of merchandise.

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This offer is exclusive to AutObarn Eltham.
Please identify yourself as a Club member to obtain your discount.
*Note: only Peter Rutherford or Hayden Dally are authorised
to offer Club discounts in-store.



Car care products - member discounts

Waxit Car Care in Tullamarine is offering Club members 12.5% off all products (excluding already-discounted kits and the following brands/products: Polishangel, Vikan, Flex and Concours 900 Polisher).

Check out the Waxit range and order online at www.waxit.com.au. Our Club coupon code is mx5club. Please add your Club membership number to the "comments" section of your order.



Peter Ferguson

The Mix 5 Chilb Grill

Chapter Captain ~ Eastern Victoria

Name? Peter Ferguson

Age? 64

Born? Yes, in Melbourne

Current abode? Trafalgar in Gippsland (near Warragul and Morwell)

Profession? Retired, used to run own business specialising in height access and safety; still do the odd bit of consulting when I can't make the client go away!

Partner? Carol, married 44 years

Pets? Two dogs

Fave food? Spaghetti Bolognaise

Can you cook? I can BBQ, otherwise a "kitchen cripple"

Favourite tipple? Irish whiskey

First drive? Dad's EJ Holden

First car? Austin A30, bought at 17 and re-built

First fender bender? Rolled a VW Beetle – fell asleep at the wheel on the way home from Sydney

Everyday driver? Mini Cooper, Mazda ute (to tow the caravan)

How many MX-5s have you owned? Two

Current MX-5? 2010 NC2 (white) and 1989 NA (51st built for Oz market) (Classic Red)

MX-5 improvements? Yellow Speed springs and shocks, front and rear sway bars, exhaust and UHF radio

MX-5 dislikes? Hard to find many. My NC2 has the Recaro seats that make putting seat belts on very difficult but that's pretty minor compared to how well they work!

Why an MX-5? I used to build and race Clubman Sports 1300 race cars. The last car was sitting in the shed unused ... and we have magnificent roads around here which were also not being used (by me!). My wife suggested I sell the race car and get a sports car – originally it was to be a "Spridget" then someone suggested that NA MX-5s were getting affordable – best bit of info I was ever given! Seems to me the MX-5 is the "best kept secret" with few young blokes aware of how good they are.

Fluffy dice? Um, no

Passions besides the MX-5? Playing in the workshop, photography, caravanning, my granddaughter

Favourite TV show / movie / book? Fawlty Towers

Dream wheels (money no object)? I don't so much desire one flash car (the MX-5 does a pretty good job of satisfying this need), but if I had the money, I'd have a VERY large shed and a LOT of interesting



cars including things like a Citroen 2CV, an Austin Healey, a 57 Corvette, an early Holden, Falcon or Valiant and even an early Land Rover (yeah I know about the pools of oil and Lucas, the prince of darkness! — I still like them!)

Would you drive a Daewoo or SsangYong? If it avoided walking, I'd drive anything. Even a Smart Car ...

Favourite other Mazda? Better say my Mazda ute. Recently drove a brand new Mazda3 as a loaner while ute was being serviced – very impressive

If not a Mazda (gasp!), then what? When we bought the Mini recently for my wife, I tried to get her to consider a Toyota 86 (unsuccessfully). I guess this would be the first thing I'd look at

How long in the Club? 3-4 years

How many MX-5 Club runs or track events? No track events but probably 12-15 runs – all great

Favourite Club run/track?
Rob's "3 Peaks run" with
overnight stops in Bright.
Great roads and a chance
to get to know people as

there is ample time out of the cars over a few drinks. Don't miss this year's "3 Peaks" in May!

Funniest thing seen at a Club event? The lengths Alan Laine will go to in search of a parma. Even turning up on one run with a Subway parma!

Have you been to DECA or NatMeet? No, not yet

Ford vs Holden? Holden

What's playing in your MX-5? Bit of everything – I have wide musical tastes

Footy team (AFL / NRL / A-League)? Not a football follower

Final comments? Great cars and great club. It really surprises me how cheap used MX-5s are and I can only see that a large part of the market simply doesn't understand how good they are.

Maybe it's good for us that this is the situation.

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[†]John Benson – Davies, Cra (03) 9369 1234, ext 2

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A right royal display opportunity

Mornington Racecourse - Sunday, 22 February



The RACV and AOMC are staging their next one-day showcase for classic and Japanese cars at the Mornington racecourse carpark (Melway 146 A3) on Sunday, 22 February.

Last year, at Flemington, we had a Club display of 12 cars, and Club social captain Cary Warren (below) took out the prize for the "Best Japanese" Open Sports Car".

We proved we can do it with the fantastic display at Sandown Raceway last November, so let's try to get a few more cars along this year. It would be great to have as many MX-5s of all ages there as we

The cost is \$15 per display car (including driver and passenger), with proceeds supporting the Lions Club's Cerebral Palsy Education Centre.

Display cars should gather at the car park of the Mornington Bunnings at 9am, as we must arrive as a group so that we can all park together.

A flyer with the details is in this edition of *mxtra*, or can be downloaded from the online calendar.

Non-displaying spectators should go straight to the racecourse; gates will open at 10am. The cost for spectators is \$5 for Club members (bring your membership badge), and \$8 for non-members.

There is no EFT or ATM at the venue. We believe food vans will be available on-site. but suggest bringing a picnic lunch in

Full details of the event can be found on the AOMC website, www.aomc.asn.au.

If you missed out on the AGP display, this is your chance to show off your pride and joy to an appreciative public, and help raise money for a worthy cause.

To book your spot, please contact Cary now at social@mx5vic.org.au. ●



Central Chapter members ...

Have we done the best run yet?

Probably not! In fact, the best run might be yours!

Many of us know some great roads and think, "Yeah, the Club should do a run here."

So ... have you ever thought of leading a run?

No experience is necessary ... just the desire to share your road with

If you have a run in mind and/or would like to lead a run let us know so we can put it on the calendar.

If needed, we can assist you with putting it together. If you don't have your "own" road, we also have a stash of old runs that you could choose from too.

The Club is yours. Be involved and give it a go.

Please contact Geoff Roche, Central Chapter Captain:

E-mail: central@mx5vic.org.au Mobile: 0409 039 867 (ah)



My favourite MX-5 road ...



■ Words: Jeff Woolf, Western Victoria Chapter

Buningong-Mount Mercer Road

It may not be the most spectacular drive but it's handy to home and I love it. It has also been included as part of numerous Western Chapter runs. This is 16km of smooth, winding, undulating country road with pleasant views and sparse traffic to impede progress. You can either tootle along or go quicker up to an uninterrupted 100km/h. Some bends have advisory signs – most are medium to fast. Some gear changing is recommended for added fun and to tackle a hill.

It all starts at the historic 1850s ex-gold mining town of Buninyong with its old cafés and pub. The town is overlooked by Mt Buninyong with a lookout and extinct volcano. Heading south there is evidence of past activities including mining, churches, mining cottages, with names such as Slaughter House Rd and Ouartz Crescent ... reminders of the past.

At the 100km/h sign the country opens up into larger properties, farms, old buildings in areas named Durham Lead, Garibaldi and a neglected

> Avenue of Honour reminding us of how the wars and time decimated these communities which now exist mainly in namesake only.

In the distance you see the new wind farms at Mt Mercer and the choice has to be made either to do a U-turn and enjoy the return trip or turn right to Dereel on the Colac Rd, left to Meredith, straight ahead to Shellford and on to Geelong.

I have occasionally observed some large roos and a fair few rabbits – including the human kind – crossing the Rd, so take care ... and apply plenty of sunblock.





If you have a favourite MX-5 road, you're welcome to submit a short description (150 words) and a photo to <editor@mx5vic.org.au> and share it around!

pssssst ... remember ...

Join the Midnight MX-press!

Great Ocean Road - Saturday, 21 March

Fellow MX-ers ... quietly pack your cucumber sandwiches, macaroons and a thermos.

Tell the kids/grand kids, if you dare, not to wait up! This role reversal will naturally spark their curiosity

Family: "So what's up?"

MX-er: "Um ... just checking out the night life in

Apollo Bay."

Family: "What the ... urrrr ... OK, #have fun."

By the time you've changed into second gear your family will have diagnosed you (via search engine of course) with some awful incurable affliction.

C'mon ... lose those inhibitions ... remember, you own a two-seater car and you did not get a discount because it has no roof.

Don't forget that 80% of the general population (and 100% of your extended family) think you are impulsive, irresponsible and just plain mad.

See the flyer in this month's mxtra (or the online calendar) for full details.

So, see you under the stars!

~ Chris Biffin

Chapter chatter ...

11.1.15 | **Central** ■ Words & photos: **Bronwyn Roche** ■ Organisers: **Geoff & Bronwyn Roche**



Who can be bothered driving down to Phillip Island beaches at the height of the summer holidays with all that traffic?

Not us!

The Central Chapter's Long Way Round run via the Gippsland hills took us to Grantville on Westernport Bay, missing that entire beach-bound January traffic.

Ouiet Grantville had it all: pleasant weather, cafés, plenty of parking, picnic tables, seagulls – everything you need for a beach-side picnic ... except the water!

Low tide in Grantville exposes several hundred metres of mud flats that offered no chance of a swim, boat launch or even a walk along the water's edge. Never mind, we'd already enjoyed a couple of hours journeying through the hills and testing out the MX-5s on their first touring run for the year.

Starting with a guick dash across the Kooweerup swamp flats, 23 MX-5s headed into the hills and didn't leave them until they rolled down into Grantville for lunch.

The early part of the run took us on some very small winding roads that followed the contour line of the steep hills south of Drouin and Warragul. These roads were first developed to access the giant eucalypt forests for their timber, followed by the establishment of small dairy farms. And although the roads are very narrow and sometimes bumpy, they offer some spectacular views of the surrounding countryside. Bringing the cows up to the dairy from the bottom paddock to the dairy twice a day was guaranteed to keep both the farmer and his dog very fit.

Turning into the broader sweeping curves of the Warragul-Korumburra Road, the 80km/h speed limit signs were a sure indication we were on to something good. We continued to climb through the hills – this time the views were both east and west as the road followed the high ridge. Within sight of Korumburra we turned right and headed down into the town of Poowong and over to our morning tea break at Loch.

Loch is one of those very small villages reincarnated from a farming town to antique store and coffee stop destination. The break gave us all an opportunity to have a chat to the Central and Eastern Chapter members, meet new members who had joined us for the run and share the rare experience of a touring run with Robert Downes, MX-5 Motor Sport champion! Whilst Robert and his MX-5 are nearly always found out in front on the racetrack, it was great to see that every five years or so both he and the car join the touring group out in the big wide world -Grantville anyway!

Also stopped at Loch were a few motorcycle enthusiasts, including the rider of a rare early *Indian* motorcycle that served as a reminder of just how far modern motoring comforts have come

Heading further south past Krowera we made a sharp left and followed the ridge road to Glen Alvie. This was another gem of an MX-5 road with broad zoomy curves that offered expansive views south to the windfarms, the islands and the sea. The predicted heavy rain didn't eventuate and the views were exceptionally clear.

The last part of our journey saw the convoy head across the lower farmlands to again climb up into the hills on to another great road that took us north and then west down into Grantville. We passed the *Indian* motorcycle going in the opposite direction – proof that the west and south Gippsland hills are criss-crossed by numerous smaller roads that are a fun trip in any direction.

Thanks to our tail-end-charlie Bob de Bont, all those who corner marked when needed, and others who assisted on the run.













That winning photo ...

■ Words & photo: Alan Bennett

It only took 1/500th of a second to take this picture. Well, not quite - let me explain.

With the Club calendar competition announced some time ago I wanted to take a range of photos and one I set my mind to was an autumn one (hoping to get the "May" slot, you see ...).

We have lots of deciduous trees in our area and trawling the local streets turned up a few likely suspects – so it was a matter of waiting for the right lighting for the trees I'd chosen, and hoping the space around the trees would be clear when I was ready to take my photos.

Luck was with me ... although one enquiring neighbour came out to ask me if I was a real estate agent. When I explained that I was specifically looking for autumn leaves she opined that it was a pity someone had parked a car in front of the tree I was photographing! I just agreed with her.

The technical stuff

Camera: Nikon D610 (full frame, 24 megapixel thingy) with a 50mm f1.4 standard lens set to f1.4, ISO 100 and 1/500th second shutter speed. The camera was on a tripod and the lens had a circular polarising filter on. The photo was taken in RAW format.

Why all those settings?

First I wanted to focus on the car (pun intended), and the 50mm lens has the widest aperture that I have to give me a narrow depth of field. In other words, I wanted the car to be in sharp focus and the background to be recognisable but slightly out of focus so as not to detract from the subject – which, of course, was

The shutter speed and ISO were selected to balance the light at the chosen aperture, and the filter was used to bring out the colours of the leaves. The tripod was used for stability to increase the sharpness of the photo.

Afterwards, on the computer, I made minor tweaks to bring out the colours a bit more and to add a minor vignette (if you look closely you will notice the corners are slightly darker). This is a common trick used to help keep the viewers looking at the subject longer.

Last year we ran a competition for Club members to submit their favourite MX-5 photos for the 2015 25th anniversary calendar.

The winning photo, which graces the front cover of the calendar, was Alan Bennett's photo of his MX-5 under a liquid amber tree in full autumn glory.

Here, Alan talks us through how he did it ...

What could I have done better?

The house on the right-hand side is brighter than I would have liked, so I could have tweaked the image to darken the white of the boards or reframed the shot to eliminate the house altogether.

The last word

The photo took several hours to find a tree to complement the car with a good coverage of autumn leaves.

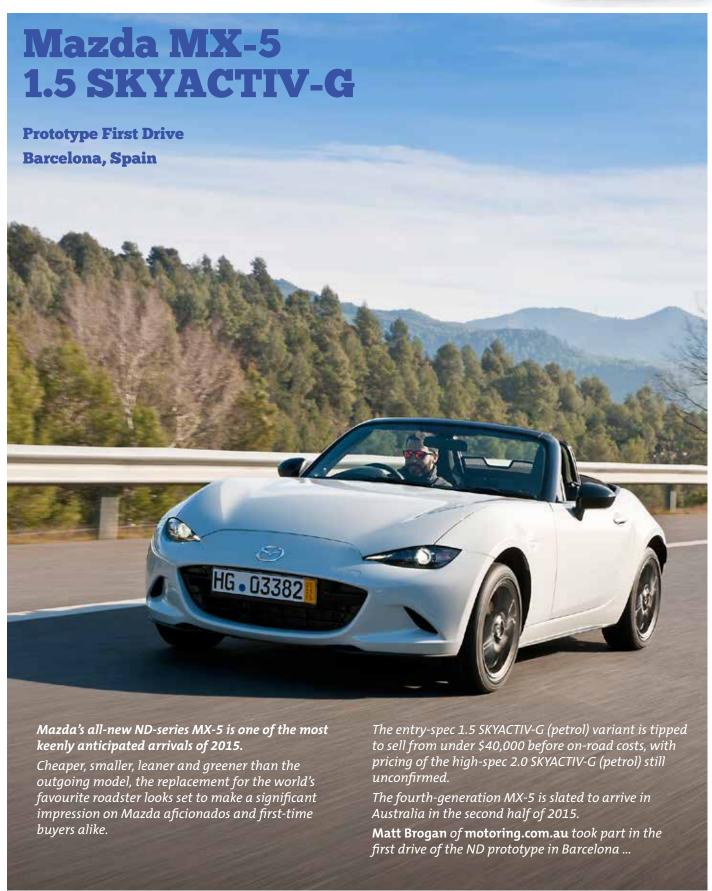
I took several photos and spent less than two minutes on the computer later.

With apologies to the editor, the resolution in *mxtra* doesn't show off the detail of the car but I can assure you it is very sharp and looks fantastic blown up to A3 size and framed in pride of place on my wall!









In a time when more is expected from each new-car arrival, it's rare that a model seemingly offering 'less' aims to not only retain its loyal fans, but attract more of the uninitiated.

Of course we're talking about the MX-5, Mazda's compact twoseat rear-drive roadster which for a large part has preserved the purity of its formula over the past quarter-century while evolving to meet the expectations the modern motoring world has thrust upon it.

That engineering balancing act has defeated many who've gone before it – and indeed all that inspired the first MX-5's creation, which actually began way back in 1983. Yet in spite of the pressures that befell its mentors, the MX-5 somehow continues to thrive.

Mazda says it's through adapting, and not conceding to the demands of increased regulation, that the much-loved roadster has prevailed. It's an ethos reflected throughout the company's SKYACTIV vehicle portfolio, but one that seemingly is simultaneously at odds with the MX-5's playboy character.

Yet here it is, four generations and almost one million sales on, still ticking both the emotional boxes its devoted fans demand and the stringent safety and emissions laws of the many markets in which it is sold.

The new ND-series MX-5 arrives cheaper, smaller, lighter and greener than the model it replaces. It's also set to be offered with as many as three engine options, and will, initially at least, arrive only with a folding soft-top roof.

Locally, for the downsized 1.5-litre version at least, pricing is expected to begin from under \$40,000 (before on-road costs), making the new MX-5 the cheapest it has been since 1998. It's also anticipated that Mazda's Service Select tailored servicing program will be available as part of the list price.

The body is shorter (-105mm) and lower (-20mm) than the NCseries before it, yet wider (+10mm) and lighter (-100kg). In its most basic form, the new MX-5 tips the scale at just 1000kg in six-speed manual guise, making it almost as light as the original NA-series, which first took to Australian roads back in 1989 (see table below for details).

Just like the original, the 'ND' will focus on driver enjoyment, and not power, beginning proceedings with a high-compression 1.5 SKYACTIV-G (for "gasoline") unit based on the same engine that powers the humble Mazda2.

With a steel crankshaft (in place of the cast-iron crank on the Mazda2), a modified cylinder-head, lighter flywheel and shorter intake and exhaust manifolds, the modified, longitudinallymounted direct-injected mill sends to the MX-5's rear wheels 96kW at 7000rpm and 150Nm at 4800rpm, with 90 per cent of the latter available over 2000-6000rpm. It's mated to a six-speed manual transmission, with a six-speed auto to arrive later.

Also expected to arrive later — in Australian and US markets at least — is a 2.0-litre petrol engine familiar to the Mazda3 and CX-5. The 2.0 SKYACTIV-G produces 114kW and 200Nm in those models listed, but is expected to produce 125kW (and 200Nm) in the MX-5.





The figures will see the more powerful MX-5 variant surpass the output of its predecessor by at least 7kW and 12Nm, which bodes well for its performance credentials considering the aforementioned reduction in weight (the previous MX-5 managed the 0-100km/h dash in 7.8sec). It should also be offered with a choice of six-speed manual and automatic transmissions.

The new model's reduction in weight, more efficient drivelines and re-sculpted body is also expected to provide a significant improvement in fuel economy and exhaust emissions. Mazda is yet to publish its official figures, though with a European (NEDC) combined CO₂ value of 139q/km, we estimate fuel consumption to sit somewhere around 5.9L/100km.

By way of reference, the Mazda2 1.5 SKYACTIV-G uses 4.9L/100km on the ADR Combined cycle and emits 114g/km of CO₂. The previous NC-series MX-5 used 8.1L/100km and emitted 192g/km.

Mazda has yet to quote a 0-100km/h time for its new MX-5 range, but based on our calculations, the 1.5 SKYACTIV-G should hit triple figures in around 7.0sec.

Of course, like any roadster, the MX-5 is as much about form as it is function. It's here we see Mazda's KODO design language stretched to its most acute, the body creating an intense and energetic expression of the roadster mould.

Naturally, the long bonnet and rear-set cockpit are retained, as is the wide, wheel-at-each-corner stance (the body overhangs are now shorter than ever before). We're sure the edgier new

shape is not too everyone's taste, but in the metal the styling makes an undeniable impact, and one Mazda says is as much about emphasising the car itself as it is about accentuating its occupants.

Nestled in a cockpit made purposefully snug, the MX-5's driver and passenger sit lower and nearer to the vehicle's midpoint than before. The body-coloured caps atop the door cards are said to "emphasise the feeling of oneness between the driver and car", visually flowing into the bonnet when viewed from behind the wheel.

It's a compact space, and one taller drivers may find places their eye-line in parallel with the top of the windscreen. However, the primary controls do fall easily to reach, and act to brace the driver in an optimal position for, shall we say, enthusiastic driving.

We mentioned at the outset that the MX-5 was about offering more of 'less', and that's more or less true. The latest generation presents a higher standard equipment level than ever before, with many of the technology items identical to those found in MZD Connect-equipped Mazda2 and Mazda3 variants.

It's also the safest roadster Mazda has ever built, with many of the brand's iACTIVSENSE driver aids to be made available optionally in addition to roll-over protection bars, a full complement of airbags and an active bonnet aimed at reducing injury in the event of a collision with a pedestrian.

But as you'd expect from any roadster, the MX-5 is not worth a pinch if it doesn't deliver that feel behind the wheel. Mazda calls



it $Jinba\ Ittai-$ a sense of being at one with the car - we call it driving like a true roadster should. Fortunately, this sensation hasn't just been retained, it's been improved.

There's a linearity to the throttle which improves the MX-5's drivability at speed, yet still manages to provide enough urge in urban driving for decent response at tip-in. The engine complies readily to input, and in spite of its relative lack of torque feels uninhibited, spinning freely to (and just over) its 7500rpm rev ceiling.

The engine note — tuned specifically to deliver a 'beat' in its middle ranges — is the best we've yet sampled from Mazda's SKYACTIV range, and with just the right amount of resonance from the exhaust is engaging, especially at higher engine speeds between corners.

The new MX-5 seems to defy its meagre on-paper figures. It will happily 'pull' from lower in the rev range without needing to downshift in ordinary driving scenarios, but drop a cog or two and the little 1.5 races briskly to redline offering progressive acceleration for overtaking.

The clutch and gear throw complement the process perfectly, recalling a feel (both ergonomic and mechanical) of some of the better Japanese sports cars of days gone by (think W20-series MR2 or AP2-series Honda S2000).

Mazda says it has gone to great lengths to provide the driver with the right level of haptic feedback from all its primary controls. It's a sensation noted from the ideally spaced pedal box, through to the weighting and response of the pedals and gearshift and even the electrically-assisted steering.

The smaller-diameter steering wheel conveys the feedback from the front wheels with a similar alacrity to the non-assisted NAseries once at speed. It's responsive, but not abrupt off-centre, and linear as the wheel loads into corners.

The return action is equally smooth, and free of any of the 'digital' feel usually associated with electric units, though if we had to nit-pick, a little less assistance from the motor would be a good thing.

Our drive of prototype ND-series MX-5s also revealed a better balance from the suspension. The car is less inclined to pitch on harder corner entry, allowing a smoother transition to corner exit. The body stays flatter and feels more taut, resulting in a better spread of grip across even challenging road surfaces.

Mazda says it has worked to ensure the suspension is doing more work than the tyre, and it shows when deliberately carrying too much pace to evoke mid-corner under or oversteer. Here the MX-5 remains quite neutral, tending to slight oversteer only when provoked. It's a cleaner action than exhibited from the NC-series, which was prone to 'snap' to oversteer when provoked in the same manner.

The ride quality too is much improved. The stiffer body transmits no unwanted vibrations through to the cabin, and on 16-inch wheels the jarring over sharp road edges is minimal. We noticed no scuttle shake or vibration through the doors that's so often exhibited in convertible vehicles, and the compromise between ride comfort and handling agility is as good straight out of the box as we've yet experienced from the MX-5.





It's a similar story when it comes to braking. The action of the pedal is such that it loads progressively through its short travel, providing the kind of feedback needing to trail brake into corners, or to just make a smooth stop at the lights.

There's adequate power from the four-wheel discs, too, the MX-5's lower kerb weight eliminating a lot of stress from the system under harder brake applications. There's certainly less pitching under braking than before, which is great for harder runs requiring late braking into corners.

The MX-5 is a roadster through and through, and as such we expect most will enjoy it with the roof down. The canvas top is easily lifted into place while seated and clicks into its latch with the help of a small mechanical lever above the rear-view mirror.

There's very little wind rustle with the roof off, and like the calm, steady breeze that quarter windows used to provide in cars of yore, the Mazda's top-down draft flows quietly around your arms and chest, and not around the back of your neck or face.

Roof-on, the MX-5 is quieter than expected, with only a hint of rustle across the top of the canvas' peak. It's not as quiet as heavily insulated convertibles from European prestige marques, but it's not meant to be. That said, it's still possible to have a (hands-free) phone conversation without raising your voice even at freeway speeds.

As a shorter driver, I found the controls all well within reach and the field of vision excellent. I dare say taller drivers may find their line of sight level with the top of the windscreen frame, though two six-foot colleagues said they experienced no real problems.

The space etched out in the cockpit is rather impressive and, although it's snug, there is enough leg, elbow and head room to stretch out between corners. The passenger side is even more accommodating, with enough legroom to allow both legs to sit straight.

And with no glovebox to consume precious room, there's even space to bend one's knees when getting in and out (it doesn't sound like a big deal, but ask any girl in a short skirt to explain what I mean).

Again, if I had to nit-pick I'd say the console's elbow rest could be around 10mm higher to avoid the driver's forearm striking the infotainment controller when shifting gears. I'd have also liked telescopic adjustment from the steering column and perhaps a little more adjustment from the hard plastic sun visors. Otherwise, it's a pretty sweet use of space.

On test and through some rather enthusiastically driven mountain roads the MX-5 used an average of 9.5L/100km. That's rather high in the scheme of things but, in the absence of an official fuel consumption figure to reference, we expect a combined ADR figure of around 5.9L/100km based on Mazda's published CO, figure.

On the whole, however, the new MX-5 shows a lot of promise. The base model is far more lively than we expected and even in prototype form is wonderfully cohesive and entirely engaging.

It seems MX-5 fans need not have worried: the MX-5 formula has changed only for the better and we can't wait for a drive of a production model on home soil later this year.









2015 Mazda MX-5 1.5 SKYACTIV-G pricing and specifications:

From under \$40,000 (estimated) Price

Engine 1.5-litre four-cylinder petrol

Output 96kW/150Nm Six-speed manual Transmission

> Fuel 5.9L/100km (estimated, combined)

139q/km (NEDC combined) CO,

Safety rating TBA

ND-series NC-series Measuring up: 3915mm 4020mm Length: Width: 1730mm 1720mm 1255mm 1235mm Height: Wheelbase: 2315mm 2330mm Kerb weight: 1000kg 1167kg (soft-top (hard-top 1.5 manual) 2.0 manual)



- » Torque delivery and handling
- Better use of interior space
- It's a soft-top again!

Not so much:

- No steering reach adjustment
- Taller drivers may struggle
- There's no glovebox!











Book review

■ Words: Alan Bennett

This is the book if you want a detailed explanation of most things MX-5 - perfect for those who think detailing your car involves elbow grease when in fact reading is the key required skill.

As you will probably be aware, the MX-5 holds the Guinness world record for the best-selling two-seater sports car ever produced. The 2015 ND will surely push this to over the one million mark.

However, it was from humble beginnings in 1976 that conversations between a journalist by the name of Bob Hall and Mazda's Kenichi Yamamotto that started the journey.

From their teams in Japan and the US, Mazda designers started sketching and revising until the first MX-5 (*Miata* in the US, *Eunos* in Japan) — or NA as we like to call it — debuted in a plastic body in April 1987. It would be two years before a prototype was driven by journalists in Japan and then not until February 1989 that actual production began. By November 1992 some 250,000 cars had been produced.

For those that were lucky enough to hear Tom Matano speak in Melbourne a few years ago, there is a cameo mention of his role as 'the father of the MX-5' as one of the core early designers in Japan.

Thirteen months later, the 300,000th car rolled off the production line. By February 1999 this had reached 500,00 cars — if they were lined up end to end they would stretch for nearly 2,000 kilometres — which explains why the traffic is getting so bad ... too many people lining up cars along the country's freeways!

Twelve years later and 900,000 cars had been produced, with more special and limited editions than Cricket Australia!

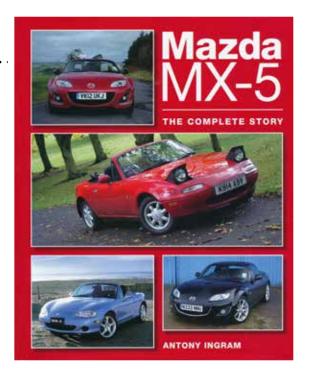
This book has facts and figures to keep you engrossed until your head explodes; for example, the rarest of the rare models was the coupe launched in 2004 with only 350 produced.

The book covers, in some detail, the various models' specifications.

For example, did you know the NA 1.6 reached 100km/h in a rather pedestrian 8.8 seconds but this is faster than the NB 1.6 by 0.9 seconds (who approved that?). The 2-litre NC brought this down to a more respectable 7.9 seconds but there is no mention of the Australian-only NB SP — which was only slightly faster.

But then the MX-5 was never about speed, as the book explains; it has

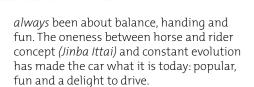




Mazda MX-5 The Complete Story

176pp

Author: Antony Ingram
Published 2013 by The Crowood Press



The book outlines the changes through the years and also details what it's like to drive the core NA, NB and NC models today (well, in 2012). It also provides advice on what mechanical components to check and concludes that "A good MX-5 will provide years of reliable fun, while costing very little to buy and run."

In summary, this is a book for the detail minded seeking an extensive history, abundant photographs, specifications (did I mention detail?) and more numbers than a spreadsheet can add up.

Disclaimer: I won a copy of this book in 2014 as a prize for contributions to *mxtra*. ●



Chapter chatter ...

18.1.15 | **Northern Tasmania** ■ Words: Bruce Harvey ■ Photos: Kelly Berggren, Jill Steer, Cheryl Murray, Bruce Harvey

The cryptic title for this run came

from a spur of the moment decision to have a drive into the Narawntapu National Park. where the "Bottle-Brush Snacks" caravan was discovered on the edge of the bush waiting for the hungry



Whether it was the run title or the need to get out for a post-Christmas blowout, the net result was 18 cars and more than 30 people all lined up down the side of the green at Westbury. A random alternate A or B group split was made, with Kelly and Carl – having been provided with a map and some route details - leading Group B out

Group A followed a suitable distance behind but soon became the leaders when Group B had to backtrack because of a bridge closure and, once Kelly had advised of the problem, Group A was able to make the detour without backtracking.

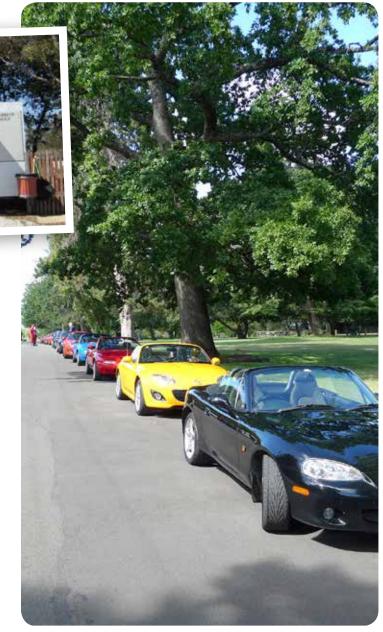
The morning drive took in Hagley, Bishopbourne, Blackwood creek and Bracknell, where Group A stopped and let the B group catch and pass. From here it was a short drive – providing the right roads are taken – back to Westbury and lunch on the grass under the trees.

The talk over lunch featured quite a bit of discussion over where the Ice Creams in the Bush might lead but, with all the suggestions, no-one actually guessed the final destination. Lunch complete, Kelly rounded up her Bs and set off with a happy group of multi-coloured MX-5s. The afternoon's route linked some of our favourite roads including Dunorlan, Weegena, Merseylea and Harford Targa stages so, after 15 minutes or so, Group A followed.

After crossing the Bass highway, taking the Harford Targa stage in reverse, we emerged on to the Frankford Highway and were able to head down the Bakers Beach road into the Narawntapu National Park, and 22km later the old caravan trading as Bottle Brush Snacks was around the

The group actually emptied the van's freezer and some had a short wait for an ice cream while the owners made a quick dash home to replenish the freezer!

Nonetheless, it was a great way to finish the run and, as always, an enjoyable day in northern Tasmanian with a group of astute MX-5 owners.





▲ Top: by the green in Westbury. Above: lunch at Westbury.



■ Organiser: Bruce Harvey

Carl's happy!





Chapter chatter ...

18.1.15 | Southern Tasmania

■ Words: Michelle & John Waldock ■ Photos: Caz Timbrell, Nigel Honey, John Waldock ■ Organisers: John & Michelle Waldock





A summer twilight run sounds so tempting — tops down, a short but fun drive through the countryside and afternoon tea with friends ...

What's not to like?

Nothing, except the weather gods had taken the day off and had forgotten to turn on the summer weather before they left.

Of course, being (mostly) native Tasmanians, everybody turned up at the meeting place wearing typical Tassie summer clothing: hats, coats and scarves!

We had a great turnout with 12 cars in the group. New members Ed Podolski and Nigel Honey came along and it was great to meet them. We also met Quentin Jones, who joined last year and popped past to say hi and show us his new, cool silver NA.

After the usual chat and drivers' briefing, we headed off for a short run to New Norfolk. We headed off the highway, taking a detour along Glenlusk Rd, which is narrow and winding and lots of fun. Rejoining the highway we arrived in New Norfolk a tad early, so we decided to take another little loop north of the town, arriving back just in time for afternoon tea at the Patchwork Café.

The café is situated in the grounds of Willow Court, the historic complex of



buildings that used to house the lunatic asylum for greater Hobart (there's a lot of folklore surrounding this building, but that's another story...). The complex has been converted into various shops, and the café is in the converted old chapel.

Afternoon tea was lovely, and it was nice to get together with Chapter members

and catch up on Christmas and holiday goings on. The café owner was very keen that we park our cars on the lawns so that he could take some pictures of us for his Facebook page, which we did after much manoeuvering. After which, we all headed back down to the highway home.



Chapter chatter ...

25.1.15 | Western Victoria

■ Words: Karen Bradshaw ■ Photos: Karen Bradshaw, Bronwyn Roche ■ Organisers: Ian & Karen Bradshaw

Aussie, Aussie, Aussie ~ Oi, Oi, Oi!!

It's our Australia Day Run – what better way to celebrate our great country than zooming around in a MX-5 with a terrific bunch of like minded Aussies?

We started with nine cars meeting Jeff Woolf at Phoenix College in Sebastopol to travel out to the Royal Palace of Everett in the Kingdom of Wallinduc. In true Western Victoria Chapter tradition, a tradition that was set in concrete by former Chapter Captain, John Gleeson, a U-turn was performed at Smythesdale with Jeff having turned at a town too soon!

Zooming through Cape Clear they decided to check out the lighthouse without an ocean before travelling on to the Everetts' for morning tea. What a sight the convoy made rolling into the royal driveway where King Alan and Oueen Dawn and their loyal subjects – the Gillicks and the Roches and, last of all, we commoners the Bradshaw's.

After lots of chit chat and an over indulgence of morning tea, Captain Ian welcomed everyone to the run, including new members Travis Bawden and John Thorne on their first run as well as those from the Central Chapter and North-Eastern Victoria Chapter – great to see new faces joining us.

We then lined up at the palace gates and, with 13 cars in our royal convoy, headed off to Lismore where we went past the old, now-dilapidated flax mill. It was then on to Pomborneit to meet up with two cars from Geelong and one from Melbourne ... although we had to send Ian in search of them – they had gone walkabout around the Pombo Market.

After this we zoomed around Lake Purrumbete and onwards to Cobden for a "quick" toilet break but, with 17 cars, there was nothing quick about it! Rounded up once again, we ventured on to Simpson for lunch with the rain putting in an appearance as

we pulled up, so the roofs were quickly raised and a mad dash was made for the undercover area. A little rain was NOT going to dampen our enthusiasm for fun!

Some had to search for food at the local supermarket as the only takeaway shop was closed – for a 90th birthday. After grazing and yacking for about an hour we headed off again, (some with the roof up, some down); this time we went a round-about way to Gellibrand then had a regroup at Beech Forest, where we had a quick talk before heading on to tackle the non-stop curvy corners of Turtons Track – which presented a few more challenges than usual with a lot of traffic going in the opposite direction.

We did another regroup at Forrest where we farewelled four MX-5s which headed back to their homes. The remainder of the convoy headed off towards Colac then Cressy where new member Travis left us. We had a change of leader with King Alan and Queen Dawn leading their royal convoy of loyal subjects back to their palace for an Aussie BBQ.

We had a right royal time talking about everything under the sun and bragging about our MX-5s, making new friends and of course feeding our faces. We celebrated Patrice Van Velzen's birthday, which was the next day (26 January – Australia Day) and Bob de Bont's birthday from the previous day. Of course the birthday cake was a passionfruit sponge that was quickly devoured, even though we were stuffed to the hilt! All too soon it was time for everyone to abandon the Palace of Everett and head for our respective homes, after a day thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

A big thank you to Alan and Dawn for welcoming us into their home for morning tea and our Aussie BBQ. It was very much appreciated by your royal subjects.













Shannon's All Japanese **Car & Bike Show and Shine**

18 January saw us travelling once again to the Ballarat Showgrounds for the second annual Shannons All Japanese Car & Bike Show and Shine - wow, what a mouth full!

What a turn out there was ... word had certainly spread since last year's show with a massive increase in cars and bikes attending. There were cars and bikes coming and going all day. It was a great fundraiser for *Dragons* Abreast, a national organisation for breast cancer

In total we had eight MX-5s to show off. Woolfie spoilt our fun by putting on his sunscreen before he got there – he is getting wiser in his old age!

What a great day and a change of pace: just sitting, talking, eating and relaxing by our cars and promoting the cars to friendly passers-by and in between stretching our legs by visiting the Trash & Treasure next door.

The day was over in a flash. We didn't receive any trophies, pipped at the post for the club with the most in attendance.

Thank you to the very keen MX-5ers who came along to show off their little beauties; they certainly stood out from the crowd ... but then I am biased!

~ Karen Bradshaw





First track day of the year ...

■ Words: Randy Stagno Navarra ■ Photos: Daniel White, Vanessa Macaulay (www.redbookphotography.com.au)

Certainly for me excitement levels are high. Seems forever since I've done a track day. Plus Phillip Island is a great circuit and one of my favourites, I couldn't wait for the working week to end so I could head down to the Island.

Saturday dawned and it looked like it was going to be a perfect day and, with a shot of coffee to get the morning started, it's off to the circuit we go.

As always one of the highlights of getting to the track is meeting up with everyone. This is my 10th year of motor sport with the Club so I've been lucky enough to build a great extended Club family. One person I always enjoy catching up with as soon as I can is Robert Downes, who I regard as my mentor. I've always enjoyed the tussles we had when I first started and his words of wisdom were, and still are, always welcome.

So, lots of hellos and well wishes, lots of smiles and happy people who were about to take on the Island ... and, more importantly, the weather was great. Plus today held a bit more importance for me as my dad was competing as well. Not in a MX-5, mind you ... but at least his Mini starts with M!

Scrutineering and drivers' briefing out of the way and off we went for the first session. Two corners in and I knew it was going to be a bad day in the office. I'd been chasing a miss all week and thought I'd solved the issue. I was wrong, couldn't even rev the car past 6,000rpm! Ah well, back in the pits to see if anything can be done. Swapping the coil packs around was a desperate measure but it seemed to work. Rather than a constant miss it became a random miss. My day was done. It became a test day for me, trying a few different things to see if they worked out. Still ended up enjoying myself – how could I not?

Turned out to be a great day for quite a few people. Great fun chatting in the pits and hearing what was going on out there. Now, social members might not know this ... but we are a competitive bunch. There are small groups of drivers who are always trying to best their mates.

One of the most competitive is the "Noel, Peter and Max Class". The sledging that goes on between these guys would make an Aussie cricketer blush. They definitely take no prisoners. As always, Brendan Beavis flew the flag in his well-modified aero machine to scare some of the guys in cars with fancy brand names. And per normal Paul Ledwith was hard on his heels, followed by Russell Garner.

Most impressive to me was Colin Denman-Jones (right). I always enjoyed the tussle with Colin in Standard NC Class, but now with a few quality mods on his car he has really shown what a well-driven NC can do. His time of 1:55.7 is tremendous and well worth mentioning. It's fantastic to see all his



hard work finally rewarded. It was good to chat with a few of the new guys and hear about their experiences on a new track. The comments are always positive and you can't wipe the smile off their faces.

On a personal level I enjoyed spending the day with my dad, from whom I got my love of motor sport. It's only his second event after a 30-year break and, after each session, he was really happy to have knocked a few seconds off his initial time – which is what our track days are all about. I was lucky to do three laps in his Mini JCW GP, but that is a story for another day.

So, time to get my car sorted and ready for the next track day. Can't wait!

Max Lloyd, Peter Phillips, Robert Downes and George Vellis











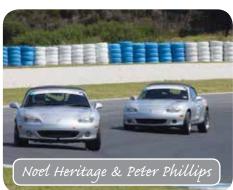
















Warning: Some kids don't like MX-5s!

■ Words: Peter Ferguson, Eastern Victoria Chapter Captain

We were in bed but still awake at 1am on a recent Sunday morning when we heard a noise that we thought was the neighbour's cat on our roof.

I went out next morning to find a big mess, but not from a cat!!

Some local kids had decided to grab a couple of rocks from a neighbour's garden (one of them about 150mm long) and toss them at my NA MX-5 and BT50 ute.

The big rock hit the screen and bounced back onto the bonnet, denting it in four places.

The second rock appears to have been aimed at the side window of the ute, but missed and hit the door just below the glass line – denting it nicely – then bounced off and dented the MX-5 driver's door.

We live in a country town and certainly don't expect this kind of thing to happen – the police that attended tell me it's pretty unusual

In future I won't be so lazy and will put the car back in the rear shed like I SHOULD have!

The rock managed to deform the screen surround above where the rock hit so even putting a new screen in has turned out to be expensive, let alone the other repairs that are yet to be actioned

As it is my "other" MX-5 (also have an NC), I have just put it on "club permit" plates and stopped comprehensively insuring it as it can only be driven 45 days a year. Perfect timing!

The message is – if you can park the car off the street, do so! ●



Mazda Introduces "Mazda LM55 Vision Gran Turismo" ...

... a virtual sports car exclusive for a video game

Mazda Motor Corporation has released a virtual sports car called the "Mazda LM55 Vision Gran Turismo" developed for Gran Turismo 6*, a PlayStation 3 racing simulation game.

The car was created as part of the "Vision Gran Turismo" project for Gran Turismo 6, the latest Gran Turismo series developed by Polyphony Digital Inc. A close collaboration between Mazda and Polyphony led to the creation of the LM55.

For the design of the LM55, the Mazda design team blended agility with elegance in the car's dynamic silhouette. While iterating Mazda's hallmark KODO design language on the front face, its stance is reminiscent of the famed 787B that took overall victory at the 1991 24 Hours of Le Mans, is powerful yet graceful.

Mazda will continue to strive to become a brand that enriches customers' lives and maintains special bonds with customers through a variety of "touch points".



* $\it Gran \, Turismo \, 6$ is a driving simulation game software exclusively developed for PlayStation 3 by Polyphony Digital Inc., and is sold by Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

Gran Turismo 6 ™ & © 2013 Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Developed by Polyphony Digital

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