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Mazda Motor Corporation 1920-2020

a century of defying convention

* From Hiroshima cork producer to global carmaker, Mazda celebrates 100 years of innovation.
* Mazda to mark a century of pioneering design, style and engineering success.
* Company’s vibrant history will be showcased at the Geneva Motor Show in March.

Today Mazda celebrated its 100th anniversary with a ceremony at its Hiroshima headquarters that starts a year of events during which the company will remember its past and look to the future. And with more than half-century history in Europe, the celebration continues at the 2020 Geneva Motor Show in March.

**Defying convention**

The courage to question common practices and forge new paths in engineering and design that others considered unfeasible has driven the team at Mazda since 1920. Along the way Mazda was the first Asian brand to win the Le Mans 24 Hour race in 1991, commercially launched the rotary engine in the iconic Cosmo Sport 110S, created the world’s best-selling two seat roadster: the Mazda MX-5, which has sold over one million cars since its launch in 1989 and with Skyactiv-X introduced the world’s first production compression ignition petrol engine.

**From cork to cars**

100 years ago Mazda was a Hiroshima cork producer until Jujiro Matsuda, an industrialist, took charge of Toyo Cork Kogyo Co., Ltd in 1921 and transformed the business first into a machine tool producer and then a vehicle manufacturer.

The first model was a three-wheeled truck – the Mazda-Go – that went on sale in 1931. It proved popular and underwent continual improvement, for example receiving an innovative four-speed transmission in 1938 that reduced fuel consumption by 20%. After the Second World War, truck manufacturing resumed only a few months after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

Commercial vehicles remained in the focus after the war and the first passenger car arrived in1960 with the Mazda R360. The car was a hit in Japan’s budding kei-car segment, paving the way for the successful line-up of Mazda cars that we see today.

**Achieving the impossible**

In 1961, the company signed a licensing deal with German carmaker NSU to develop and produce its new compact, lightweight Wankel rotary engines. The engineers in Japan then pulled off what many thought impossible.

In 1967, the futuristic Mazda Cosmo Sport 110S became the world’s first production model with a rotary engine. It was the start of a remarkable success story that would see the brand launch numerous models including the Mazda RX-7 and sell almost two million rotary-powered vehicles over the years. Mazda would also prove its technological prowess on the track, becoming the first Asian manufacturer to win the gruelling 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1991 with the four-rotor Mazda 787B – the only victorious car with a non-piston engine.

The Mazda rotary engine inspired Mazda’s ground-breaking Skyactiv Technology range of engines, transmissions, platforms and car bodies optimised in the name of maximum efficiency and to bring *Jinba Ittai*, the connection between car and driver, to all Mazda models.

**Distinct identity – a love of driving**

Whilst the rotary engine was an example of Mazda’s devotion to fun-to-drive cars, it was after the company name officially changed to Mazda Motor Corporation in 1984 that it really showed its love of driving with the launch in 1989 of a lightweight roadster called the Mazda MX-5 a time when two-seater convertibles were virtually extinct. Today, four model generations later, the Mazda MX-5 remains the top-selling roadster in history, having surpassed the one-million-production-units mark in 2016.

It is the love of driving that is the DNA found in the whole Mazda range today and will remain for the next 100 years as the automotive industry continues to go through significant change.

**The next 100 years**

Today, Mazda has a range of cars, designed using the Kodo – Soul of Motion design language that are winning awards across the globe and the brand continues to defy convention with the launch of its first electric vehicle, the Mazda MX-30.

A model for the future, it also pays respect to Mazda’s past with a cabin featuring eco-friendly cork, harking back to the company’s humble beginnings as Toyo Cork Kogyo.

“As we look ahead to the next 100 years, we will continue to challenge ourselves to create unique products, technologies and experiences that our customers love,” said President and CEO Akira Marumoto.

Commenting on Mazda’s centenary Mazda Motors UK Managing Director, Jeremy Thomson, said: “Mazdas have been sold in the UK for over 50 years and today, just as in the past, UK consumers love the style, quality and driver involvement of our cars. The UK’s passion for the MX-5 means we’ve sold more than 130,000 here and today all our cars feature the essence of the *Jinba Ittai* driver-and-car-as-one philosophy that is exemplified by the MX-5.

Since the inception of Mazda Motors UK in 2001 we’ve sold a total of 795,883 cars in the UK, so during the course of 2020 we will be celebrating the centenary of Mazda Corporation and the many ground-breaking vehicles in our past, plus looking forward to our exciting future including the forthcoming Mazda MX-30 electric vehicle, which will arrive in the UK next year.”

More information on the Mazda Centenary can be found here:

<https://www.mazda-press.com/eu/about-mazda/100-years-mazda/>

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Further press information is available at [www.mazda-press.co.uk](http://www.mazda-press.co.uk)

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