

# Taking a look at the 2008 Mazda RX-8 R3

• from MAZDA on page C6

smooth there is no sensation of how fast it is turning over.

The electric power steering is also light, a bit too light for me, but nonetheless quick and effective without that ratchet feeling so common in first generation electric steering boxes.

Besides the rotary engine, the RX-8 is unique in having demidoors to the back seat often called suicide doors. They are like French doors when opened. The backseat is more decorative than useable, but you can fit two small fry back there.

Base price of the 2009 RX-8 is \$37,295 but the R3 package bumps that to \$40,780.

The most visual difference is a deep front spoiler with large air inlets and a large rear wing. The special 19-inch wheels (18-inch standard) have spokes with a design that incorporates a stylized Wankel rotor. The interior is fitted out in leather and special Recaro front sports seats with red stitching.

Standard on all RX-8s including the R3 is a Bose premium sound system with nine speakers, cruise, climate control, rain-sensing wipers, automatic headlamp leveling and too much more to print.

Along with standard ABS, traction control and dynamic stability control (DSC), the R3 is fitted with a limited slip rear differential.

When you have an engine that revs this freely and a car with equal front and rear weight distribution



**ABOVE:** Forty years of research and continual development have led to the 2009 Mazda RX-8 R3 sportscar with its unique rotary engine. The R3 is fully equipped with no options but contains more than a dozen extras not found in other RX-8s.



**RIGHT:** Also unique are the French doors on the RX-8 that offer access to the back seat. This R3 version features premium leather and special Recaro sports seats.

you get a platform that tends to oversteer, that is, it likes to nose in instead of wanting to stay going straight. This is great if you know how to capitalize on it, but if the back starts to come around, a spin is in the offing. The limited slip locks up the rear wheels so one wheel doesn't start revolving faster than the other thus keeping grip under control (mostly) in the process.

Everything about the RX-8 is so different. It's the engine, the handling, the sound and also the looks. My tester was fitted in a glistening black like the skin of the monster in the Alien movies.

Forty years in the making, the rotary-powered RX-8 R3 is for those who want something a little out of the ordinary but with that Zoom Zoom DNA that makes all Mazdas such fun cars to drive.

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