



The Mazda Ibuki—the name comes from a Japanese word that refers to “breathing new energy into” and “adding vigor.”

37th Tokyo Motor Show was bigger and better than ever

By Rob Beintema

TOKYO, JAPAN — The end of October signaled the first days of press previews here at the 2003 Tokyo Motor Show. The “37th Tokyo Motor Show - Passenger Cars and Motorcycles” at the Makuhari Messe Convention Center in Chiba City features 263 companies from 14 countries and trade exhibits by several national government exhibits (including Canada).

This year’s show was bigger and better than ever with over 40 Automotive World Premieres slated for the two press days and a host of regional, motorcycle and parts industry debuts as well.

Although all the world’s automotive players gathered here, most of the concepts, new technologies and automotive surprises pulled out from under wraps were unveiled by Japanese auto manufacturers who saved their brightest and best ideas for this important global stage on home turf.

One of those companies—Mazda Motor Corporation “zoom-zoomed” into the 2003 Tokyo Motor Show with the strongest line of production and concept cars in company history.

Mazda recently completed the final stage of an 18-month regeneration program when they launched their latest model—the new 2004 Mazda3. This compact sedan and hatchback replacement for Protegé joins a lineup that includes the still unique Mazda Miata, the MPV minivan, the revolutionary RX-8 4-seater sports car, the new midsize Mazda6 and the new subcompact Mazda2, designed for Europe and Asia.

All of these recent additions have received awards and critical acclaim from media and, more importantly, they have received the kind of global customer approval that has driven Mazda’s sales to new heights.

But completing the final chapter on their corporate rejuvenation plan does not mean that Mazda has run out of ideas. Some of the concepts rumoured to be debuting today include:

IBUKI CONCEPT

With all the changes to the rest of the lineup, we can count on a future evolution of Miata and the two-seat Ibuki concept, an open-top, lightweight sports car hints at a possible design direction for Mazda’s Roadster.

The Mazda Ibuki concept (the name comes from a Japanese word that refers to “breathing new energy into” and “adding vigor”) reaches back to the Miatas’ 1989 origins and hints towards one possible approach for an upcoming Roadster/MX-5 model.

The Ibuki features a clean and simple design, accented on the concept by a frameless windscreen, and indicators integrated into the A-pillars. Powered by the MZR 1.6-liter, four-cylinder engine, the Ibuki concept is built on a super-front-midship platform (as also found in the Mazda RX-8) that places all major components within the wheelbase area. Compared with the current MX-5 Miata, the engine is positioned approximately 400mm further to the rear, while the air conditioner unit is located behind the seats. Moving the weight back reduces yaw inertia moment, enhancing pure fun drivability—the oneness between car and driver that has been central to the Roadster’s ongoing success.

ROADSTER TURBO & COUPE

Other Miata derivatives at the show include the Roadster Turbo, a more powerful limited-edition twist on Mazda’s best-selling sports car. The turbocharged 1.8-liter DOHC engine delivers additional power and torque, particularly at speeds from 40 to 80 km/h.

The Roadster Turbo’s suspension has been upgraded with larger diameter anti-roll bars, larger tires, stiffer dampers and springs rates and the Turbo’s body has been lowered by 10 mm.

And a hardtop version of Miata—the Roadster Coupe—is already available in various body styles in Japan, courtesy of Mazda Engineering and Technology, a subsidiary that specializes in the development of special edition models.

Unfortunately, the very limited Coupe will not make it to North America but Canadian customers will see some turbocharged Mazdaspeed Miatas by early 2004.

KUSABI CONCEPT

Mazda’s Kusabi concept was first shown at the 2003 Frankfurt Auto Show and is based on the concept of a new everyday sports sub-compact, offering unique values from its conventional counterparts. A “Twin-Lift” hatchback design features dual hatches with two opening modes: a longitudinal hinge in the center of the roof allows individual opening of the hatches from either side of the car, or they can be opened together from the rear in the conventional hatchback manner. The design is aggressively funky for the segment with a shape that is low and wide with short front and rear overhangs. The flat roof and overall wedge shape was the inspiration for the name—Kusabi, which means wedge in Japanese.

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