# Mazda MX-5RF 2.0 Homura – Road Test

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Author:

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UK
BG24 CWY

Sometimes, the simple things in life please the most and that’s certainly the case with the Mazda MX-5, writes Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales).

The classic yet modern sports two-seater is straightforward, front-engine and rear-wheel-drive engineering, but underneath it embodies some of the latest technology to enhance owning, driving and enjoying the open-air experience in safety and, when the sun’s not shining, in sophisticated style with a snuggly fitting roof.

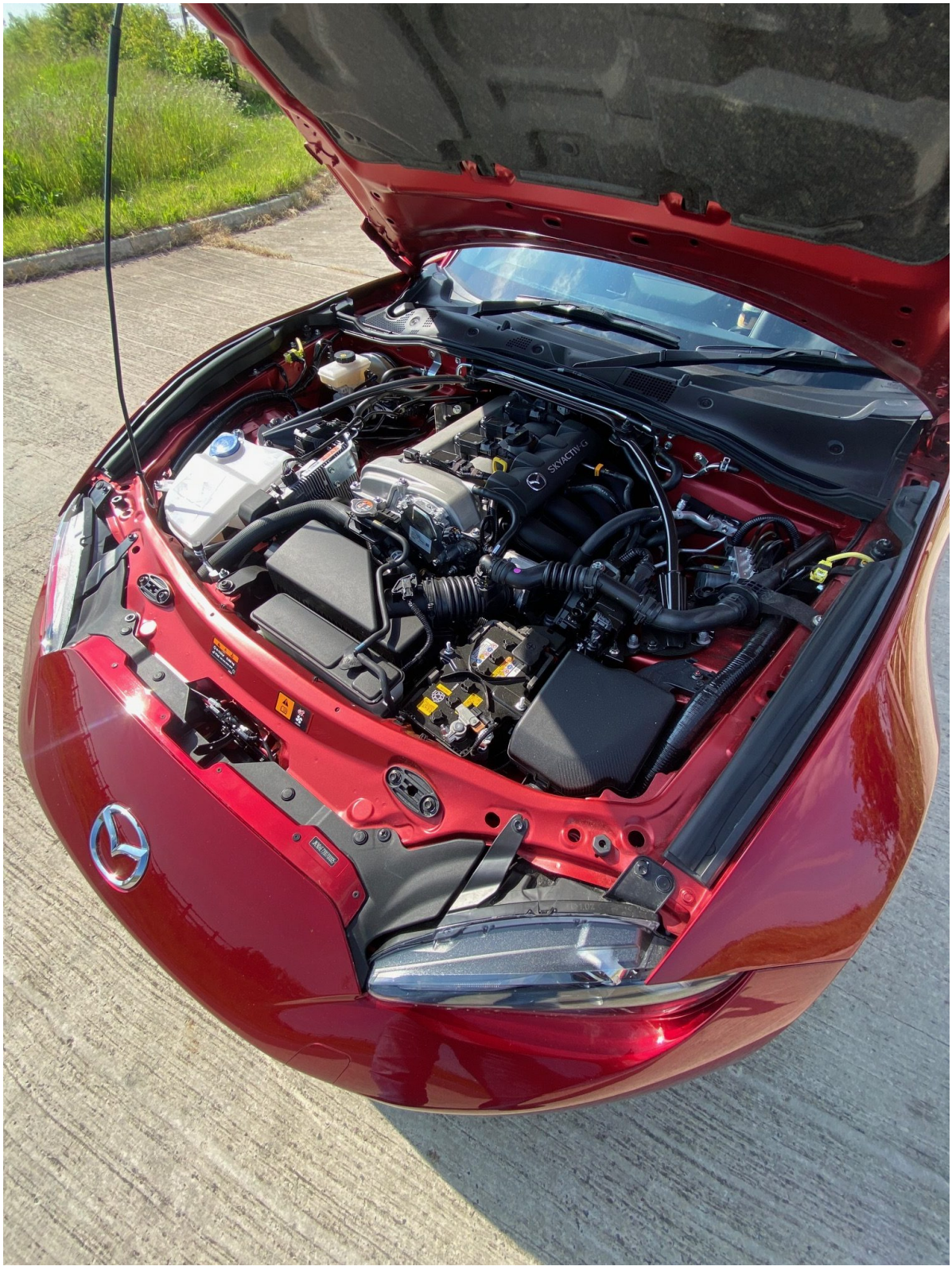
Earlier this year Mazda unveiled the current range. The eight models feature four Roadster and four RF models with a choice of Prime-Line, Exclusive-Line and Homura trim grades. Prime-Line cars are powered by the 132 PS 1.5-litre Skyactiv-G engine, while Exclusive-Line can be chosen with either the 1.5-litre or the 184 PS 2.0-litre Skyactiv-G engine. The range-topping Homura is exclusively matched to the 184 PS unit. Prices for the 2024 Mazda MX-5 range start at £28,000 for the 1.5-litre Prime-Line Roadster.


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Launched as a soft-top in 1989 it has become the world's best selling two-seater convertible with over 1.25M built and 135,000 finding homes with UK drivers, and in 2005 it gained the powered roof version, which we have just retested with the latest 2.0 litre Skyactiv-G petrol engine after earlier evaluating the smaller engined model.

The 2.0 litre engine has been refined to produce low emissions while not sacrificing performance and diluting driving pleasure.

Although it's a higher revving engine than before, the software has been tweaked to sharpen responses and maximum power has risen from 160 to 184 PS while torque is also improved to 205 Nm (151 lb.ft) at 4,000 rpm.


SKYACTIV-G

These important yet subtle changes have kept the sporting edge under the driver's right foot and left hand with a real flick-of-the-wrist short throw six-speed manual transmission.

The clutch had a longer travel than I remembered on the other model but it allowed for a very progressive take-up and was not heavy to use.

Gear ratios were excellent for pulling away from rest, through intermediate changes on country or urban roads and proved long-legged on motorways, which meant we averaged just over 46 mpg overall, which was some 5 mpg better than suggested by the 'official' tested consumption figure. Our return certainly brings into doubt suggestions in Japan that Mazda has not been testing cars as it should according to the country's legislators.

The MX-5 handling is truly enjoyable, light around town with excellent balance and feeling on open roads, plenty of grip and no nasty surprises as it's all easily controlled.

Underfoot the brakes were progressive yet strong and the manual lever handbrake – an increasing rarity these days – held it on our test slope.

Secondary controls were closely packed on the wheel, around the column or just infront on the dash with some infotainment buttons on the central console by the gearlever.

The 8.8 inches infotainment display was centrally placed and easy to read, integrating with a phone to give mapping, radio, audio and phone functions while dials infront of the driver showed engine and road speed but also packed in fluid levels, odometer, safety alerts and cruise controls which were a bit small and, as a result, not as clear as might have been.


22
15
A/C
29
AUTO
0
AUTO
PASSENGER
AIRBAG
OFF


22
15
A/C
29
AUTO
0
AUTO
START
STOP
ENGINE
PASSENGER
AIRBAG
OFF
1
2
4
6
MX-5

For a sports car the heating and ventilation was excellent with straightforward controls, wide settings and good output, accompanied by powered windows and, of course, a very fast folding or raising hardtop. When this was down with side windows up, the airflow generally went overhead without ruffling the interior too much and when closed it was as good as a fixed coupé model.

Oddments room has always been challenging in a two-seater and the MX-5 was no exception, although Mazda has made a good effort to ease compartments, trays, bins and pockets where-ever it could. It just lacks many places to put items larger than a soft-pack of tissues and even the mobile phone rest barely accommodates an i-10 handset.

The boot could be opened electronically or manually and was big enough to take a weekend bag or some shopping, and while deep and wide it lacked length and also contained towing and emergency kit, so a driver has to carefully think about what they are going to buy or use on a trip.

Inside, the seats were low as expected but were surprisingly comfortable and had a fair but not generous amount of adjustment range although might be a tight fit for anyone over 6-ft or 1.83 m.

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Visibility was restricted over the shoulder due to the B-pillar and high waistline and when the roof was raised only a narrow slit served as a back window. Side and forward sightlines were clear, the wipers cleared the glass over a wide area and at night the headlights were bright and covered reasonable range.

There was a rumble from the road with occasional bump thump from the suspension over bad surfaces but the engine was generally muted and when pushed produced a busier but not unpleasant note. Wind noises were very low.

The MX-5 seemed to wrap itself around a driver and went exactly where pointed with willing

performance and with some electronic aids to keep a driver alert, in lane and away from overtaking vehicles. It's select and sit back speed control worked well in traffic and helped keep up economy.

## VERDICT

This MX-5 is an enjoyable compact sportscar I did not really want to get out of, and when I did I found exiting was not so easy due to the low seating, but it was worth the effort for the enjoyment it delivered and you cannot say that about many cars today.

For: Agile, good performance, excellent economy, great handling and controls, quick folding metal roof.

Against: Very small boot and tight cabin for taller users, some blindspots, nobbly ride, road and engine noise, average warranty.


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FAST FACTS

Model: Mazda MX-5RF 2.0 Homura


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Price:  £37,810

Mechanical: 184 PS 4 cyl 2.0 petrol, 6 speed

Max Speed: 137 mph

0 – 62 mph: 6.8 secs

Combined MPG: 46

Insurance Group: 32A

C02 emissions: 153 g/km

Bik rating: 35%, £680FY, £190SR

Warranty:  3 years/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 3.92 m (12.86 ft), W 1.74 m (5.71 ft), H 1.24 m (4.07 ft)

Bootspace: 127 litres (4.48 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,127 kg (2,485 lb)

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