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Mazda3 GT Sport – First Impressions

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The first test drive of the new Mazda3 186 PS GT Sport with new e-Skyactive X hybrid technology...

By Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

Just when you think things couldn't get better, Mazda has improved its acclaimed Skyactiv engine technology.



Constant engine development and software revisions have improved combustion and power, reduced emissions and extended economy in the latest e-Skyactiv X with hybrid assistance.

We tried it out in the newest popular Mazda3 186 PS GT Sport, costing from just over £28,000. The specification includes 18-inch black alloys, parking sensors, keyless entry, heated front seats and steering wheel, dual zone air conditioning, intelligent headlights, sunroof, rear privacy glass, 12-speaker Bose sound system and powered driver's seat linked to head-up display and driver mirror.

That's a good specification at this price even if it meant a dark interior and rear-seat passengers don't have enormous legroom.



Up front the driver and passenger have adequate room, plenty of adjustment and the former



has a sophisticated memory setting to maintain not only seat but also mirror and the angle of the very useful head-up display onto the windscreen.





The car seems to wrap-around the driver and has really good responses to steering, brakes and throttle as you might expect of a GT Sport hatchback.

The powertrain is so refined now it contrasted with the suspension, which was firm, but also noisy when working away over potholes and ridges in the road surface. Oddments and boot space are both good, and visibility was fairly clear all round when manoeuvring.

For a quick comparison we briefly drove the 165 PS Skyactiv-G powered Mazda CX5 2.0, essentially using the previous engine series to the new e-Skyactiv X.

That showed slightly higher fuel consumption and more engine noise with a bigger demand on the driver to extract the available power over a mixture of roads. It's only a rough



comparison as the SUV is bigger than the hatchback but the difference was noticeable.

Having said that, the CX5 remains a firm favourite with its dynamic features pleasing sporting drivers and its practicality and room is very good.

VERDICT

No doubt we'll see the new engine family gradually extend throughout the Mazda line-up and that will make their internal combustion engines among the best you can buy.

For: Excellent smooth powertrain with flick-of-wrist gearchanges, very good seats, well-equipped, improved economy over previous generation Skyactiv engine.

Against: Firm ride with large wheels & tyres, noisy suspension, very dark interior, short legroom in the back, ungenerous warranty.



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Mini Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Mazda3 186 PS hybrid GT Sport

Price: £28,005

Mechanical: 186 PS 4-cylinder, 2.0 litre petrol, hybrid e-Skyactiv X engine, 6-speed manual

Performance: 134 mph, 0 - 62 mph 8.1 seconds, combined fuel consumption 53.3 mpg, CO2 121 g/km



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Tax costs: BiK company car tax rating 28%, VED First Year road tax £170, Standard rate £145

Insurance Group: 22E

Warranty: 3-years/60,000miles

Size: L 4.46 m (14.63 ft), W 1.80 m (5.91 ft), H 1.44 m (4.72 ft)

Bootspace: 401 to 1,022 litres (14.16 to 36.09 cu.ft)



Kerbweight: 1,941 kg (4,279 lb)



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