The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Wheels: Mazda 3 Poses Challenge to Legendary Golf GTi

By Tim Saunders

March 25, 2013



The MPS boasts a 2.3-liter turbo 260bhp engine and rockets from 0 to 100kph in an eye-watering 6.1 seconds.

The legendary Golf GTi often seems to be the benchmark for other hot hatch manufacturers to follow.

Rarely do any surpass the high standard set by the German manufacturer. But, pleasingly, there might just be a challenger in the form of the Mazda 3. We're not talking about the standard model, though, but the MPS, which boasts a 2.3-liter turbo 260-bhp engine and rockets from zero to 100 kilometers per hour in an eye-watering 6.1 seconds.

We'd better discuss the difference between PS and "bhp." PS or Pferdestärke is German for horse strength and most of us know that bhp is Brake Horse Power. PS is a slightly higher figure than bhp but the difference is minimal. Stick an M in front of the PS, perhaps for major or mighty, and you have the Mazda 3 MPS.

Mazda 3 MPS
OTR from: 1.2 million rubles ($40,000)
0 to 100kph: 6.1 secs
Top speed: 250 kph
Economy: 12.75 kpl

It's got the wherewithal to leave a Golf GTi at the traffic lights. You have to be careful though, because it is front-wheel drive and while pushing this phenomenal amount of power through those front wheels can be a great source of fun, it can also be quite lethal, especially when the roads are wet.

Suffice to say that during my commute on a dreary winter's day, I was unable to push the accelerator all the way to the floor, much as I wanted to, otherwise I would have lost control.

As per usual, morning rush hours are incredibly frustrating, with even more motorists when it rains. It's one of those days when every traffic light turns red. I take a scenic back route and join the motorway at as late a junction as possible in an attempt to avoid the typical snarl-ups and accidents.

We crawl on to the side road joining the highway and then thankfully there's a gap in the monotony. No sooner have I seen it and carefully pushed the accelerator accordingly, we're there, with the equivalent effortless stealth of a cheetah. Why is it that so many drivers insist on hogging the outside lane when the other two are faster flowing? It's very frustrating, but eventually the driver in front gets the message. And so they should, the aggressively styled MPS has a bulbous air vent in the hood, even making the driver of a Porsche "I Spy" wary. The six-speed gearbox is a joy, being stiff and decisive, just how it should be.

I used to own a Mazda Xedos 6, a 2-liter V6, and bitterly miss the style and handling of that car. But the MPS easily matches it and brings a smile to the face just as that used to. And the ride is hard and sporty, too. It's a real joy. The electrically heated leather seats are comfy and it has a useful cruise control. The Bose sound system and electrically folding wing mirrors are a distinct advantage.

A criticism that I have always had of Mazdas as a whole, is the poor use of interior space. Consider the size of the Mazda 3 and it is disappointing that conditions are nothing short of cramped inside. The reason for this is that the dashboard takes up a considerable chunk of room and if this was cut back, space in the front would be improved. The second reason is that the trunk is really pretty large and an inch or two could be lost here without anyone batting an eyelid. This would give rear passengers more space.

It's not unreasonable for the driver of this car to want to transport two children in their car seats, in this case Harriett (2 years old) and Heidi (one week). Harriett has a comfortable but cumbersome front-facing Cosatto car seat while Heidi has a rear facing Britax. Harriett, especially, needs her legroom, otherwise wife Caroline is kicked in the back.

All of this results in Caroline and I having our seats pushed forward to an uncomfortable degree. It's not so bad for me but for Caroline, who has to contend with the intrusion of the

dashboard, it’s not the best experience.

So, performance aside, when compared to the Golf GTI, the 3 MPS does not score as highly simply because of the poor use of interior space. With the best will in the world it’s not one for the family.

Overall the Mazda 3 MPS makes a far better proposition for the affluent, young, free and single, who want to woo the opposite sex with their black alloys and twin exhausts.

Other car reviews can be found at testdrives.biz
Video of the test drive.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/03/25/wheels-mazda-3-poses-challenge-to-legendary-golf-gti-a22685