

# MAZDA 3 MPS



MPS sits very flat when cornering hard. Roll stiffness up by 60%

uncorrupted its overall dynamics are despite all that grunt feeding through the steering wheels.

The 3 MPS certainly feels more planted and stable than the slightly taily SP23. You have to try really hard to step the rear out, and even when it does move, it's of the subtly shifting, balance-enhancing, nose-tightening variety. Indeed, the 3's very high handling limits are definitely a match for its prodigious power. Its steering provides plenty of feedback and has lovely weighting at speed, reducing assistance the harder and faster you go, but it's quite light around town and lacks the sporty meatiness of its in-house rival, the Focus XR5. The Ford and Mazda share brake sizes, though – 320mm vented front discs and 280mm solid rears. Repeated hard stops fail to produce any noticeable fade, or lengthening of pedal travel.

Finally, to the MPS's ride quality. It's a tad jiggly in town, but hammering hard out in the country, it's great – tightly damped, though with a real talent for rounding off the edges of bumps. At times, it's almost completely unobtrusive and combines with superb body

control to withstand diagonal mid-corner dips at full speed without throwing the MPS off line. Thanks to concerted NVH improvements, the MPS is a quieter car than the original 3, too, though the fat 18-inch rubber produces a fair amount of roar on coarse bitumen. But not an intolerable amount. Suspension noise has also vanished, which is a welcome relief.

So, what to award the bullish, bullet-performing 3 MPS? The Mazda isn't a bargain proposition like Holden's \$34,990 SRi Turbo and Ford's \$35,990 XR5 Turbo, but even at its optioned-up pricetag of \$43,690 (with Sports pack), the Mazda offers rival-crushing performance. And it's polished, too. The 3 MPS is one of those cars that simply gets better and better the longer you drive it.

It's wickedly fast (but thirsty) when you ask for everything, yet it's also supremely driveable and surprisingly economical when you feel like a rest from max attack. Add terrific seats, a fine chassis, and Mazda's effective solution to solving front-wheel traction issues and the outcome is one high-performance hatch that's so damn hot, it's searing. **W**

## MAZDA 3 MPS

\$39,990 / As tested \$43,690

### Drivetrain

Engine	in-line 4, dohc, 16v, turbo, inter
Layout	front engine (east-west), front d
Capacity	2 261 litres
Bore/stroke	87.5/94.0mm
Compression	9.5:1
Power	190kW @ 5500rpm
Torque	380Nm @ 3000rpm
Redline/Cut-out	6500/7000rpm
Transmission	6-speed manual
km/h 1000rpm	8.4/13.2/19.3/25.2/32.1/40.8
Gear ratios	3.54/2.24/1.54/1.17/1.09/0.85
Diff ratio	3.94 (1st-4th), 3.35 (5th-6th)

### Chassis

Body	steel, 5 doors, 5 seats
L/W/H	4430/1765/1465mm
Wheelbase	2640mm
Front/rear track	1535/1525mm
Weight	1415kg
Boot capacity	290 litres
Fuel capacity	95 octane/55 litres
Fuel consumption	11.3L/100km (test average)
Suspension	<b>Front:</b> struts, A-arms, anti-roll bar <b>Rear:</b> multi-links, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Steering	power rack and pinion
Turning circle	11.0m (2.7 turns lock to lock)
Front brakes	ventilated discs (320mm)
Rear brakes	solid discs (280mm)
Tyres	Bridgestone Potenza RE050A
Tyre size	215/45R18 89W

### Safety hardware

Active	ABS, EBD, BA, DSC
Passive	front/side/curtain airbags, front pre-tensioner/load-limiter seatbelts
NCAP rating	★★★★ (Aus)

### Performance

Power to weight: 134kW/tonne  
Speed at indicated 100km/h: 9.4

#### Speed in gears

- 1 55km/h @ 6500rpm
- 2 86km/h @ 6500rpm
- 3 125km/h @ 6500rpm
- 4 164km/h @ 6500rpm
- 5 209km/h @ 6500rpm
- 6 250km/h @ 6100rpm\*

#### Standing-start acceleration\*\*\*

0-60km/h:	3.4sec
0-80km/h:	4.6sec
0-100km/h:	6.6sec
0-120km/h:	8.8sec
0-140km/h:	11.1sec
0-160km/h:	14.9sec
0-400m:	14.6sec @ 158km/h
Rolling acceleration: 3rd/4th/5th	
80-120km/h:	3.5/4.1/5.1/7.8sec

#### Verdict: ★★★★★

One of the fastest front-drivers ever  
torque; handling; stability; seats

Not quite a bargain; exhaust note  
little too whooshy; looks too tame

Track: Oran Park, dry, Temp: 21°C. Driver: Nathan Aspinall. Warranty: 3yr/100,000km. Service intervals: 10,000km. \*\*Estimated or manufacturer's claim. \*\*\*Including Sports pack (xenon lights with w polished wheels, part leather, Bose audio). See test.

### CHANGES

Front guards 20mm wider to house 18s; self-levelling xenon headlights with washers part of Sports pack

Body reinforced at floor tunnel to increase bending stiffness and rear damper mounts. Also gains front strut brace

5mm-thicker anti-roll bars front and rear. New dampers have up to six times more damping force

Higher spring rates, high-performance dampers and roll-bar changes increase roll stiffness by 60%

