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Mazda MX-30 e-Skyactiv R-EV named

Plug-In Hybrid of the Year at the 2024 What Car? Awards

* Mazda MX-30 e-Skyactiv R-EV features a 17.8kWh battery and 830cc rotary engine generator.
* The MX-30 R-EV is offered in three grades: Prime-Line, Exclusive-Line and Makoto.
* Always driven via the electric motor, the MX-30 R-EV series PHEV has a 53-mile pure EV range.

The Mazda MX-30 e-Skyactiv R-EV has been named Plug-In Hybrid of the Year at the 2024 What Car? Awards. Having joined the pure battery electric Mazda MX-30 in Mazda’s electrified range last Autumn, the unique Mazda MX-30 e-Skyactiv R-EV series plug-in hybrid is in UK dealerships now.

A series plug-in hybrid that offers new ways of using a car as a battery electric vehicle, the R-EV has a 17.8kWh battery and a 53-mile pure electric range, while using Mazda’s unique rotary engine technology, the all-new 830cc single-rotor petrol engine acts as a generator to enable longer distance drives without range or charging anxiety. With no mechanical connection between the engine and the wheels, the rotary unit simply acts as a generator, ensuring the MX-30 R-EV always drives via the electric motor to deliver a seamless EV driving experience.

Commenting on the award, What Car? Editor, Steve Huntingford, said: “The Mazda MX-30 R-EV combines fun handling with a well-controlled ride, while its classy and distinctive interior features one of the most user-friendly infotainment systems around. In the real world, we also found the MX-30 R-EV to be much more sparing on petrol than its larger PHEV rivals. And unlike them, it doesn’t just make financial sense as a company car; it’s also a very cost-effective private purchase.”

With more than half a century of expertise in the development of rotary engines, Mazda selected the rotary powerplant for this application due to its unique ability to produce the required output from a small, light and easily packaged unit. The rotary engine is placed neatly alongside the generator and high-output motor in the engine bay. The combination of the 17.8kWh battery and 50-litre fuel tank create a unique series plug-in hybrid with a flexible total range of over 400 miles, while a WLTP CO2 output of just 21g/km ensures class-leading environmental performance.

Compatibility with both AC charging and rapid DC charging is another benefit, meaning 3-phase AC charging takes around 50mins, while for maximum customer flexibility, DC rapid charging can be completed in around 25 minutes. The Mazda MX-30 R-EV has three drive-modes to suit different driving situations: Normal, EV and Charge, and thanks to a 125KW/170ps output, it delivers slightly better acceleration performance than the 145ps fully electric MX-30.

The Mazda e-Skyactiv R-EV is offered in the same highly specified grades as the all-electric e-Skyactiv MX-30: Prime-Line, Exclusive-Line and Makoto. All versions feature a rotor badge on the front wings and an e-Skyactiv R-EV badge on the tailgate, while unique wheels differentiate the R-EV from its BEV sibling - Prime-Line with a dark grey finish and Exclusive-Line and Makoto a black diamond cut finish.

Commenting on the Mazda MX-30 e-Skyactiv R-EV’s success at the What Car? Awards, Jeremy Thomson, Managing Director, Mazda Motors UK, said: “I’m delighted that the MX-30 R-EV has been named PHEV of the Year at one of the UK’s most important automotive awards. This car is a great example of Mazda’s challenger spirit, as thanks to its unique technological approach, it’s a car that’s the perfect solution for customers who want an electric car for everyday usage but the flexibility to undertake longer journeys without the reliance on charging infrastructure.”

Adding, “with the option to choose either the pure electric MX-30 or the new R-EV version depending on their needs, our customers now have even more choice. Whichever version they choose they get the same seamless electric drive experience, engaging handling and first-class cabin, which features unique materials and premium design. It’s the latest example of how Mazda’s Multi Solution Approach, ensuring we have cars to suit all our customer’s needs by improving environmental performance with a combination of electrification and clever internal combustion engine technologies”.

Between the launch of the Mazda Cosmo in 1967 and production of the RX-8 ending in 2012, Mazda mass-produced more than 2 million rotary engines. Adapted to meet the needs of our times the rotary engine is now back being used as a power generator rather than a drive unit. The new 8C rotary engine is a 830cc single rotor with a 120mm rotor radius and 76mm rotor width, its compact size enables coaxial placement and integration with the electric motor, decelerator and generator to achieve a unit with an overall width of less than 840mm, allowing it to fit under the bonnet without changes to the MX-30 body frame.

Thanks to the use of aluminium, the engine is over 15kg lighter than the twin-rotor Renesis engine used in the RX-8. The use of direct fuel injection reduces emissions and increases fuel economy, while the engine also features an Exhaust Gas Recirculation (EGR) system to improve efficiency at low rpm and low load running. With a 50-litre fuel tank the rotary generator allows for long-distance travel without the need for regular fuel station stops.

A 17.8kWh battery was chosen to ensure enough capacity for a 53-mile electric-only driving range while at the same time considering the environmental impact of the battery over the entire vehicle life cycle. The MX-30 R-EV’s high output 125KW/170ps electric motor can produce up to 260Nm of torque, while the new R-EV retains the same relaxed, accurate and engaging driving experience as the pure-electric MX-30.

The MX-30 e-Skyactiv R-EV features three driving modes: Normal, EV and Charge, however the choice of mode does not affect maximum vehicle speed. Normal mode delivers electric drive as long as there’s enough battery charge. If more power is required than the battery level can deliver - for example, when accelerating - the rotary engine generator will activate based on the degree of accelerator opening and supply the battery with more power. Thus, the MX-30 e-Skyactiv R-EV delivers outstanding acceleration performance and ensures drivers can always enjoy the car.

Drivers can turn EV mode on when they want to stay in electric drive for as long as possible. This mode will ensure the vehicle uses electric drive exclusively until the battery is completely drained. It should, however, be noted that if the driver needs to accelerate suddenly and purposefully depresses the accelerator pedal significantly beyond a certain point (equivalent to the kickdown switch function on a standard automatic transmission vehicle), the rotary engine will activate and generate the power needed for the car to accelerate as powerfully as possible.

Charge mode can be used to safeguard the necessary amount of battery for situations such as the need to save zero emissions running for particular urban environments, additionally drivers have the option of setting the amount of battery charge they want to reserve in increments of 10%. The generator will activate when battery charge drops below the specified reserve level, charge the battery to the set level, and maintain that level of charge. Once battery charge is above the set level, the car will operate in the equivalent to Normal mode until the battery depletes to the specified level. It will then use the rotary engine generator to keep the battery at that level.

The 2024 What Car? Plug-In Hybrid of the Year is available now in Mazda’s UK dealer network where it’s currently offered with a half-price pod-point home charger for retail customers. Further commenting on the MX-30 R-EV’s success, Jeremy Thomson, said: “the plug-in hybrid market is huge and with so many PHEVs launching in the last 12 months to be tested by What Car? it’s fantastic that the MX-30 R-EV has come out on top.”

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