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Defying conventions together:

30 years of Mazda and Bose co-creation

* Mazda and Bose started working together 30 years ago on the 3rd generation Mazda RX-7.
* The partnership was designed to enhance the driving experience with exceptional sound quality.
* This film highlights the collaboration between Mazda and Bose: <https://youtu.be/74tPvfsHZyI>

A look back three decades to 1991 is a trip back to a landmark year for Mazda. Most famously, the 1991 Le Mans 24 Hours saw Mazda become the first Japanese brand to take overall victory in the world’s most renowned endurance race, while the extensive product range included mainstream models and attention-grabbing coupes and sports cars. Glance at a UK Mazda brochure from 1991 and you’ll see big sellers like the 323 and 626 alongside the smaller 121, while the MX-5 and RX-7 sports cars shared showroom space with the MX-3 and MX-6 coupes, there was even the E-Series van and B-Series pick-up.

However, 1991 was also the start of a technology partnership that has spanned three decades so far and featured in numerous car models. Since Mazda and Bose first started working together on the third-generation Mazda RX-7 thirty years ago, the two companies have continued to collaborate on innovative premium sound solutions that contribute to a superior driving experience. Put together, the power of sound and the joy of driving deliver an outstanding and engaging customer experience that lets passengers feel all the acoustic detail and emotional impact of a live concert inside their own car.

Powerful bass and impactful sound – these were the requirements the audio engineers working on the third-generation Mazda RX‑7 had set for themselves. In the search for exceptional audio performance that could match these premium standards, the team around Mazda Audio Engineer, Ryoji Oe came across Bose’s Acoustic Wave Cannon system. The bass reproduction system comprising a 3.6-metre-long tube with a high-power woofer inside provided exactly what Mazda was looking for, and the two companies set to work integrating the speaker technology into the car. And while the task seemed insurmountable at first, an ingenious system of folds and bends allowed the Bose and Mazda engineers to package the long tube into the rear of the car without compromising space or sound quality. “The Acoustic Waveguide technology and the RX-7 made music effortless,” remembers Mike Rosen, Principal Engineer Bose Automotive Systems, who was involved in the project; a success that kicked off the ongoing mission to bring superior sound to many more Mazda models.

One particularly challenging milestone on this road was Mazda’s most iconic model to date, the Mazda MX-5. Providing great sound quality for convertible cars when the top is down had been a challenge for manufacturers and sound designers the world over, but Mazda and Bose came up with an innovative solution for the fourth-generation MX-5. An EQ switch automatically adjusts the sound setting when the top is down, and UltraNearfield speakers embedded directly into the seat headrests allow for an

immersive listening experience even when the roof is open. Furthermore, Bose’s AudioPilot noise compensation technology continuously monitors the noise environment and automatically adjusts the audio playback to any changed circumstances, such as road and wind noise. This way, the driver can focus their attention on the music and driving experience without the need to make manual adjustments.

The latest generation of Mazda cars saw another breakthrough in the thirty-year collaboration: In almost all models since the 2019 Mazda3, the woofers were moved from the door panels to the cowl side above the kick panel. This new placement not only frees up space for bigger door pockets, but also contributes to a better sound experience, as the bass energy is reflected by the floor, firewall and kick panel area simultaneously. This corner-loading effect creates a remarkably impactful, rich bass reproduction that is neither overbearing nor prone to rattling. Furthermore, the cowl-side bass enclosures are complemented by an additional subwoofer in the rear to “match” the low-frequency performance across the cabin. The new configuration – aptly called BassMatch – shows its full potential in the all-electric Mazda MX-30, because there is no motor sound, the driver and passengers can experience even more detail and a richer audio experience than ever before.

From the first project to this latest example, the collaboration between Mazda and Bose has been characterised not only by engineering ingenuity but by a kindred spirit between the two companies: A passion for pushing the limits of what is possible, and a shared belief that premium solutions require a bold, unconventional approach. That is also what will drive joint projects in the years to come – people with passion striving for unique solutions towards a common aim: The perfect connection between car, driver and music.

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