

# MAZDA



**Official name:** Mazda Motor Corporation (Matsuda Kabushiki-gaisha).

**Owned by:** Japanese security companies (2.6%), other Japanese corporations (16.7%), Japanese individuals (16.8%), foreign institutions and others (31.3%), Japanese financial institutions (32.6%).

**Formerly owned by:** Ford Motor Co (33.4%), recently reduced to just 3.5%.

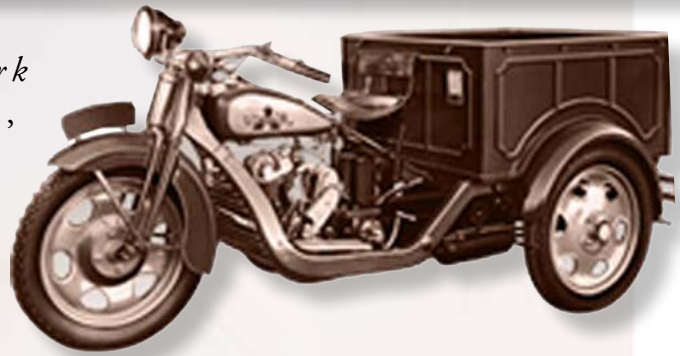
**Current situation:** Mazda makes very good small, fun, fuel-economic cars. Ford and Mazda used to share many vehicles but have recently gone their separate ways. Mazdas generally have good longterm reliability. However, times are tough for all carmakers and Mazda has lost billions recently. Although its North American and Chinese sales are still poor, Mazda is improving its profitability in most other places.

**Chances of survival:** okay. However, there's strength in numbers: in the longer term Mazda may have to merge with another carmaker in order to survive •



# A brief commentary on Mazda

Started as the *Toyo Cork Kogyo Company* in 1920, Mazda began, in classic Japanese fashion, by thinking small. Mazda started producing motorbikes called the *Mazda Go*.



From motorbikes to tiny cars, from tiny cars to mainstream models, Mazda grew into one of the major players in Japan.

Mazda's R-360, Carol and Familia models established Mazda as Japan's third largest manufacturer by the early 1960s.

However, Mazda's attempts to fit out much of its fleet with Wankel rotary engines very nearly landed the company in bankruptcy when the 1970s fuel crisis hit.

Mazda's designers rushed back to the drawing boards and in 1977, the 323 was born again as a conventionally-designed saloon. Within 27 months of release, more than a million 323s had been sold, re-establishing Mazda as a powerful force in the world's car markets.

In 1979 the Ford Motor Company took a 24% shareholding in Mazda (later increased to 34%, and recently dropped back to 3.5%).

Despite several attempts at heading upmarket, Mazda has had little success selling luxury models.

The Ford linkup did have the big advantage that Ford began distributing Mazda cars carrying Ford badges. (The Ford Escape and Mazda Tribute are basically exactly the same car, so we review them both as Mazdas).

Although Mazda has had some success with sports cars, for the last thirty years Mazda has offered mainstream models in three basic formats; very small, small and medium. These were widely regarded as reliable but boring. However, with Ford input, these cars have morphed into stylish models like the Mazda2, Mazda3 & Mazda6.

Before the late 1990s, Mazdas were often shockingly unsafe. However, the current generation of Mazdas offers both excellent styling and excellent safety. Mazdas are close to Toyota in terms of reliability •

