

That's the Spirit

Signalling the end of the Mazda RX-7's 11-year production run, the limited-edition 280bhp Spirit R gave the marque quite a send-off

All good things come to an end, they say. The world may love the Mazda RX-8, but the car it replaced was more than just good. The Mazda RX-7 was one of the best looking, most potent and certainly most unusual sports cars on sale during the 1990s.

But the end had to come some time and, for the RX-7 Series 3, that was in August 2002 when, after more than ten years in production, it made way for the RX-8. Despite its long production run, the Series 3 was nowhere near as big a seller as the first generation RX-7 and, consequently, it was withdrawn from the UK market in 1995 and other remaining world markets in 1997.

It lasted in the Japanese domestic market for an extra five years and, during its full eleven-year life span, there were many RX-7 special editions, with extra power and more luxury to tempt the consumer and boost declining rotary sales. Some of these special editions commemorated special occasions – for example, the Bathurst Type R II was released in 1994 after Mazda won the Bathurst 12-hour race for the third year in succession. The Type RS-R was another example, released in 1997 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Mazda's rotary engine. Then, in March 2002, came the final salute, the Spirit R, which celebrated a Japanese performance institution.

Only 1500 Spirit R cars were produced, making them a rare sight in Japan, let alone the UK import market. This final edition was offered in five colours – Vintage Red, Pure White, Titanium Grey, Innocent Blue and Brilliant Black. There was also a choice of three models – the Type C with automatic transmission, Type B with a two-plus-two format and Type A, the purest sports model. This was a strict two-seater with a five-speed manual gearbox and, as the owner of this car has found out, it's a very exciting car to own.

Andrew Cozen's association with the RX-7 didn't start with the purchase of this car in January 2003. He has long been an enthusiast

