MAZDA PARTNERS WITH JAPANESE NOSTALGIC CAR TO HOST ONLY VINTAGE JAPANESE ROAD RALLY IN NORTH AMERICA

'TOUGE CALIFORNIA' TO TAKE 28 VEHICLES THROUGH 200 MILES OF COASTS AND CANYONS

IRVINE, Calif., March 29, 2016 /PRNewswire/ — “Driving Matters.” It’s not just Mazda North American Operation’s (MNAO) slogan, it’s a company manifesto that drives Mazda to build cars and crossovers that thrill and delight. And despite the slogan’s recent inception in 2015, the joy of driving has always been an integral part of Mazda.

As such, it was a natural fit for Mazda to collaborate with *Japanese Nostalgic Car* to serve as title sponsor of Touge California, the only all-Japanese vintage road rally in the U.S., taking place on April 2. Expected to feature 28 rare and original Japanese cars from the 1960s, ’70s and early ’80s, the rally will cascade up the coast from San Diego to Mazda’s Irvine-based R&D facility.

Of the vehicles selected to participate, 11 are Mazdas—including the 1975 Rotary-Engine Pickup (REPU), a 1978 GLC compact hatchback and 1985 RX-7 GSL-SE from Mazda’s own heritage collection. As is the case with Mazdas today, all three vehicles showcase Mazda’s commitment to lightweight efficiency, fun-to-drive handling dynamics and constant technological breakthroughs.

“We’re proud to sponsor Touge California, as it fits perfectly with Mazda’s heritage and celebration of the innovations that continue to shape the auto industry into what it is today,” said Robert Davis, MNAO’s Senior VP, U.S. Operations. “We’re a company that relishes driving enjoyment—from our heritage vehicles to today’s award-winning lineup of SKYACTIV cars and crossovers. We couldn’t emphasize that point more than to take some of our own vehicles and enjoy Touge California with those who love driving as much as we do.”

“We are proud to have Mazda, a company that understands the importance of heritage and motoring thrills, as a partner for our Touge California rally,” said Ben Hsu, editor-in-chief of *Japanese Nostalgic Car.* “As 70 percent of Japan’s terrain is mountainous, our goal with Touge California is to give owners of Japanese cars the experience of driving on roads similar to those on which their cars were born.”

Touge California was founded in 2015 by Hsu and rally master Patrick Strong after seeing many famous vintage rallies like Targa Florio or Carrera Panamericana for European cars, but nothing exclusive for Japanese makes. Hsu and Strong launched Touge California with overwhelming success in 2015, and have both increased the number of participants and limited age requirements of eligible vehicles to cars approaching 40 years old, if not older.

The idea was adapted from the infamous and often daring underground touge races in Japan. “Touge” literally means “mountain pass,” but it is now a term that’s associated with celebrating vehicles that were both mainstays sold in the U.S. and rare, exclusive sedans and sports cars that were forbidden from sale in the U.S. for many years until they became legally importable.

Through the 200-mile rally, participants and their co-drivers will enjoy California’s coastal roads, finishing at Mazda’s Irvine offices. There, they will be treated to an exclusive tour of the Mazda heritage collection, a working garage that houses more than 50 race cars, concepts, historically significant and one-off cars. The basement is not open to the public.

“Our heritage cars aren’t just museum pieces; they’re meant to be driven,” said Davis. “This is a rare chance to see all of these beautiful vintage cars where they were meant to be—on the road.”

Japanese Nostalgic Car is the premiere English-language publication devoted to classic automobiles from Japan. It was founded in 2006 and can be found at *JapaneseNostalgicCar.com*.

Mazda North American Operations is headquartered in Irvine, Calif., and oversees the sales, marketing, parts and customer service support of Mazda vehicles in the United States and Mexico through nearly 700 dealers. Operations in Mexico are managed by Mazda Motor de Mexico in Mexico City. For more information on Mazda vehicles, including photography and B-roll, please visit the online Mazda media center at www.mazdausamedia.com.

Photo – http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20160328/348678
Logo – http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20131205/MM28870LOGO

SOURCE Mazda North American Operations

Additional assets available online:
P H O T O S (1)

https://news.mazdausa.com/2016-03-29-Mazda-Partners-with-Japanese-Nostalgic-Car-to-Host-Only-Vintage-Japanese-Road-Rally-in-North-America