



Gateway Relay

Vol XI, No. 11

St Louis Sports Car Council

February 2024

Council News & Notes

- This month we'll forego the usual comment about the local weather (okay, okay, one word: "weird").
- Since January's issue the St Louis Region of the SCCA has released its autocross/solo scheduled for '24, so if you're into competition with your car, both series—SCCA and Boeig—are now on the boards. Plenty of opportunities between now and October to engage in a monthly parking lot grand prix.
- In the mood for other activities, such as club drives, rallies, tech sessions and the like. Take a look to the right, the schedule is filling up nicely. We're still waiting on the full cars & coffee schedule for this year but it should mirror last year's events. Soon as we get confirmation the info will go on the online calendar and in the *Relay*.
- Should be another good driving year, we'll see y'all out there at the various events.



The New Mazda RX-3SP.

(Rest assured, SP does not stand for slowpoke.)

Perish the thought. How could it? The remarkable, improved rotary engine is beneath the hood. RX-3SP also has things like a slick 5-speed stick shift, semi-monocoque construction, and the breeding of over one hundred racing victories in international competition.

What's more, the world's most remarkable engine is now backed by the world's most remarkable engine warranty. Mazda warrants that the basic engine block and its internal parts will be free of defects with normal use and prescribed maintenance for five years or 75,000 miles, whichever comes first, or Mazda will fix it free. This transferable, limited warranty is free on all

new rotary-engine Mazdas sold and serviced in the United States and Canada. How much, you might ask, will all this set you back? A very reasonable \$42,900! Or, for a mere \$3,995* you can have the good stuff minus the special appearance package shown. Whichever RX-3SP you drive home, it'll make a believer out of you.

Fair. **mazda**



- ### Up & Coming
- 18 Feb 24—Polar Bear Run**, SLTOA's traditional first drive of the season, followed by lunch. Open to all cars and drivers. Meet in Twin Oaks at the southeast corner of Big Bend and MO 141, between Dunkin and Hardee's. Driver's meeting at 10:45, depart at 11 AM, drive back roads to the Big Chief Road House in Wildwood for lunch at noon. Open to all cars/drivers, *really* bad weather date is 25 February.
- 19 Feb 24—MG Club of St Louis Tech Session**, at Past and Present, 2020 S Old Highway 94, St Charles, 5 PM.
- 24 Feb 24—RESCHEDULED St Louis Region SCCA Wolf Moon 2024 Rally**. Evening rally/social event; two hours of a Monte Carlo-style touring format with Richta GPS checkpoints, winding up at the DeCamp Station Roadhouse on US 66 near Staunton. \$20 for SCCA teams, \$40 for non-SCCA teams, meet at the Troy Park & Ride, 809 S Main St, starting at 5 PM. Registration open at <http://msreg.com/STLWolfMoon24>.
- 29 Feb 24—MG Club of St Louis RUBCO**, at The Shack Breakfast & Lunch, 731 S Lindbergh Blvd, Frontenac, 9:30-11 AM.
- 29 Feb 24—Gateway Miata Club Retiree/Hookie Run**, see <https://gatewaymiataclub.clubexpress.com>.
- 10 Mar 24—RESCHEDULED Journey to the Center of the Earth Rallye**, hosted by the Jaguar Association of Greater St Louis. Meet at the StL BreadCo on MO 21/Tesson Ferry and Kennerly, two blocks west of I-270, at 9 AM. Drive to the Bonne Terre Mine for a tour, followed by a 1 PM lunch at El Jarochito Tex-Mex. \$30 per person for the tour, at the restaurant order from the menu and pay on your own. Limited to the first 40 people, RSVP by 12 February to either Jim Hendrix at (314)406-2481 jhendrix@curtispack.com or Phil Taxman at (314)761-5913 ssjagman@aol.com.
- 16 Mar 24—MG Club of St Louis Annual Terry Fanning Rally**. Details TBA, monitor <https://stlouismclub.com/>.
- 16 Mar 24—Gateway Miata Club St Patrick's Day Breakfast**, see <https://gatewaymiataclub.clubexpress.com>.
- 17 Mar 24—Gateway Miata St Patrick's Day Breakfast**. Wear your luckiest, bestest and greenest costume. See <https://gatewaymiataclub.clubexpress.com>.

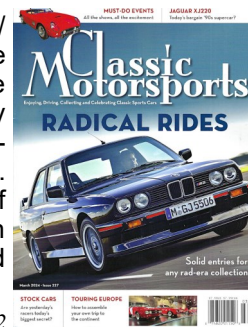
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Note: Some club events restrict participation to club members only, primarily for national/chapter insurance reasons. If interested in joining in on a drive or other event, we recommend you contact the club's event coordinator in advance for details.

In Print



We'll lead off with December/January's *Vintage Motorsports*. The "My Favorite Race" monthly feature focuses on race car designer Tony Southgate and the 1988 Le Mans 24-hour race, won by a **Jaguar XJR-9**. In the vintage write-ups, coverage of the HSR Classic 24 at Daytona, with emphasis on **Mazda's** 1989 767B and 1991 RX-7 GTO racer.



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- 17 Mar 24**—Boone Trail Corvette Club drive to **Diamond Mineral Springs**. Meet at Mattingly's on Truman Blvd, St Peeters, at 10:30 AM, depart at 10:45 with lunch at 12 noon (cash only). For info or to sign up, contact Debbie Doak at (636)373-4850.
- 17 Mar 24**—SLTOA **Targa Desoto**. Spirited, scenic drive southwest of St Louis, winding up in Desoto for lunch. Planning underway, more to follow.
- 20 Mar 24**—MG Club of St Louis **Tech Session**, 6-8 PM, everything you want to know about brakes at Brooklands Restorations LLC, 9532 Lackland Rd, Overland.
- 28 Mar 24**—MG Club of St Louis **RUBCO**, at Silver Pancake House, 9983 Manchester Rd, Warson Woods, 9:30-11 AM.
- 30 Mar 24**—St Louis Region SCCA **Autocross/Solo II Novice School**, at Family Arena. For info or to register, call up <https://solo.stlsscca.org/schedule/>.
- 31 Mar 24**—**XIV MG-Triumph Challenge for the British Leyland Cup**, in association with the Horseless Carriage Club of Missouri annual **Easter Concours**, Forest Park. Details to follow.
- 7 Apr 24**—St Louis Region SCCA **Autocross/Solo II Event 1**, at Family Arena. Event fee \$55, plus a \$15 weekend membership for non-SCCA members; online pre-registration is \$45. For more info, monitor <https://solo.stlsscca.org/>.
- 8 Apr 24**—Gateway Miata Club **Eclipse Run**, see <https://gatewaymiataclub.clubexpress.com>.
- 13 Apr 24**—Boone Trail Corvette Club **drive to Glasgow** for lunch. Meet at the I-70 Wright City rest stop (milepost 199) at 10:30 AM, back roads drive to lunch at Beckett's Restaurant, 510 1st St, Glasgow at 1 PM. Limited to the first 40, please contact Melissa Dean at melissa428@charter.net or (314)605-7165.
- 14 Apr 24**—**Boeing Sports Car Club Autocross No. 1**, Family Arena, St Charles. Show around 9-9:30, \$50 for six runs. For more information or to get on the email list, contact Racer Steve at sshab@yahoo.com.
- 14 Apr 24**—**Farmington Rallye**, hosted by JAGSL. Spring dust-off rallye, taking back roads towards the beautiful Hermann wine country. Meet at 9:30 AM at the QuikTrip, 1617 Gravois Rd in High Ridge, lunch at the Herman Wurst Haus. After lunch, feel free to stroll through town or visit the Hermannhof Winery, the Hermann Wine Trail or the historic Stone Hill Winery. Please RSVP by 1 April to event organizer Nathaniel Leonard at (314)685-5951.
- 20 Apr 24**—**Cars & Coffee/Amp Up**, 13901 Manchester Rd, 8-11 AM.
- 21 Apr 24**—St Louis Region SCCA **Autocross/Solo II Event 2**, at Family Arena. Event fee \$55, plus a \$15 weekend membership for non-SCCA members; online pre-registration is \$45. For more info, monitor <https://solo.stlsscca.org/>. Event fee \$55, plus a \$15 weekend membership for non-SCCA members; online pre-registration is \$45. For info or to register, call up <https://solo.stlsscca.org/schedule/>.
- 24 Apr 24**—MG Club of St Louis **Annual Pinewood Derby**, at Bar K dog park, 4565 McRee Ave, St Louis (Forest Park southeast). Monitor <https://stlouismgclub.com>.
- 27 Apr 24**—**Wings & Wheels Fly-in and Cruise-In**, presented by SaltRiver Automotive, Smartt Field, 6390 Grafton Ferry Road, Portage des Sioux. Info/registration at <https://wingsandwheels.givesmart.com>.

St Louis Car Shows and Cruises: www.stlouiscoachmen.com/car-shows-special-events

Thoroughbred & Classic Cars for January covered the restoration of a truly unique vehicle: the **Jaguar E-Type V12-based Guyson E12**. Quentin Wilson's "Hot Tips" focuses on the escalating values for the **Volvo 850** wagon/estate. Want more info on the Guyson? Grab the February *T&CC* for the "life story" of the car (we'll provide a summation in a future "Roadwork"). Same issue, a cover article on "Influencers – Icons of sport, film and TV tested." The vehicles include a 1965 **Jaguar Mk2 3.8** ("Inspector Morse"), 1988 **BMW E30 M3 Evo II** and 1962 **Volvo P1800** ("The Saint," natch), and yes, there's a 1968 "Bullett" Mustang in the pack. Towards the back of the magazine, a buyers guide for the **Sunbeam** Alpine ("Rarer than a Triumph TR4 and cooler than an MGB").

Finally, a twofer courtesy of *Classic Motorsports*. The January issue incorporates a substantial article by Peter Brock, "Zora's Dream," concerning Zora Arkus Duntov's early efforts to make the **Corvette** a world-class sportscar, particularly on the track. Same issue, the 3w team continues the rebuilding of a 1960 Austin-Healey Bugeye/Frogeye **Sprite**. March's issue has a rampaging **BMW M3** on the cover, the lead-in for "radical rides." The article features "8 solid entries for any rad-era collection;" besides the BMW, the list includes the **Corvette ZR-1** and the **Mazda Miata**. Subsequently, an article on the **Jaguar F-Type R75**, "...the end of gas-powered Jaguar sports cars," and a buyer's guide for the **Jaguar XJ220** (yes, the XJ220...phew!).

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away (well, actually, in 1967 in Hiroshima), a Japanese corporation named the Toyo Kogyo introduced a new vehicle in its Mazda line of cars. A rather uniquely styled coupe bearing the name/designation the Cosmo 110S, the car drew attention for one reason in particular: it was powered by a two-rotor Wankel rotary engine.

Toyo Kogyo received a license to develop and manufacture Wankel engines in November 1961, four years after Dr Felix Wankel built his first rotary. Notably, the Cosmo was the first two-rotor rotary-powered vehicle to actually hit the streets; Germany's NSU, the first licensee of the engine design, didn't put its arguably better known Ro 80 on the market until a few weeks later.



Mazda Cosmo (photo via *Arthatravel*)

Mazda followed up in 1968 with the R100 coupe – the company's first car designated for export to the United States – and, in 1970 the larger RX-2, developed from the piston-engined Capella. By 1971, the company had a firm foothold in the US market and a reputation for having made mass-produced rotary-powered vehicles both feasible and reliable, where other manufacturers had failed. Per Craig Jamieson, writing for *Top Gear*, "...it's not just NSU that couldn't work it out (ie, the rotary) – other companies, from Mercedes to General Motors, tried and failed to solve the inherent issues of the unique layout." Automotive writer Jon Branch pretty much said the same: "...NSU went broke trying to bring a Wankel engine car into production, and French car maker Citroen did themselves some significant financial damage attempting the very same thing."



RX emblem (photo via *Carscoops*)

Premature wear of the seals at the tips of the rotors was the issue. Mazda managed to solve the seal longevity issue...well, for the most part. As the seals wore oil consumption went up and vibration became an issue. Mazda's engine employed carbon-aluminum seals, plus a hardened cast aluminum rotor housing with chromed steel inner facing. The company

sold the cars with a 75,000 mile warranty for the engines and seals, unheard of at the time. Cars sold in Japan and Australia received Mazda's original rotary, the 982cc, 110 bhp 10A. Cars

bound for the states got the 1146 cc, 125 bhp 12A with two distributors and twin plugs for each rotor.

In 1971, the company's mid-sized Savanna received the rotary treatment as the RX-3. Shorter and lighter than the RX-2, the RX-3 proved something of a rocket; one US car magazine referred to it as the "Japanese Road Runner." And, the prospective buyer had a choice of three models: coupe, sedan and the first rotary-powered station wagon. The front suspension consisted of MacPherson struts. At the back end, nothing fancy: semi-elliptic leaf spring and live axle. A common mod involved adding a Watts linkage to stabilize everything.



Above, RX-3 coupe (Mazda photo). Below, the RX-3 dashboard (photo via *Carscoops*)



The cars immediately proved popular with tuners and even Mazda got into the swing of things, offering the Japanese market-only Savanna GT coupe with five-speed, USA export 12A rotary, lowered suspension and enhanced interior. The US equivalent was the RX-3SP, with the five-speed, power front disks and a "special appearance package," which included a number of bright, garish colors appropriate to the muscle car era. The cars also had a 15.9 gallon gas tank, rather large for a small car of the time, but the Wankel's relatively low fuel mileage drove the decision.

The RX-3 proved immediately successful in competition, taking first place at the Fuji Tourist Trophy Race in December 1971; over the following years the type won over 100 races in Japan. It made its European debut on 16 April 1972, when Walter Brun placed 12th in the European Touring Car Championship (ETCC) at Salzburg, Austria. In and around other competitive events in Europe, an RX-3 also raced at the 1975 Le

(Continued on page 4)

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A very reasonable \$4290! Or, for a mere \$3945* you can have the good stuff minus the special appearance package shown.

Whichever RX-3SP you drive home, it'll make a believer out of you.

Fast.

mazda



Mans 24 Hour race. Regrettably, the car, driven by Claude Buchet and Jean Rondeau, DNF'd due to engine failure.

Suitably modified RX-3s made their racing debut in the states during the mid-1970s. On 5 February 1978, Mazda entered two cars sponsored by Gatorade in the 17th annual 24 Hours of Daytona. Yoshimi Katayama/Yojiro Terada and Roger Mandeville DNF'd, while Jim Downing, Stu Fisher and Walt Bohren finished 29th. A third RX-3, entered by Faza Squadra and driven by Taku Akaike and Al Consentino, finished 30th. On 3 September, Mandeville and Diego Febles finished 6th in the 6-Hour Champion Spark Plug Challenge at Road Atlanta, behind two RX-2s, a Datsun B210, AMC Gremlin (yes, a Gremlin) and winners James Reeve and Peter Harrison in a Buick Skyhawk.



The Downing/Fisher/Bohren/RX-3 at Daytona, 1978 (photo via RX7 Club)

On 1 July 1979, once again at Daytona, Mandeville and Febles drove their RX-3 to a 3rd-place finish, followed by Mike Meyer and Rusty Bond in second car. Same event, 29 June 1980, Joe Varde and Bob Garretson placed 2nd in their RX-3 behind Rob McFarlin and Hurley Haywood in a Datsun 200SX. Multiple other RX-

3s ran the race. Haywood and Jack Dunham placed third; Jim Downing and John Paul, 9th; Canadians Paul Lambke and Bob Esseltine, 15th; Mandeville and Don Whittington, 17th; and Jeff and Bob Dearduff, 40th. Three other -3s failed to finish the event.

Finally, on 2 July 1981, an RX-3 won at the Daytona 6-hour race, driven by Mandeville and Amos Johnson. Tom Waugh and Downing placed second; Dunham and Haywood, third; and Jim Nealon and Bill Jobe placed 6th. Notably, NASCAR drive Kyle Petty competed in an RX-3 along with Gary Ouellette but DNF'd. Also, actor Gene Hackman was listed as one of the drivers in the Dunham/Haywood Mazda, but he never took the wheel.

Records indicate teams and individuals continued to run RX-3s into late 1987, but by that point the RX-7 was Mazda's dominant car in sports and GT racing. By this point, the -3 had been out of production for nine years; in the end, the company sold 286,757, the most for any Mazda rotary-powered vehicle.

The company followed up with additional rotaries, including the storied RX-7 and the top-of-the-line RX-4 coupe/sedan/wagon. Eventually, however, Mazda moved away from rotaries due to their low gas mileage and seal replacement requirement and shifted to conventional piston engines, save for the RX-8, in production from 2000 to 2012. The RX-3s remain popular, if you can find one. Top Gear writer Craig Jamieson noted in Australia the cars were going for six figures (!), adding, "convert that into real money and you're still hurting."

Was it all worth it? According to Jon Branch, absolutely:

Were Mazda wise to invest so much into the development of the Wankel engine? The answer is very clearly yes, and the RX-3 was one of the most important vehicles in using that technology to the best advantage



Ray Walle at Mid-Ohio, 1974 (Mark Windecker photo)

Sources: Daniel Vaughan, "1972 Mazda RX3," *ConceptCarz*, July 2007; Craig Jamieson, "Here are the 109 most interesting things about the Mazda RX-3," *Top Gear*, 10 March 2021; John Branch, "The Mazda RX-3 – An Introduction," *Silodrome*, 21 May 2019; *Racing Sports Cars*, <https://www.racingsportscars.com/>; Sam D. Smith, "The Forgotten Rotary Champ: Remembering the Mazda RX-3 at 50," *Carscoops*, 28 February 2021; Nathan Dyer, "Meet the Iconic Mazda RX-3, the Legend of the 70s," *CARHP*, 8 August 2023.

Featured Events

Holiday Party
MG Club of St Louis—13 Jan 24



Photos by Andy Ackerman



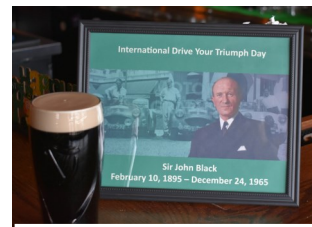
Photos by Andy Ackerman

Drive Your Triumph Day

St Louis Triumph Owners Association—10 Feb 24



Photos by
Stephen L.
Paur
Dave Massey
and
Karl Schmidt



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