



The Centaur (77)

Tue, 21st Feb 2006, The Centaur

Lot 54

Estimate: £4000 - £5000 + Fees

1974 Mazda RX-4 2.3 Coupe

Registration No: WHJ571M

Chassis No: ZA5606

The Japanese have always been quick to embrace new technology in their cars and nowhere was this more apparent than the Toyo Kogyo company's (better known to us as Mazda) quick application for a licence to use and develop Dr Felix Wankel's new rotary engine in the late 1960s. Its first appearance in a Mazda road car was in the 1967 110S, a car whose technological advances were matched by the on-road presence of its stunning styling. However, Mazda were quick to develop the rotary engine for use in its more prosaic family models, firstly with the 1200 based R100 in 1969 and then with the RX-2 in 1971 (616 based) and RX-3 (818 based) in 1972. These models quickly impressed buyers with the smoothness and refinement of their rotary engines and performance which far surpassed their piston engined rivals, plus a level of reliability which always seemed far in advance of that other period rotary engined car, the NSU Ro80. The 929 based RX-4 appeared in 1973 and immediately took the concept a stage further by matching the smoothness of the rotary engine to a chassis which was better able to handle this level of performance than the earlier models. Available in Saloon, Coupe and Estate bodystyles, the success of the Mazda rotary models was cut short by the 1974 fuel crisis which only served to emphasise the rotary engine's one major downfall - excessive fuel consumption. Sales plummeted, especially in Europe and the US, and Mazda withdrew their rotary engined models from markets outside Japan whilst it continued to further develop the rotary engine ready for the next stage in the story - the arrival of the stunning RX-7 in 1978. RX-4s of any description are very rare today due to the unfortunate tendency shared with all period Japanese cars for the bodywork to dissolve at the sight of a salt cellar, even more so original right hand drive examples. This makes the right hand drive Coupe in red offered for sale today a particularly rare bird. Originally supplied to New Zealand this example was imported into the UK in 2000 and is particularly striking having a white interior to contrast with the red paintwork. Further enhanced by having been tuned, fitted with lowered suspension and 13x6" alloy wheels the information file contains the original vehicle modification declaration certificate issued by New Zealand Land Transport Safety Authority. The 99,560 KM shown on the odometer are believed to be genuine from new. The engine, transmission, electrics, interior and (most importantly) the bodywork are all described by the vendor as being good and the car is even supplied with its original owners handbook. One of the most unusual and striking vehicles in today's sale this is a rare opportunity to acquire a wonderful example of 1970s period style.

SALEROOM NOTICE

Please note that this vehicle is now registered WHJ571M.