

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

The All-New Mazda BT-50 is like no other ute; tough and reliable but also offering Mazda's unique sense of style

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In 2011 Mazda celebrates its 80th year of producing utilities and 50 years since the very first B-Series ute went on sale.

When it appeared back in 1961 it set new standards for the small utility class. Instead of following in the tyre tracks of the competition, with their crude, agricultural workhorses, Mazda created something far more sophisticated. That's why the B1500 came with advanced suspension, a beefy one-tonne payload and a punchy 44kW 1.5-litre engine.

Since then, the firm has built a well-earned reputation for toughness and durability in some of the harshest places in the world. So the All-New BT-50 has a lot to live up to. Expect it to be advanced, tough and reliable.

It helps that the seventh-generation utility got off to a great start when the All-New BT-50 made its global debut at the Sydney motor show, where it

stunned show-goers with its new-found sense of style.

Style? You read right, the All-New BT-50 is a genuine looker, introducing design that, until now, has been pretty alien to the vehicles in the utility class.

"This utility has been designed to be noticed. That's why it's distinctive and nothing else looks like it. You can recognise it from 100 metres away," says chief designer, Ryo Yanagisawa.

Picking up where the dramatic Shinari concept left off, Yanagisawa-san took his inspiration from the image of an animal about to pounce, this time a lion. "We had a photograph of a lion. He looked like a magnificent predator with all his muscles bunching up," he says, pointing out the BT-50's pent up aggression and flared wheel arches. Its tail lamps, meanwhile, look like they could adorn a premium SUV, hinting that the new Mazda ute has been

designed for more than just hard work.

"The BT-50 signifies a new direction in the utility segment. It was developed as an 'active lifestyle vehicle', to further extend the appeal of a utility from traditional business users to families and pleasure-seekers," he adds.

The design is only part of Mazda's plan to broaden the BT-50's appeal. According to Yanagisawa-san, the interior of the All-New BT-50 complements its athletic and refined exterior design and rivals Mazda's current passenger car standard.

Even better, for those who like to drive, Yanagisawa-san says the engineers have created a ute that will feel as comfortable to drive as a Mazda car, without compromising the toughness or carrying capacity.

Yanagisawa-san is clearly passionate about the All-New BT-50 and can't wait to hear what buyers think of it. ■

Workhorse or weekend warrior, the All-New BT-50 does it all

