

CLASSIC DRIVER

McLaren MP4-12C: GT3 Car Unveiled



A £310,000 “race car of unrivalled quality” was revealed to the world’s media today, 4 May 2011, when the British manufacturer took the wraps off a GT3 contender based on [its stunning road car](#).

To be strictly accurate, the presentation was made by ‘McLaren GT’ - a new manufacturer resulting from the pooled expertise of McLaren Racing, McLaren Automotive and ace race team CRS Racing.

All the big guns, Martin Whitmarsh (McLaren Group CEO), Antony Sherrif (McLaren Automotive's managing director) and even Company Chairman Ron Dennis were on hand to present the first of just 20 cars which will be homologated for a full season of racing in 2012.

There will, however, be a limited number of appearances this year - including at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in July - for the 12C GT3, a car that has benefited from all the technical know-how and years of racing experience one would expect from the multi-World-Championship-winning McLaren team.



Naturally, the road car's defining feature, its 75kg carbonfibre 'MonoCell' chassis, is key to the racing version's design. McLaren has drawn on its extensive F1 supplier network to fast-track many components, developing a car from computer screen to testing at the Spanish Navarra circuit in just 12 months.

The steering wheel is closely related to that used in Button's and Hamilton's F1 cars. A TAG-400 Engine Control Unit is the twin-turbo engine's management system and data logger, designed and built by McLaren Electronic Systems. F1 suppliers past and present Mobil 1, Ricardo and Michelin are also involved.







Interestingly, the normally 600PS (592bhp) V8 has actually been *detuned* to 500PS (493bhp). The reason for this is to meet the FIA's performance-balancing criteria, so it can go head-to-head with the equivalent racing Porsche, Ferrari, Aston Martin or Lamborghini.

An exciting prospect.

Weight is down too, though, to compensate; and the centre of gravity has been pushed forward, with a new six-speed (the road car has seven gears) sequential-shift gearbox developed by Ricardo greatly aiding this. The front wheels and tyres are, as a result, considerably larger than on the standard MP4-12C.

Initial testing by CRS has proved the car to be promising – as long-term company tester Chris Goodwin put it at the launch: “The first tests were amazing... it blew me away”.



By limiting numbers to an initial 20 cars, McLaren GT is confident that the cost of ownership of the new GT3 car will be kept low, due to a reasonable purchase price, promising performance and high demand resulting in good residual values. As with the road car programme, EVERY part will be kept in stock and available to private teams. Plus, the car's price - £310,000 - is in effect, 'on the road'. A new MP4-12C GT3 is ready to run, with no hidden "oh yes, but you will need the latest aero pack... and gearbox upgrade..." extras.







The initial driver line-up of team principal Andrew Kirkaldy, paired with Briton Oliver Turvey (Vodafone McLaren Mercedes test driver) and the Portuguese Álvaro Parente will be behind the wheel for the Blancpain Endurance Series race at the Spanish Circuito de Navarra (22 May), followed by Magny-Cours (27 August) and Silverstone (9 October).

After a full season of European racing in 2012, the team “may look elsewhere...” in future years. Plus, Sheriff spoke about the car giving them “future ideas for road cars”.

“We are McLaren – and we race,” he declared. They sure do, and the prospect of the new GT3 car up against arch-rival Ferrari in GT as well as F1 races is an exciting one.



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