

CLASSIC DRIVER

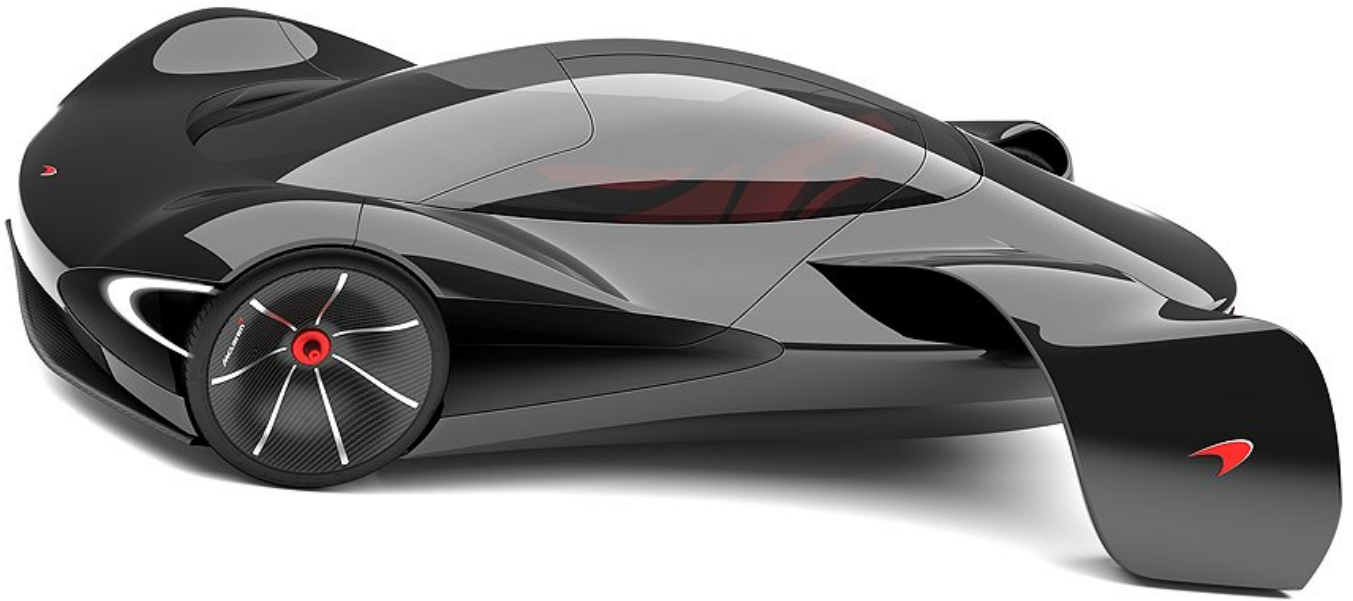
McLaren JetSet, in your garage by 2020?

Lead

The unveiling of the striking McLaren X-1 last week at Pebble Beach shows just how dramatic the results can be when a fresh-minded design student is given licence to create a supercar. Now we take a look at the McLaren JetSet; a minimalist, all-electric supercar designed by another RCA graduate.

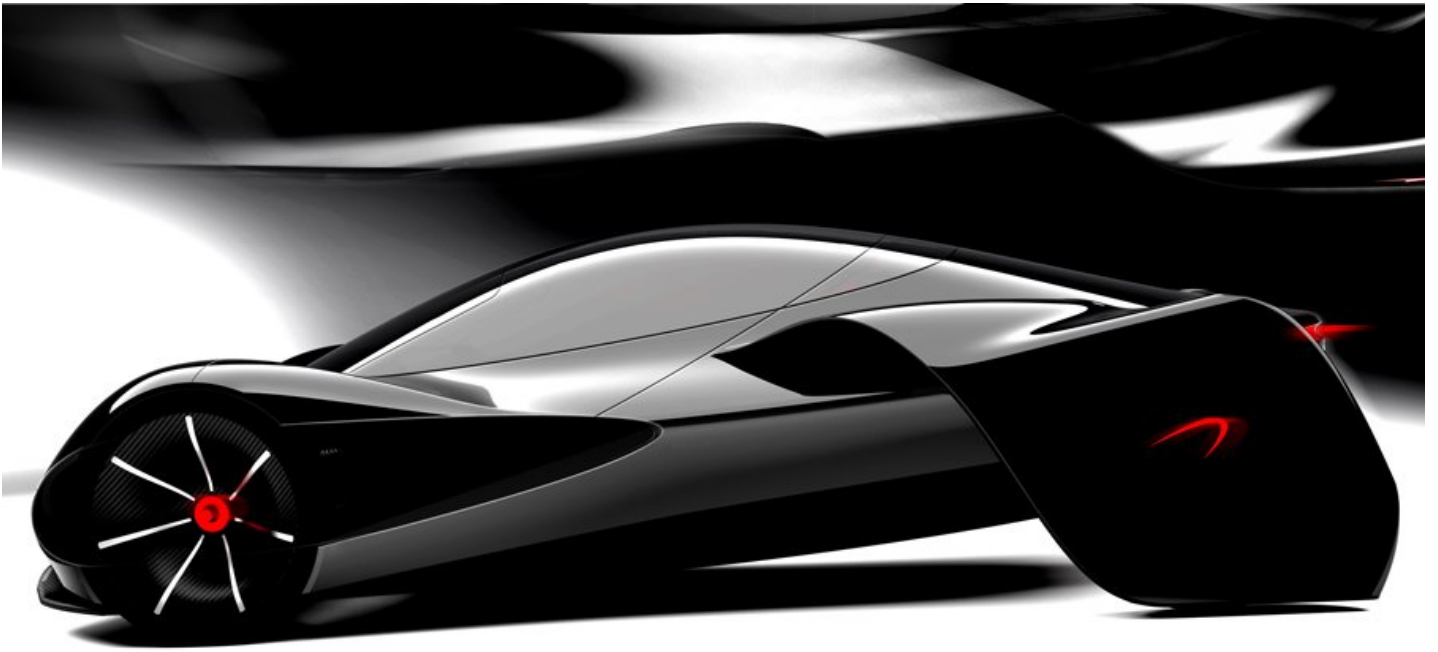
The flashbulb reflections on the X-1's piano black paintwork might only just have dimmed after it spent its inaugural appearance as one of the star exhibits at Pebble – but the design process began almost three years ago. One of the anonymous owner's stipulations was that a competition between a group of external designers and McLaren's own should take place to decide a winning design. In the end, it was a Royal College of Art student who won the competition; simultaneously landing himself a job with the esteemed manufacturer.

We now know how the X-1 story turned out, so let's skip forward to the RCA Class of 2012. McLaren design director Frank Stephenson set the students of the celebrated Vehicle Design course a brief: to create a minimalist supercar, which combined traditional McLaren values with a healthy dose of forethought into future trends and technologies. Five finalists were chosen, one of whom was Marianna Merenmies and her McLaren JetSet.





Clearly centring on the famous 'everything for a reason' McLaren principle, the JetSet keeps weight to an absolute minimum by using carbonfibre composites for the chassis, body, suspension systems and even the wheels. Other focal points are F1-inspired aerodynamics, and an "attractive design that would appeal to a high-end customer typical to the McLaren brand," according to Merenmies. Power would theoretically come from an electric motor, while weight would be expected to be well under 1000kg; both would surely combine to provide a memorable driving experience. Inside, there's space for the driver only, centrally seated à la McLaren F1.



It can sometimes be difficult to envision these futuristic concepts on our roads, especially when they're as atypical as the JetSet. But, given that the competition that spawned it was backed by McLaren, and that Frank Stephenson has admitted interest in exploring a 'minimalist supercar' before the end of the decade, we could be seeing a distant relative of the JetSet on sale a lot sooner than you might think...

Photos: Marianna Merenmies

Gallery

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