

AUTOMOTIVE

McLaren celebrates brand heritage, pioneering spirit with Elva roadster

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The new Ultimate Series Elva open cockpit road vehicle. Image credit: McLaren Automotive

By NORA HOWE

British automaker McLaren Automotive is looking back at its racing history to promote its new Ultimate Series Elva roadster, the brand's first open-cockpit road vehicle.

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Positioned as the "customer version" of the innovative Group 7 McLaren race cars, the Elva embodies the pioneering design and engineering principles that are integral to the automaker's road cars. The heritage behind the roadster is celebrated in a new film highlighting McLaren's storied past, which inspired the open cockpit Elva.

"Juxtaposed against evocative track footage, this film of past and future frames the new McLaren Elva as a rare hyper car with palpable links to a defining moment in motorsports history when founder Bruce McLaren was establishing this iconic brand," said Roger Ormisher, vice president of communications and PR at McLaren, the Americas, Irvine.

McLaren Elva

In the 1960s, Bruce McLaren and Denny Hulme became notable names in racing behind the wheel of the McLaren M1A, but the only way to extend McLaren's magic to everyday drivers was to join forces with Elva Cars.

The result paved the way for McLaren's global success in both Canadian-American racing and road cars. Now, the brand pays homage to this history through creative efforts.

The history of McLaren's Elva, race car turned roadster

The film mixes archival footage of McLaren racing in North America with present-day shots of the newest Elva model, as well as interviews with leaders at McLaren and notable race car drivers.

"The story is what matters about an automobile; people do talk about, they do remember stories," says Bruce Long, CEO of Arrow Electronics, in the film. Arrow Electronics is one of McLaren's Formula One partners.

The vignette differs from much of McLaren Automotive's marketing, which often emphasizes vehicle performance rather than brand narratives.

This is not the only reason why it stands out, however. According to the automaker, the video was created by

McLaren Beverly Hills.

"[What makes this campaign unique is that it is] a retailer-developed concept and content that will be used throughout McLaren North America and global channels showing the cooperation between the brand and its sales network," Mr. Ormisher said.

To exaggerate Elva's performance capabilities, McLaren also released a **short film** with IndyCar driver and Stanford engineering lecturer JR Hildebrand, who shows consumers what it is like to be at the wheel of the Ultimate Series roadster.



Mr. Hildebrand dubbed the Elva the "ultimate driver's car." Image credit: McLaren Automotive

Visually, the McLaren Elva was designed to be as striking and unique as its driving experience. The most obvious differences in this road vehicle is the absence of a roof, windshield and exterior windows.

The low nose and pronounced front fender peaks enhance forward vision. Helmets can be worn if preferred, but the form and sculpture of the upper cabin wraps around the driver and passenger to provide a secure environment.

Only 149 Elvas are available for order, starting at \$1.69 million. Final prices will depend on the level of personalization by McLaren Special Operations, the bespoke division of McLaren Automotive.

Evolution of Elva

The roadster takes its name from customer versions of the M1A race cars developed by Mr. McLaren in the 1960s.

After the M1A showed its speed on the race track, consumers asked to order the car. McLaren only had seven employees at the time who were focused on the racing team, so it outsourced production of the cars to Sussex-based Elva Cars Ltd.

The automaker introduced the open cockpit concept in 2019, aiming to promote an "unparalleled driving pleasure" ([see story](#)).

In June 2021, the brand partnered with **Lego Group** to create a replica of one of the world's exclusive open-top speedster: the Lego Speed Champions McLaren Elva.

The 263-piece play set highlights the mini-figure inspired by Rachel Brown, McLaren Automotive's principal development engineer for the ultimate series ([see story](#)).