

AUTOMOTIVE

## McLaren gets playful, nostalgic with customization

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McLaren first launched its customization unit, McLaren Special Operations, in 2011. Image credit: McLaren

By NORA HOWE

British automaker McLaren Automotive is taking a creative approach to vehicle personalization, fulfilling its customers' wildest dreams.

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While building a successful career in tech, finance and real estate, toyshop owner Qais Sedki never lost sight of his passion for lighthearted playfulness, leading him to open his hobby shop. In a short film, McLaren brings audiences along Mr. Sedki's journey of building his dream McLaren 765LT, highlighting his focus on the concept of play.

"This car was created for our retailers in the Middle East markets, where it allowed McLaren to successfully engage with the extremely passionate art community in Dubai and throughout the Middle East," said Roger Ormisher, vice president of communications and PR at McLaren Americas.

Like Minds

In working with the engineers and designers at McLaren Special Operations (MSO), Mr. Sedki adds a bright yellow McLaren 765LT to his already impressive fleet.

"I feel like a child trapped in a man's body," he says. "I really do like the concept of play and, in terms of cars, motorsport is a way to use them as they were intended."

*Qais Sedki appreciates the concept of play and sees motorsport as a way to make car ownership playful*

Mr. Sedki was set on having a unique yellow color for the vehicle and describes working with MSO paint principal Darren Townsend, who suggested adding a turquoise fleck to the yellow. At first, this did not appeal to Mr. Sedki, but upon reviewing the samples he deemed the choice as brilliant.

Mr. Sedki named the uniquely developed paint color after his oldest daughter, Ghalya.

The first half of the 5-minute campaign film shows Mr. Sedki test-driving his new vehicle and studying the intricate details of the car in his driveway.

To test his new 765LT, Mr. Sedki was not required to travel far from his home. There are two F1-accredited circuits

in the United Arab Emirates: Yas Marina and Autodrome, both located in Abu Dhabi.

In celebrating these two notable tracks, Ms. Sedki had the automaker illustrate and stamp both circuits on the bottom of the vehicle's doors the Autodrome on the driver's side and the Yas Marina on the passenger side.

In addition to the color and circuit motifs, McLaren delivered on a number of Mr. Sedki's performance- and design-driven requests such as a fully carbon-fiber hood, interior engravings and differently colored wheels on each side of the vehicle.

"You can play with a configurator online and choose options, but MSO takes that experience to entirely new levels," Mr. Sedki said in the film.

The second half of the film focuses on Mr. Sedki's passion for craftsmanship and attention to detail through plastic model kit building.

When traveling between Dubai and Tokyo, Mr. Sedki was inspired to bring these kinds of products to his home region to serve the needs of people who are interested in building model kits.



*Otaku ME offers a wide range of model kits, including McLaren vehicles. Image credit: McLaren*

His shop, Otaku ME, imports rare and complex model kits for hobby enthusiasts in the United Arab Emirates it even sells miniature McLaren models. This is where Mr. Sedki spends the majority of his time with family, friends and customers.

He compares building a McLaren supercar to piecing together parts of a toy kit, acknowledging the amount of precision, detail and effort that is required for both.

#### Playing around

Luxury automakers often lean into the concept of toy replicas as a way to build brand interests from adolescence or offer a fun alternative to large-scale models

In June 2021, McLaren teamed up with Lego Group to create a replica of one of the world's most exclusive open-top speedsters.

Celebrating speed and innovation, the collaboration introduced a new supercar: the Lego Speed Champions McLaren Elva. The 263-piece playset highlights the mini-figure inspired by Rachel Brown, McLaren Automotive's principal development engineer for the ultimate series.

The Lego Speed Champions McLaren Elva set comes complete with a McLaren driver mini-figure in a race suit, helmet and wrench ([see story](#)).

In a similar playful push, German automaker Porsche reunited with Lego in early 2021 to miniaturize its iconic 911 Turbo and 911 Targa.

The two-in-one Lego Porsche 911 Turbo and 911 Targa set allows fans to choose between the classic coupe or convertible when putting together the toy model ([see story](#)).

"[The 'Like Minds' campaign] is a perfect example of the work that McLaren Special Operations delivers for our customers around the world," Mr. Ormisher said. "They were created to combine performance, innovation and craftsmanship to deliver the art of the possible."

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