



“ IS IT ME OR DOES IT SEEM LIKE ONLY LIKE LAST TUESDAY THAT MCLAREN CAME FROM NOWHERE AND PUNCHED US IN THE FACE WITH A GAGGLE OF SUPERCARS? - ROBBIE DICKSON



# A VISIT TO THE FACTORY

by Robbie Dickson





# “We needed an answer. Which one is the better deal? The McLaren 570S or 650S?”



Ok, so I know what you're thinking, how can you possibly compare one McLaren model costing \$380k to a new \$220k Baby McLaren, which, by the way is not the iddy biddy cute-n-cuddly wimpy supercar we were expecting, not by a long shot.

Well, I didn't want this to be like every other car review where we compare a few cars in the same price bracket and see which car makes your eyes bleed the most or which make my pants the wettest.

I wanted to take a different approach, one that looks at 2 supercars made by the same company. So where to start?. That was in fact the easy part... McLaren. Is it me or does it seem like only last Tuesday that McLaren came from nowhere and punched us in the face with a gaggle of supercars that made Furroccio Lamborghini and Enno Ferrari wake from the dead ?.

So to begin with I decided to go visit the McLaren factory and see what all the fuss is about. Ask anyone where the supercar capital of the world is and they'll likely point you towards Italy. But that's not the only place where supercars are born. Nor is it – despite the best efforts of Ferrari – home to the bulk of grand prix victories and world championships. Those bragging rights belong to a section of England we call Carbon Fiber Valley. It's where you'll find the majority of Formula One teams and suppliers, and at its heart lies the sleepy town of Woking

With a little over 60,000 inhabitants, Woking wouldn't register on most radars. But it blips big on mine thanks to the McLaren Technology Centre, home to one of the most successful teams in F1 history and a supercar manufacturer to rival Italy's best. It's one of the great gearhead meccas of the world.

Hidden on more than a hundred green acres at the outskirts of Woking lies a space-age complex that could double as a supervillain's lair in most any fantastical action movie.

My journey (and McLaren's) started with the 1929 Austin 7 in which Bruce McLaren won his first race in 1954 at the tender age of 15. His father bought the car in pieces with plans to sell it, but Bruce convinced him to keep it instead. They built the car together, along with a figure-eight track on which Bruce learned to drive. It was the start of a legendary career as both a driver and constructor of racing cars.

Sitting across from the Austin and bookending the other end of McLaren's history is the MP4-27 that Jenson Button drove in 2012. Button won three races that season, his teammate Lewis

Hamilton another four, marking the team's last race wins to date.

## More wings than a chicken joint...

Just beyond lies a dramatic 1969 McLaren M7C with more wings than a chicken joint. Bruce drove it himself until the guillotine front wing was banned, but I was more interested in the orange wedge parked adjacent. This was the car I came to see: not for the car but the history and insanity of the race series it drove in: The Can-Am series, Nick named the Can-Am-Killer, it was one of the most insane racing series ever devised, and McLaren positively dominated it, winning the championship five years running. The series would go on to become, arguably, the greatest form of motor racing the world has ever known. It began in 1966 but to 1974 it was over, but it was the Canadians that made it happen, first green flag flew at St. Jovite (now Mont-Tremblant) in Canada. Just imagine for a second a racing series where there was no HP limit, hence this 1500HP monster. The series was like something from a Quentin Tarantino movie with similar fatality numbers to match.

Once the Death Races were done with, McLaren entered the Marlboro era soon thereafter. The original MP4, name sounds familiar ? (named for the merger of McLaren and Dennis' Project 4 team) won just one race in '81, but its influence was far greater: the MP4 pioneered carbon-fibre construction, long before any other team adopted the lightweight material. Though these cars long predate the ban on tobacco advertising, bureaucrats mandated the removal of their Marlboro logos. But now you can begin to see where the technology for the road cars come from, and that's also what I wanted to see. The Factory floor

From the Museum we walked through a futuristic hidden tunnel painted floor to ceiling in a new color I just invented called "Star wars white". Can someone get Benjamin Moore on the phone. All that was missing was a few storm troopers to make me feel like I was in episode 8 but this time with a v8 powered carbon fibre edition R2D2 to keep me safe.

Eventually at the end of a tunnel appeared another hidden door which when opened revealed the entire production facility which from where we were stood high above the floor, it looked like someone had dropped a box of skittles on a surgical white floor. This was no ordinary Automotive production facility, this was something very special, no Robots to be seen just lots of people dressed in all black buzzing around assembling complete Supercars by hand at a rate of one per four hours. This was the first time I got to see the new 570s up close and with no cloth on....I mean the car not me.





## 570S

Engine: 3.8 L twin-turbo M838T E V8 | 562 brake horsepower (419 kW) | Transmission: 7-speed Graziano SSG dual-clutch | Curb weight: 3,200 lb (1,451 kg)



### The 570's Tub

True to the McLaren recipe, the 570S begins with a carbon-fiber passenger cell sandwiched between aluminum substructures like a british chip buttie. Now called MonoCell II, the tub features sills slimmer than the wide, tall rails of the 650s and the P1. That should make it easier to enter and exit the car, playing to the 570S's intended purpose as a daily driver for those who take their Sunday drives in Gulfstream jets.

### Powertrain

Like the pricier 650S, the new 570S derives its name from the output of its 3.8-liter V-8 in Metric horsepower. That's 562 horses in to you and I. Torque is rated at 443 pound-feet. While the displacement of the twin-turbo engine matches that of the 650S and P1, and power supplied to the rear wheels via the seven-speed dual-clutch automatic gearbox.

Since McLaren remains an unwavering advocate for rear-wheel drive, the 570S won't match the 911 Turbo S's shocking 2.5-sec-

ond zero-to-60 time warp. The Brits say their car will rocket to 62 mph in a still-swift 3.2 seconds, but also claim that a best-in-class power-to-weight ratio will give them the edge in any race to triple-digit speeds. Keep your foot in it long enough and the 570S will eventually top 200 mph, perfect for drag racing your Gulfstream Jet on a Sunday morning whilst the neighbors are at church.

### So how does it drive then?

My daily driver is a 650S, and yes I'm a little bitter the 570 looks better and is \$150k less so I expected to really notice the difference in the drive ... and I did.

The 570 is not ridiculously quick. That might sound a bit harsh, but I am comparing it here to a 650S don't forget. The McLaren I got used to has such abundance of power that it can almost overwhelm you on the road, in the 570S you can actually keep the pedal pinned for long enough to savor the action if that's a good thing. But in a 650S you tend to back off like your shoe's on fire to avoid some massive carnage that's about to unfold.

But 'not ridiculously quick' still means its quick enough to beat 99% of cars off the green light, which is of course the most important reason to have a fast 0-60 time. On the road it hurls itself with proper assertion, once you've passed 4,000rpm, and the engine sings to 8,300rpm (most turbos call time at 7k-ish). In that operating range, turbo lag simply isn't an issue, so the engine always responds proportionally and controllably and you gotta love that turbo wind up sound. And if you're on unknown twisty roads, that torque is a gift that keeps on giving.

### What does that mean for cornering?

McLaren has deliberately limited grip. A bit. In other words the rear tyres are 'only' 285/35 20. And there are no moving aero devices and no extravagant downforce or Air brake wing. Those things result in a car with gentle edges to its envelope gives you loads of warning that grip is running low, and loads of choices about what to do next. This makes the 570 safe to have fun in if your idea of fun is drifting rounds corners controllably, which it is, or doing figure 8's in the parking lot, which it also is.

McLaren has hydraulic steering too, and the feel is terrific, adding another layer to your confidence. You'll seldom feel understeer. At root it's a balanced chassis with loads of traction. Beyond that it has very clever electronic stability systems, including a new, very loose, setting that allows you to – OK, encourages you to – play at lurid oversteer. Where conditions permit, to let you lay down some rubber in a parking lot near you to mark your territory, not that I would ever do that of course.

### So a daily driver?

I think my 650S is a usable daily driver, and it has been for nearly 2 years, the 570 is even more so. Its easier to get in and out of, better on gas – oooops please pretend I didn't say that and it has more cargo space too, I'm still not bitter. So I know by now your thinking I'm now going to trade in my 650S for the new McLaren and yes that would make perfect sense to do so. The 570 is stunning to look at, and if you compare it to the Porsche 911 which it competes with there is no comparison, this really is the 911 killer I expected it to be, in the looks department at least.

### Should you buy the 570 or the 650

If you were to put a professional driver in the 570 and race against me in a 650 on a track, there is no doubt I would be embarrassed and I'd have to claim some engine problems for my lack of performance to save face. So the best advice I would have is save the \$150k, buy a membership at a race track like Area-27 in the Okanagan, get some good professional racing tuition and I guarantee you will be quicker than a 650.

### "More is more"

So did I trade in the 650s? - Yes I did. But not for the 570 like any normal person should and would do, instead I decided to go the other way and opt for the even more expensive 675LT Spyder, not because the 570 is better value than the 650 but because for me if there is an option to get more power or more insanity into a car, I'll always opt for more, because to me more is more, and I like more.



## 650S

Engine: 3.8 L twin-turbo M838T V8 | 641 bhp (478 kW; 650 PS) - 500 lb-ft (680 N·m) of torque | Transmission: 7-speed dual-clutch | Curb weight: 3,148 lb (1,428 kg) (coupe)

