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McLaren 620R – First Drive

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The author with the new 620R (Photo by Chris Adamson).



Chris Adamson assesses McLaren's latest model, the new 620R...

(Photos as individually credited).

McLaren's current resurgence in Formula One has put the British brand back in the sporting spotlight although for most racing enthusiasts the thrill of motorsport is still very much a long-distance connection.

However, if you do want to experience some of the visceral energy of motor racing and you have a big budget, McLaren has what could just be the right prescription - the 620R.

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The competition-inspired, road legal 620R (derived from the 570S GT4 - McLaren's most successful race car) is the swansong for the McLaren Sports Series and they have obviously saved the best until last as it's the most powerful model in the series and certainly looks the part.

This comes courtesy of a mid-engined, longitudinal mounted twin-turbocharged 3.8 litre V8, which free from competition regulations has been tuned to produce a mouth-watering 620 PS (611 bhp) and more importantly, serves-up 620 Nm (475 lb.ft) of torque.

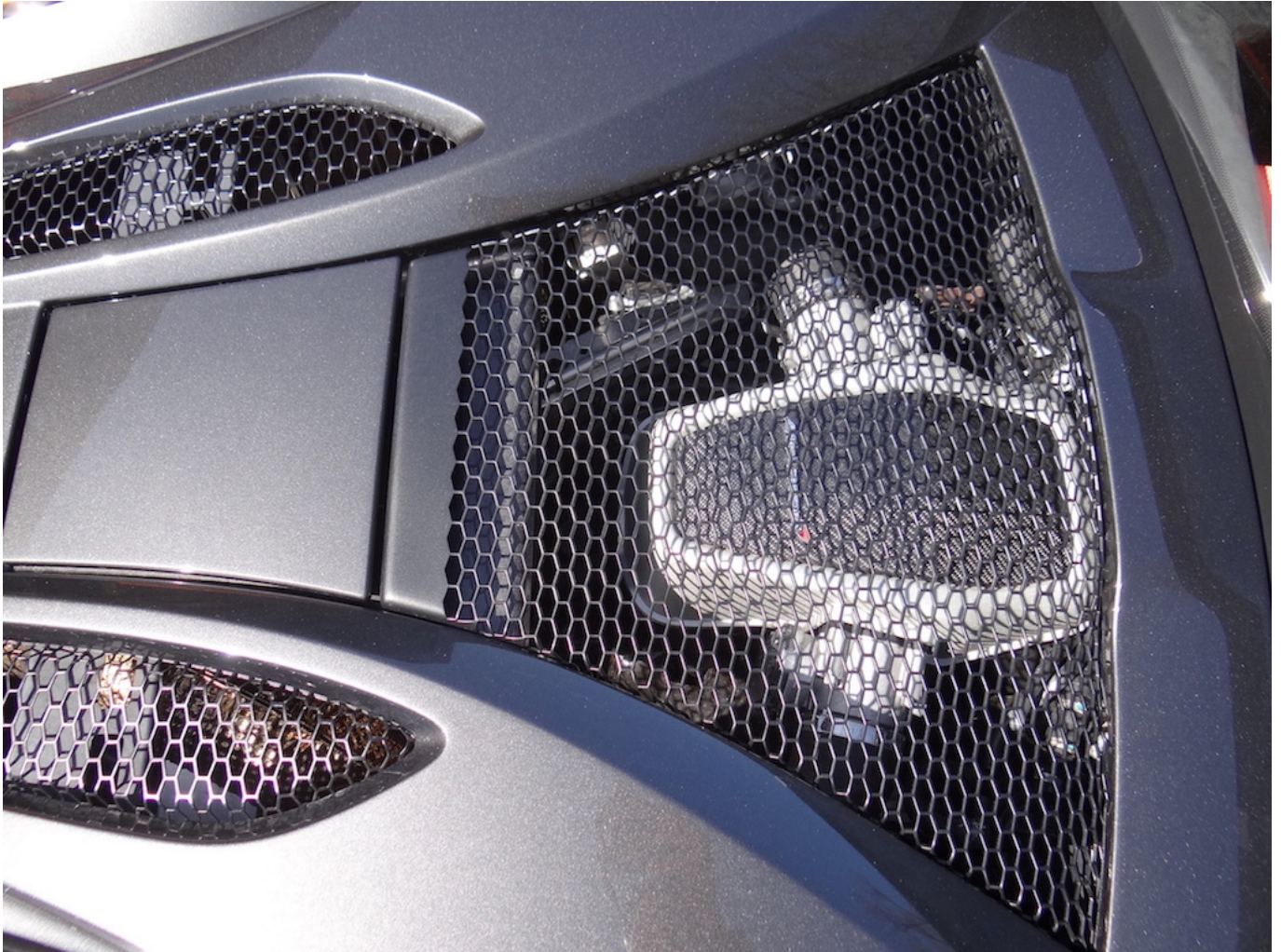


Photo by Chris Adamson.

McLaren claim 62 mpg in 2.9 seconds, which will get you away from the traffic lights faster than almost anything else, but doing that will quickly deplete the 72 litre (15.84 gallons) fuel tank which at best is going to give up its unleaded at the rate of between 20 and 25 mpg.

Delivering all this grunt to the rear wheels is a seven-speed seamless shift gearbox that can be operated by nicely positioned steering wheel paddles.

Temptingly, McLaren fits a Track mode featuring McLaren's inertia push technology which



converts built-up flywheel energy into a burst of torque on upshifts, something which can only really be exploited on the track.

Of more benefit on the road is the Sport selection which allows for quicker upshifts created by a split-second cut of the ignition spark. To be honest in British road conditions the difference is hardly noticed because the Normal setting does such a good job.

Like every other McLaren, the 620R is bristling with aerodynamic aids including a highly distinctive and massive rear wing sitting 30 cm (11.8 inches) above the engine cover which has three adjustable angles, the most aggressive of which helps the 620R develop a maximum of 185 kg (408 lb) of downforce at 250 km/h (155 mph) - something to experience on the track rather than on the road.

This works in conjunction with a host of other features, such as the front bumper with its aero blades, a carbon-fibre bonnet with twin nostrils to clean-up the airflow over the car and dive planes that can contribute up to 30 kg (66 lb) of downforce on the nose.

An optional R Pack (at a whopping £25,000) adds in more sporting touches, such as the gloss finish carbon-fibre roof scoop, titanium exhausts with black finishers along with carbon fibre front louvres plus McLaren Track telemetry with three cameras and a carbon fibre interior upgrade.

If you have an extra £9,000 you can add in roof contrails and extended sill finishers.

The single-piece carbon-fibre Monocell chassis, shared with the GT4 race car, provides the foundation for the whole vehicle, combining strength with light weight and it shows in the way the 620R handles.



[Photo from McLaren.](#)

The 620R's circuit to road handling is provided by a wide track and lowered suspension with two-way manually adjustable coil-over motorsport dampers (another element derived from the GT4 racing programme) featuring 32 click of adjustment per corner which allows the driver to tailor the compression and rebound rates.

Allied to this are aluminium wishbones and uprights with stiff anti-roll bars and struts that swap rubber top mounts for solid stainless steel alternatives.

You would imagine that this racing technology would give the 620R a harsh ride but surprisingly it doesn't and the major benefit is more steering control and feedback to the driver, so the 620R is a very quick responding vehicle to be in charge of.



Photo by Chris Adamson.

Sufficient stopping power is ensured by big carbon ceramic brakes - 390 mm (15.35 in) at the front and 380 mm (14.96 in) at the rear, which get a boost to stopping power in the dry from the installation of Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R semi-slick road tyres on the 19 in front and 20 inch rear 15 spoke forged alloy-wheels.

This is topped-up with an anti-lock braking system, Dynamic Electronic Stability Control, Traction Control and hill-hold assist.

For a road car inspired by a race car, the 620R has a remarkably civilised alcantara and

chrome trimmed cabin.



[Photo from McLaren.](#)

The carbon-fibre race style seats for example are a lot more comfortable than they look and have generous hip proportions so you don't feel you are being shoehorned in.

These come fitted with a six-point racing harness (necessary for fast track work) which would be a bit of a faff if they hadn't also installed conventional three point seatbelts.

Further racing influences are the red pull straps for the dihedral doors which are essential when you are firmly strapped in.

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McLaren will sell you a 620R without air conditioning, IRIS navigation and an audio system – but these can be selected as no cost options so why wouldn't you – about the only thing you are going to pay extra for is £3,640 for the Bowers and Wilkins audio.

Most features such as the media system, audio, navigation, phone and a selection of apps are controlled through the elongated, centrally mounted seven-inch touch screen monitor which is very intuitive and easy to adapt to. All the other controls are close to hand, logical and positive to the touch.

On the Road



[Photo from McLaren.](#)

Getting behind the wheel of the 620R can be quite intimidating but you quickly realise that



that is a car that will go at your pace and respond to your desires.

For a high performance machine with so much power on tap it is remarkably docile in traffic when you can just leave it in the normal transmission setting and it will potter around like a shopping trolley.

But then when you find a piece of open road you can really open it up – with one big word of warning.... the performance of the 620R is very deceptive.

The finely-tuned chassis is remarkably forgiving which can influence your perception of speed, I soon discovered that what felt like 20 mph was in fact 40 mph and 50 mph was 70mph so had to restrain my natural enthusiasm and right foot application.

Yes, the ride is a tad firm and can bump in and out of potholes but even this is far from spine jarring thanks to that adaptive suspension set-up.

Equally impressive is the electro-hydraulic assisted power steering that is pin sharp and takes hardly any time at all to respond to the driver input, positioning the 620R exactly where you want it with just a hint of oversteer to pull the back round on tight cornering.

If I had a minor complaint it was the slight turbo-lag when booting the accelerator; on any other vehicle this wouldn't be noticeable but on the 620R you are expecting it to be perfect so it is an aspect that is unexpected.

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Photo by Chris Adamson.

VERDICT

The 620R isn't a car to take to the supermarket - for one thing a loaf of bread and pint of milk will just about fill the 120 litre (4.24 cu.ft) luggage compartment - it is one that only really appreciates and rewards on a fast-flowing country road where you can let the V8 run free.

Originally McLaren planned to build 350 examples of the 620R but the intervention of the pandemic means that just 225 have been completed - and I am informed there are still a few available so if you have a spare £250,000 doing nothing this could be the car for you.



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Photo by Chris Adamson.



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Wheels-Alive Tech Spec:

McLaren 620R



Photo from McLaren.

Engine: 3799cc V8

Transmission: 7-Speed SSG

Power: 620 PS (611 BHP / 456kW) @ 7,000 rpm

Torque: 620 Nm (457 lb.ft) @ 3,500 rpm

Performance:

0 - 62 mph (0-100 km/h): 2.9 seconds

Top Speed: 200 mph (322 kph)



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Fuel Consumption (Official Figures):

Combined WLTP: 23.2 mpg

CO2 Emissions: 278 g/km

Price (On the Road) from: £250,000 (£287,390 as tested)