

CLASSIC DRIVER

Our birthday party for the McLaren F1 was a night to remember

Lead
Last Tuesday, Classic Driver and Kiklo Spaces celebrated the 30th anniversary of the McLaren F1 with a line-up of 13 cars and a gathering of influential personalities. "Uncovered at Thirty" was truly a night to remember!



When we first started throwing around the idea of a party to celebrate the upcoming 30th anniversary of the McLaren F1 with our friends from Kiklo Spaces over a year ago, the goal of getting a dozen cars into one room sounded ambitious to say the least. After all, the F1 is one of the rarest and most valuable cars on the planet. However, thanks to a lot of persistence, hard work, and the exceptional network of Chris Vassilopoulos and Luke Rebelo of Kiklo, we finally made it happen. We even exceeded our internal goal of gathering a dozen cars when racing engineer Adrian Newey arrived in his Papaya Orange McLaren F1 GTR, despite the heavy rain, raising the count to an impressive 13 road and race cars!





With five road cars, five GTRs, and three GTR Longtails lined up in Kiklo's marvelous, gallery-style all-white garage, the exhibition allowed the invited guests to study the evolution of the McLaren F1 from road to track, a history of success that culminated in the overall win at the 1995 24 Hours of Le Mans. And while the iconic liveries of the two Gulf cars, the Harrods and Ueno Clinic GTRs, the art car designed by the artist César, and the funky Longtail affectionately named 'Swiggles' certainly took the spotlight, many guests were heard discussing the less obvious differences of the road cars. Asked for their favourite car of the night, many of the guests pointed towards chassis 043, one of the most original road cars and the only one sporting a subtle two-tone scheme, inspired by the Ueno Clinic GTR chassis 01R. You can take a deep-dive into the individual histories of all 13 McLaren F1s here in our guide on Classic Driver.



While we were delighted to see so many cars arrive for the party, we were even more pleased to be joined by so many influential people who shaped the history of the McLaren F1, sharing their best memories and anecdotes. Moderated by Classic Driver's J.P. Rathgen, our panel discussion featured racing legend Derek Bell, the McLaren F1's designer Peter Stevens, former McLaren commercial director David Clark, automotive journalist Andrew Frankel, and Paul Lanzante, who led his Kokusai Kaihatsu Racing Team to overall victory at Le Mans in 1995. While most of the behind-the-scenes-stories are not meant to leave the room in which they were told, there were some particularly cheerful memories that we can't help but share. Derek Bell joked about the hard time his son Justin had when convincing him to return to Le Mans, while Paul Lanzante speculated that David Clark, the natural-born salesman he is, casually made up a row of eager competitors while talking him into founding a McLaren F1 racing team.





However, it was Paul Stevens who certainly earned the most laughter while recalling the intercultural differences in the development of the F1. Highlights included when an Italian customs official threatened to cut the clay model prototype for the custom luggage in two, until Paul explained they were were visiting leathermakers Schedoni in Modena and mentioned the magic word 'Ferrari'. Or the time when they offered a Japanese customer a custom bag after he made a remark about his many 'golf clubs', before realising that he was referring to the numerous golf courses he owned.



But that's not where the party ended. Taking things back to the racing origins of the McLaren F1, Paul and David led the guests to the garage next door, where they started the engine of an Ex-Senna McLaren MP4/6 F1 car, roaring back to life with earshattering sound. After this spectacle, guests had time to return to the cars or inspect Kiklo's treasure trove of automobilia. After all, Chris and Luke have managed to create one of the most impressive collection of holy relics for the McLaren F1 that we can think of, including a heap of impressive documents and significant artifacts from the history of the F1. The most impressive and relevant of them all is certainly the McLaren MP4/4 that was piloted by Ayrton Senna in the 1988 season - the same year when Gordon Murray and Ron Dennis conspired to start building a road car while waiting for a delayed flight in Italy. We also loved the many period-correct collectables, including the original F1 luggage, tool roll, and unused cleaning kit for the Japanese market, the owners' edition of the TAG Heuer F1 watch, letters between Ron Dennis and Ray Bellm, and an original sales receipt with the eye-wateringly low sales price (yes, it would have been a good investment).



To commemorate the evening, Classic Driver and Kiklo Spaces had also teamed up with George Bamford of [Bamford London](#) to create a limited-edition, retro-futuristic wristwatch commemorating the unique event. The Bamford B347 'Uncovered at Thirty' automatic monopusher chronograph features a carbon-style dial with sub-dials reminiscent of the McLaren F1's iconic instrument panel, a gold monopusher inspired by the famous exhaust cover, and a titanium case with custom engraving. While only five pieces were made and sold exclusively to the guests at our 'Uncovered at Thirty' event, you can still grab a piece of McLaren F1 history with [the extraordinary GTR book](#) by Mark Cole available in the CD Shop.



While we could have kept chatting and celebrating all night long, we knew that the party was coming to an end when two of the McLaren F1 GTRs noisily started their engines to hit the road. On that note, the mention for the most memorable exit must go to Adrian Newey and his passenger Harry Hunt, who drifted off into the rain in true racing spirit, leaving us stunned, happy, and thankful for a night we will not forget anytime soon.

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Gallery

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