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FIA'S RADICAL CHANGES TO F1

Will Mosley's rules bring better, cheaper, greener racing?

MCLAREN F1 'SPY' SCANDAL

The story so far in Ferrari's tale of industrial espionage

DEVELOPING THE CITROËN C4 WRC

Exclusive visit to the home of the French manufacturer

STRONGER, COOLER GP2

HOW DALLARA'S NEW CAR LOOKS TO FORMULA 1 FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS



Ford's GT40 reincarnated

Le Mans winner's descendant goes racing in its own right



Zero drag cooling

Can clever duct design really generate net aero thrust?



Formula SAE competitions

Engineering stars of the future put their talents to the test





McRae R4

'Road, race or rally, whatever you want...' says Colin McRae of his new multi-purpose racecar. But while it waits for MSA approval, it's potential remains untapped

Launched as a static display at last year's Goodwood Festival of Speed, the McRae R4 first turned its wheels, in the hands of the man who it is named after, in public at this year's festival.

Aimed predominantly at rallying, it is planned that the new R4 will initially compete at British and Irish national championship level, and McRae has been in consultation with the British Motor Sports Association (MSA) for 18 months on the feasibility of having it approved for British rallying. Having already invested three years and £1 million in its development McRae remains hopeful, despite the MSA looking to outlaw one-off car designs from UK rallying, his team pinning their

BY MARTIN SHARP

hopes on the fact that the R4 will be produced in quantity. The MSA's decision will be made in September this year, and once this is known, McRae will explore the possibilities of using the car in other countries. Depending on demand, plans are for 'around 20 units a year' of a car designed to have 'a bit more performance than an International-specification Group N car.'

The final specification will depend on the MSA's ruling, so an exact price is not yet fixed, but McRae's operation has stated it is aiming at a price 'slightly more' than an international Group N car, stressing 'it's obviously a lot

more fun to drive and a bit more performance, too.'

Part of that 'fun' quotient comes from the use of Roy Millington's latest dry sump, naturally aspirated, four-valves-per-cylinder, twin cam, 2.5-litre

A bit more performance than an international-spec Group N car

engine. 'It has 300bhp and makes a lovely noise - you'll smile from ear to ear when you drive it!' promises McRae.

The design and development of the prototype car was undertaken by UK-based DJM Engineering, which is also

responsible for the entire four-wheel drive transmission system. Currently, all three differentials are passive-type limited slip units, but McRae and his team are also investigating the use of a semi-active centre differential as an option. While obtaining the ideal arrangement is the ultimate goal, a key priority is also keeping costs down.

DJM's Dave Plant explained that his company's transmission system can also be arranged to create a two-wheel drive version of the car to suit other categories, and availability will depend on demand.

A steel centre section clads the powertrain, while bodywork such as the boot, bonnet and



The first outing of the R4 was on the rally stage at the Goodwood Festival of Speed this year. In McRae's hands at least, it certainly looked impressive



TECH SPEC

MCRAE R4

Chassis: tubular steel chassis/safety 'cage' with sheet steel covered central cockpit area and front and rear carbon fibre panelling. Designed by Colin McRae and Dave Plant; built by DJM Race Preparation

Suspension: double wishbone with single Proflex coilover damper in each corner

Engine: 2.5-litre Millington Diamond normally aspirated four-cylinder, 300bhp

Gearbox: six-speed dog engagement with manual or semi-automatic change

Drivetrain: all DJM design. Four-wheel drive with passive mechanical front, centre and rear limited slip differentials; option for active centre differential; two-wheel drive rear drive option available

Body style: designed by Keith Burden and Tom Webster

bumpers are formed from carbon fibre. The styling comes from computer-generated images originally designed for a video game by ex-Codemaster designers Keith Burden and Tom Webster. The physical body came about through collaboration between these designers and Plant's wife Julie, a bodywork specialist and, incidentally, the 'J' in DJM. All parts for the car will be produced by DJM, which will also part assemble the car, before its final finishing operations

in Scotland. McRae is currently finalising the details of the Scottish premises where the car will be finished and admits 'we've had a great deal of interest in the car, but we now have to look at the production side of things. The last thing I want to do is to start missing delivery dates for people.'

FUN TO DRIVE

Much of McRae's 'fun-to-drive' requirement for the car comes from the use of fully adjustable, double-wishbone suspension all

round, using Proflex dampers and coilover springs. With no 'volume production' constraints, the weight balance is close to ideal to ensure superb handling.

Though it's not exactly impartial, the car's competence was confirmed by McRae after his first test of the car: 'I was really happy with it. The car feels nice and positive and very easy to drive, which is, obviously, the main thing when we're selling the car to semi professionals and amateurs. The car's got to

be easy to drive.' And watching McRae hurl the car through the rally special stage at Goodwood was certainly an impressive experience. He's right about the sweet sounds from that Millington four, and it is visually evident - in McRae's hands at least - that the chassis responds both precisely and 'comfortably'. With performance at least on a par with a Group N car and a target price of around £150,000 (\$303,370) the R4 seems a tasty package indeed. 