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Senna stage

McLaren takes F1 champion's name for its latest Ultimate Series model

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Claws out

HSV kicks off new era with Colorado-based SportsCat pick-up



By TIM ROBSON

HOLDEN Special Vehicles (HSV) has revealed its first new model since the end of Australian Commodore production, with the Holden Colorado-based SportsCat dual-cab ute set to hit the road in late January 2018.

Based on the Colorado Z71 4x4 dual cab, the HSV Colorado SportsCat – to give it its proper name – will be offered in two variants, the SportsCat and the SportsCat+.

The updated ute offers no additional power or torque from its 147kW/500Nm 2.8-litre four-cylinder turbo-diesel engine, but instead relies on

chassis updates and body modifications to give it a point of difference from its Holden donor.

“Not only will we have a great benchmark for on-road dynamics, but we’ve improved the off-road capabilities as well,” said HSV managing director Tim Jackson.

Mr Jackson said that the SportsCat had

been in development for two years and that the company had grown more excited by the vehicle as the development period progressed.

“Previously, when we’ve stepped outside the Commodore space, we really haven’t invested much money,” he told journalists at the launch of the car in Queensland.



“This time, we’re really investing a lot of money, because we know it pays to do it well, and to do it effectively, we need to invest. The business case stacks up, and we’re typically conservative on business cases.”

He also acknowledged that the SportsCat

would appeal to a different set of customers, and not necessarily existing customers of the brand.

“We’ve seen in our Maloo (Holden Commodore ute) owners moving into the dual-cab 4x4 segment, because it’s a more versatile segment,” Mr Jackson told GoAuto.

“We’ve got a high level of confidence that we’ll be well received with the product, and we’re going to be well-received by not only our existing customers, but potentially new customers.

“Will we keep everyone? Probably not. If

you’re only in the market for a performance four-door car that’s been completely built in Australia, we’re probably not going to be able to keep you.”

Adding more power to the SportsCat came down to a cost-versus-benefits equation as well as issues around emissions



requirements, according to Mr Jackson.

“The cost complexity for a minor power increase, and the impact to other elements, it didn’t make sense,” he said.

“Feedback from customers was that it’s about the total package. Traditional customers were about ‘power, power, power’, but now it’s the total package that’s important,” he said.

Pricing is yet to be announced for the pair, which will go on sale early in 2018. The Z71 costs \$57,190 before on-road costs in automatic form, so expect the SportsCat to carry a premium, placing it somewhere between \$60,000 and \$70,000.

It will go head to head with the incoming Ford Ranger Raptor, which is expected to launch later in 2018 and offer similar levels of power and chassis development.

The SportsCat differs from the regular Colorado externally by dint of a revised grille, new LED spotlights and lower valance, stock wheel flares for the SportsCat and more aggressive versions and a bulged bonnet for the SportsCat+, as well as machined trims for the rear tray’s rollover bar supports.

The rear end is unchanged, save for the addition of a large trim decal and a strut for the tailgate, while a cantilevered quick-release hard tonneau cover is unique to the HSV. A pair of accessory mounting rails is also built into the tonneau cover.

Both versions use the same 18x10-inch forged alloy rim, with the SportsCat+ using a machined face version of the dark grey wheel. Bespoke Cooper all-terrain tyres are used on both variants, with a full size spare mounted on a custom wedge to improve the SportsCat’s departure angle measurement in off-road conditions.

The main changes come in the area of suspension set-up, with both versions sitting 25mm higher in the front on stiffer springs than the Z71. Re-valved Tenneco dampers – as used by HSV in the ClubSport R8 – are standard on both

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versions, while the SportsCat+ offers bespoke, large-diameter remote-canister dampers from Adelaide company Supashock as an option.

The top-spec ute also uses a decoupling device on the rear sway bar, which disconnects the bar when low-range 4x4 is selected to aid articulation of the rear wheel. Rear springs are still leaf.

Larger four-piston AP Racing brakes are fitted to the front of the SportsCat+, but drum brakes are retained on both models in the rear.

HSV has also recalibrated the Colorado's stability and traction control systems, along with its ABS capability.

Both utes retain a 3500kg braked trailer towing capacity, although payload capacity is slightly

reduced thanks to the extra weight of the vehicle.

Inside, the front seats are rebuilt to HSV specifications from stock items, while the dash, steering wheel and gear shifters in both the six-speed manual and six-speed automatic versions are retrimmed in a combination of leather and suede.

Both pick-ups offer an 8.0-inch colour touchscreen, satellite navigation, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, digital radio, remote window activation, remote start (on the auto only) and a seven-speaker audio, as well as driver technology aids such as rain-sensing wipers, forward collision alert, lane departure warning, front and rear park assist, rearview camera and seven airbags. **MM**

Shock tactics

Most powerful internal-combustion engine,
wild styling for McLaren Senna



By TIM NICHOLSON

MCLAREN has named its latest Ultimate Series hypercar after legendary Formula 1 driver Ayrton Senna, and the company says it is powered by the most powerful internal combustion engine in a McLaren to date.

Ayrton Senna is regarded as one of the

greatest Formula 1 drivers of all time and won three championships for McLaren in 1988, 1990 and 1991 before dying in a horrific crash at the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix in Italy.

The British car-maker says the Senna will be limited to 500 units that will be hand-assembled at its Woking, UK facility, and it will be priced from £750,000 (\$A1.3m).

All 500 units have been snapped up already and it is unclear how many, if any, will make it to Australia, but a statement from McLaren says to expect it Down Under following its public debut.

“McLaren Senna will make its public debut at the Geneva Motor Show next year, and we are likely to see it in Australia towards the second half of 2018.”

The “road-legal, track-concentrated” Senna is the latest Ultimate Series model, following the sold-out hybrid P1 hypercar and preceding the BP23 Mercedes-AMG Project One rival that is expected to make its debut in 2019.

Based on the underpinnings of the McLaren 720S, the Senna uses the same 4.0-litre biturbo V8 engine as its sibling, but with power and



torque dialled up by 58kW/30Nm to 588kW and 800Nm, driven to the rear wheels via a seven-speed dual-clutch transmission with Comfort, Sport or Track powertrain modes.

McLaren has not revealed performance figures for the Senna, but expect it to beat out the 2.9-second 0-100km/h sprint time of the 720S.

The carbon-fibre chassis is a development of the one from the 720S and the brand says it is the strongest ever used in a road-legal McLaren model.

Each body panel is made from carbon-fibre, helping ensure the 1198kg Senna is also the lightest road-legal McLaren since

the F1 (1138kg).

McLaren says the Senna visually “shocks”, with an “aggressive, unforgiving” look that has done away with the organic shapes of the 720S in favour of a design that is “purposely fragmented in pursuit of absolute performance”.

The designers focused on downforce

and aerodynamic balance as the guiding principles for the Senna, which is another example of the company’s ‘form follows function’ design philosophy.

At the rear is a double diffuser and a massive rear wing that sits 1219mm from the ground at its highest point when stationary and constantly

adjusts when on the move to optimise downforce and aerodynamic balance as well as acting as an airbrake under heavy braking.

The cabin is bathed in carbon-fibre and either Alcantara or leather is available for the seat covers and fascia, while the minimal approach is reflected in the few buttons and the three-spoke steering wheel which has no switches.

Most functions are housed in the McLaren Folding Driver Display and the central infotainment screen. McLaren says storage space is restricted to a chamber behind the seats that can fit two helmets and race suits.

The Senna's suspension is a development of the setup in the P1, which is an all-independent, double-wishbone layout that features specially tuned dampers that are hydraulically interconnected, as well as another hydraulic system that acts as an anti-roll bar.

It includes McLaren's RaceActive Chassis Control II that uses an automatic stiffness control dubbed K-damper and together it will adapt to road conditions automatically, although this can also be done manually via the Active Dynamics Panel in the centre console.

The Senna has carbon ceramic brakes – the most advanced system ever used in a McLaren road car, according to the company – as well as bespoke Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R tyres wrapped around ultra-lightweight alloy wheels with a race-inspired centre lock system.

“The McLaren Senna is a car like no other: the personification of McLaren's motorsport DNA, legalised for road use but designed and developed from the



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outset to excel on a circuit," said McLaren Automotive chief executive officer Mike Flewitt.

"Every element of this new Ultimate Series McLaren has an uncompromised performance focus, honed to ensure the purest possible connection between driver and machine and deliver the ultimate track driving experience in the way that only a McLaren can."

Racing driver and McLaren Ambassador Bruno Senna said the Brazilian legend's family were proud of the involvement with McLaren.

"Our family is extremely proud of the naming

of the new Ultimate Series McLaren Senna," he said. "This is the first project that really connects with Ayrton's racing spirit and performance. The McLaren Senna honours my uncle because it is so utterly dedicated to delivering a circuit experience that allows a driver to be the best they can possibly be.

"There is an absolute, seamless connection between car and driver and this pure engagement, these sensory cues that a driver responds to and relies upon, ensure an experience so focused and immersive that you are left in awe of the depths of excellence the McLaren Senna possesses." **MM**

Road range

BMW flips its lid with roadster version of its i8 hybrid sportscar



By TERRY MARTIN

BMW unveiled its long-awaited i8 Roadster at the Los Angeles auto show last month alongside an updated version of the i8 Coupe, with both plug-in hybrid sportscars expected to reach Australia around the middle of 2018.

The German prestige manufacturer's first open-top i-car was also shown to prospective buyers at a VIP event in Sydney following its global reveal after BMW Australia managed to secure an example of the all-new \$300,000-plus model to help generate interest and sales ahead of its launch.

"It's pretty exciting because we are one of the only countries in the world that had the opportunity to do this preview so close on the heels of a vehicle that has just been revealed in LA," BMW Group Australia general manager of corporate communications Lenore Fletcher told GoAuto.

"It is a really good commentary on BMW Australia's standing in the international market that we were able to secure one of these vehicles, and I think it's also a good recognition of how strong our customer base is here in Australia for this type of exotic vehicle."

BMW has shifted about 120 i8 Coupes since sales commenced in December 2014, although sales have fallen away after the initial surge and the company is now hoping the new convertible and its facelifted hard-roofed sibling will spark a fresh round of interest from buyers in this market.

Significantly, the pair emerged in LA with an upgraded powertrain that now develops a combined 275kW of power – up 11kW on the current version in the coupe.

The i8 series continues to use a mid-mounted 170kW/320Nm 1.5-litre ‘TwinPower’ turbocharged three-cylinder petrol engine – now with a particulate filter and sportier exhaust note – that drives the rear wheels through a six-speed automatic gearbox and combines with an updated 105kW/250Nm electric motor that sends power (via a two-speed transmission) to the front axle.

While the combustion engine’s output is unchanged, the electric motor’s maximum power is up from 96kW (torque remains the same). The high-voltage (355V) lithium-ion battery also has a higher energy capacity of 11.6kWh (up from 7.1kWh) and battery cell capacity of 34Ah (up from 20Ah).

Tipping the scales at 1595kg, the two-seater i8 Roadster can accelerate from 0-100km/h in 4.6 seconds, on its way to an electronically governed 250km/h top speed (or 120km/h in pure-electric mode).





The electric driving range is 53km and total range 440km from the standard 30-litre tank (600km with an optional 42-litre fuel tank), while fuel consumption and emissions are rated at 2.1L/100km and 46g/km respectively.

A full battery recharge takes less than three hours using a fast-charge outlet (via a newly developed 'mode three' cable) or around 4.5

hours from a domestic power supply.

The lighter 1535kg 2+2-seater i8 Coupe can reach 100km/h from standstill in a claimed 4.4s, has the same top speed and total range, and a slightly longer electric range of 55km. Fuel economy and emissions are also superior at 1.9L/100km and 42g/km respectively.

This is identical to the current model in most

respects, with the notable exception of electric-only driving range (currently 37km) and its environmental performance – 2.1L/100km economy and 49g/km CO2.

The updated coupe's improvements come despite an increase in kerb weight from the current car's 1485kg.

The production version of the convertible

comes more than five years after BMW presented an i8 Spyder concept at the Beijing motor show in 2012.

BMW says the electrically operated fabric roof opens and closes in 15 seconds at speeds up to 50km/h, with the mechanism designed to retract fully into the rear end and stow in a perpendicular position, creating around 100 litres of additional

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storage space behind the seats.

This adds to the 80 litres of cargo space provided in the rear load area.

The retractable rear window also sits up 30mm higher when the roof is down, serving as a wind blocker.

The two-seater has newly designed frameless gullwing doors made from strong-but-lightweight carbon-fibre reinforced plastic (CFRP) with an aluminium outer shell, while CFRP is used for the entire windscreen frame and across various other areas of the vehicle including the roadster's long side skirts which act as a structural element. The aluminium chassis and CFRP bodyshell carry over.

Other measures to improve rigidity, which is typically compromised with the removal of

a roof structure, include additional struts and panels at the front and rear axle.

The C-pillar of the soft-top has 'Roadster' written across it, and the tin-lidded version, which now goes without a rear side window, carries the 'Coupe' marker across this section.

Cabin revisions include a dashboard upgrade with the latest iDrive system, redesigned seats and the option of 'Accaro' cloth/leather upholstery in an also-new 'Amido/E-Copper' colour scheme.

The current i8 Coupe is priced from \$303,300 plus on-road costs. BMW Australia is still to confirm pricing and specification for the new roadster and facelifted coupe, with Ms Fletcher saying the company would attempt to keep price rises on the latter to a minimum. **MM**

Class action

Next-gen CLS ushers in new AMG performance hybrid powertrain



By RON HAMMERTON

THE car that started the four-door-coupe craze 14 years ago, the Mercedes-Benz CLS, entered its third generation with the unveiling of the all-new 2018 model at last month's Los Angeles motor show.

Sleeker and more muscular than before, the latest low-roof CLS will arrive in Australia in the second quarter of 2018, at least in its basic petrol and diesel variants.

The six-cylinder diesel and petrol engines are all new, returning Mercedes to the inline format

beloved by Benz customers before the German company made the switch the V6 powerplants.

This time, however, the engines get an extra boost via a form of mild-hybrid technology employing a 48-volt electric starter motor-generator, dubbed EQ Boost.

Instead of a V8, the top-of-the-pile AMG CLS variant this time will get a newly developed hi-po version of this inline turbocharged six-cylinder petrol engine and electric motor.

So far, details are scant, but the CLS53 4Matic's powertrain – to be shared with the new



AMG E-Class sedan and wagon – is expected to turn out about 320kW of power, 20kW more than the current CLS500's 4.7-litre twin-turbo V8.

What's more, the electric boost can lift maximum torque by a further 250Nm while adding another 25kW of power for short periods. It can even propel the vehicle on electric power for a time during coasting.

If you still want a V8, help is on the way in the form of a four-door version of Mercedes-AMG's GT sports car, which should be equipped with a 4.0-litre twin-turbo V8 with something north of 400kW.

More is expected to be revealed about the AMG CLS53 and its powertrain at the Detroit motor show in January.

However, don't expect a Shooting Brake version, as the wagon reportedly has been dropped due to slow sales. The four-door version now has five seats in place of the previous four.

The design borrows heavily from Mercedes' latest coupes, including the GT. New LED headlights flank a diamond grille that sits above three big air openings – a look that will be shared by more Mercedes cars in future.

The platform is shared with the new E-Class, but the bent belt line and sloping roof is all CLS.

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At the LA show, Mercedes wheeled out three all-wheel-drive in-line six-cylinder variants – the diesel CLS350d 4Matic, diesel CLS400d 4Matic and petrol CLS450 4Matic.

The diesel 350d turns out 210kW/600Nm, well above the 150kW/500Nm of the current 2.1-litre four-cylinder unit currently offered in CLS in Australia.

The CLS400d 4Matic steps this up to 250kW and 700Nm. Both of these diesel variants are said to consume 5.6 litres per 100km – a big improvement over the current 7.5L/100km.

The only petrol engine revealed to date, the 450 4Matic, develops 270kW/500Nm, 25kW and 20Nm more than the V6 engine in the CLS400 it replaces.

Fuel consumption is a claimed 7.5L/100km – an improvement over the 8.0L/100km of the 400.

Inside, the CLS has turbine-like air vents and an illuminated LED line sweeping around the cabin. This ambient lighting can be set to 64 colours, and the colour automatically gets warmer or cooler when the air-conditioner temperature is adjusted up or down.

The seats are unique to CLS, gaining piping and sumptuous leather finishes. The outboard rear seats are designed to resemble the front seats, but this means the centre rear seat is humped, and thus purely for emergencies.

The rear seat can split-fold 40/20/40, opening up the boot which, with the seats up, holds 520 litres of luggage.

To tempt early adopters, the CLS will be launched with an Edition 1 package that includes a number of cosmetic extras, including copper-coloured accents and black Nappa leather upholstery and trim. **MM**

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