

TAKING IT TO THE STREET

When McLaren's present-day co-owner couldn't buy a McLaren, he commissioned this one-of-a-kind 1983 Porsche 911 Turbo—the 935 Street.

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No manufacturer has come to dominate endurance sports car racing like Porsche has. And of all the machinery that has propelled it to the checkered flag time and time again over the years, few proved as victorious as the 935.

During one of the most competitive eras in endurance racing, the turbocharged racer won a solid third of all the races it entered, including Le Mans, Daytona and Sebring. The 935 took the World Championship in sports car racing four years running from 1976 to 1979, securing its standing as the dominant GT racing car of its day.

Although nominally based on the iconic 911, the 935 was so extensively developed for racing that transforming it

back into a sports car that Porsche could sell to customers for use on public roadways was almost entirely out of the question. But one customer demanded just that, and wouldn't take "no" for an answer.

That discerning client was one Mansour Ojeh, the Saudi Arabian businessman who brokered Porsche's most successful foray into Formula One with McLaren (see sidebar). Ojeh wanted something he could actually drive on the street that would embody the success he had fostered on the race track, but McLaren wouldn't get into the road-car market for the better part of another decade, and the best Porsche could offer was the 911 Turbo.

Launched in 1975, the original 911 Turbo had a 3.0-liter flat-six that pro-

duced 260 hp. In 1978, Porsche enlarged the engine to 3.3 liters and increased output to 300 hp. By the time Ojeh approached Porsche, power had risen yet again to 330 hp. But even that was not enough for the businessman, who wanted something more extreme and more exclusive. He wanted a road-going 935, so his contacts at Zuffenhausen introduced him to Porsche Exclusive.

Established to cater to discerning customers and their often outlandish requests, Porsche Exclusive was just starting out in 1983—and it was just the place for Ojeh to turn. What it proposed and ultimately put into motion was the creation of the one-of-a-kind, factory-built machine you see here.





The 935 Street as it appeared when it left the factory (above, left). When compared to its racing counterpart, the 935 Street's cosmetic differences become clear (above, right). The 400-hp engine, factory build status and custom interior make this 930 more than just another tricked-out Porsche (below).



The 935 Street

Rather than attempt the colossal task of converting a 935 racer into a road car, Porsche Exclusive set about turning a standard-production, street-legal 911 into a 935—similar to what the motorsport department had done in the first place, only this time for use on public roadways.

The lengthy process started with a 330-hp 1983 911 Turbo. But for the 935 Street project, Porsche further enhanced the 3.3-liter turbocharged flat-six engine with a modified turbocharger and intercooler and a four-pipe exhaust system, resulting in a final output measured at over 400 hp—more than any standard 911 Turbo would offer until the arrival of the 993-generation model a dozen years later. Since the five-speed transmission in the Carrera couldn't handle the extra power, the four-speed manual from the Turbo model was retained, but modified and fitted with an additional cooler.

Of course the powertrain wasn't the

only area that received special attention. The 935 Street also got a *Flachbau* front end—years before the slant-nose conversion would be offered as a factory option—with *de rigueur* flip-up 100-watt headlamps. The unique 911 Turbo also got a specially modified front splitter and center cooler from the 934, and the rear end from the 935 racer, including the enormous wing and widebody stance (albeit narrowed by 15 mm to fit), with gaping air intakes carved into the front of the rear fenders. The front fenders were conversely widened by 15 mm and fitted with additional vents to match.

Underneath the extensively modified bodywork, Porsche mounted a limited-slip differential, and a lowered suspension with new dampers and stabilizers. And in a first for a Porsche road car, it was fitted with center-lock wheels—made by BBS, approved by the racing department in Weissach, painted in Opal Metallic and wrapped in Pirelli tires. As a result of these

upgrades, the 935 Street was capable of reaching 62 mph in 4.9 seconds—half a second quicker than the stock Turbo—en route to a top speed of 176 mph.

Once the Werk 1 factory repair shop had completed the mechanical and bodywork modifications, Porsche Exclusive set about finishing the vehicle to Ojeh's specifications. Although he had initially requested a candy-apple red finish, no supplier could be found to deliver the paint at that time, so he settled on a shade of Brilliant Red overlaying Grand Prix White.

The interior, meanwhile, was upholstered in Creme Caramel leather with carpets and leather headliner, center console and roll-over bar to match. The cabin was also fitted with heated Recaro bucket seats, automatic racing seatbelts, a Momo steering wheel, specially crafted burr maple trim, a custom central locking system, a Blaupunkt/Clarion audio system and a digital turbo boost gauge mounted where the clock would normally be.

All told, some 550 modifications were carried out, the result of more than 300 working hours carried out over the course of two months. The fruit of their labor was officially cataloged as a "Porsche 911 Turbo Spezial" but was more commonly known as the 935 Street. That is, at least, in so far as an entirely unique creation could be called "common." It was the first and last of its kind.

"The 935 Street custom-built-vehicle is a true milestone in the Porsche Exclusive individualization history," said Boris Apenbrink, director of the Porsche Exclusive Special Vehicles department in a conversation with the author. "It shows our spirit as a manufacturer to really go the extra mile for realizing the customer's wish. It is still an inspiration for everybody working in the *Exklusive Manufaktur* in Zuffenhausen and shows what we

mean with our motto—The Most Personal Car."

Ojeh was evidently proud of his unique creation as well, keeping it in the South of France and driving it up and down the Riviera to his heart's content for many years. With McLaren's own road car operation coming into its own, Ojeh eventually sold the 935 Street to one David Clark in London. Clark sold it to noted collector and New Orleans Saints football team owner John W. Mecom, Jr., who in turn sold it to a European buyer with whom the 935 Street resided for the past decade.

Last year, Bonhams auctioned off the 935 Street at Spa-Francorchamps—the same circuit where Porsche has won the Spa 24 Hours six times and McLaren the Belgian Grand Prix fourteen times. Three decades since its creation and with 12,000 miles on the odometer, the one-of-a-kind 935 Street sold for over \$300,000. ■

PORSCHE AND MCLAREN

Victorious Allies Before Steadfast Rivals

Porsche and McLaren would seem today like rivals more than they would allies. Both carry the names of men who founded them, are rooted in racing and produce exotic sports cars for the road that have bred legendary rivalries of their own: Porsche 959 versus McLaren F1, Carrera GT versus SLR, 918 Spyder versus P1. And that rivalry extends beyond the road to the race track as well, with 911 RSRs trading paint with 12C GT3s on racetracks around the world on just about any given weekend. But Porsche and McLaren weren't always rivals. Once upon a time, the houses that Ferdinand and Bruce built were partners—and incredibly successful ones at that.

Unlike their mutual rival from Maranello, Porsche has never been a regular fixture on the Formula One grid. It dabbled in Grand Prix racing in the late 1950s and early 1960s with limited success, but it wasn't until the 1980s that Porsche powered its way into the winner's circle through a partnership with McLaren.

By the 1960s, McLaren had established a winning reputation, racking up trophies in Formula One, Can-Am and even Indy Car. But after Bruce McLaren's untimely death at Goodwood in 1970, Teddy Mayer took over and things started to go downhill. The team won a couple of championships with the evergreen M23 driven by James Hunt and Emerson Fittipaldi—both famous and talented drivers in their own rite—but by the late 1970s, McLaren was languishing at the back of the field. It didn't win a single race in 1978 or 1979, and didn't even land on the podium once in 1980.

Something had to be done, so at the behest of mutual sponsor Marlboro, McLaren merged with a Formula Two team called Project 4, run by an up-and-coming racing strategist by the name of Ron Dennis. Mayer stepped down and handed the reins to Dennis, who in turn instituted a groundbreaking carbon-fiber chassis—an advanced material unheard of at the time but which would go on to shape the motor racing, automotive and even aerospace industries in the decades to come. It was a revolutionary design and Dennis just needed to find the right engine to power it.

With the likes of Ferrari and Renault switching from 3.0-liter naturally aspirated engines to smaller 1.5-liter turbos, the long-serving and celebrated Ford Cosworth DFV that had powered McLaren every season since 1968 had grown out of date. Rather than buy a new power unit from an existing supplier, though, McLaren turned to Mansour Ojeh.

Born in Syria, raised in France and educated in America, Ojeh is the man behind the Luxembourg-based technological holding company Techniques d'Avant Garde. The letters TAG may be better known for accompanying the name Heuer at the famous Swiss watchmaker that Ojeh owned before selling it to luxury giant Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH) in 1999. But before that, TAG was in F1. Ojeh and TAG were supporting the rival Williams team (one of only two constructors to have scored more championships than McLaren) when Ron Dennis poached them away to finance and broker a new engine deal with Porsche.

After winning the United States Grand Prix West at Long Beach in 1983 and scoring a couple of podiums with Cosworth power, McLaren undertook the rare move of switching engines mid-season to the new 1.5-liter turbocharged V6 designed by Porsche and prepared by TAG. The engine was initially unreliable in its first outings and McLaren didn't score a single championship point for the rest of the season, but those first few races ended up proving an invaluable test for what followed.

At the start of the 1984 Formula One World Championship, the TAG Porsche-powered McLaren won the season opener in Brazil and followed up with a one-two finish at the next Grand Prix in South Africa. Out of 16 races that season, McLaren and Porsche won 12, taking both the drivers' and constructors' championships in dominant style, comfortably doubling the points scored by their closest rivals. Together they successfully defended both titles the following season, and took the drivers' title once again the season after that—the constructors' title evading them in the season after Niki Lauda retired.

It would turn out to be the first of many winning streaks to which McLaren would go on in the years since, and put the team back on top for the first time in a decade. McLaren became a force to be reckoned with, and Porsche had provided the motivation. Of course much of the credit belongs to Alain Prost and Niki Lauda, both of them multiple World Champions (two of only nine in the history of Grand Prix racing to score more than two titles) and still highly sought after as race strategists and team leaders to this day. But the winning relationship between McLaren and Porsche likely would never have happened if not for Mansour Ojeh.

