A new company is set to celebrate the life of New Zealand’s only Formula 1 World Champion in the best possible way – with a powerful high-tech supercar set to hit the road mid-year. We have the exclusive details.
KiwiLand’s Own Supercar

A New Zealand designed and built supercar is just months away from being unveiled! The Hulme F1 has been planned amidst tight security over the past two years and a running prototype is expected as early as June. Many of the technical details remain subject to the strictest secrecy.

But management of the Hulme F1 project say they have a verbal agreement with a major manufacturer to use a high performance, high-tech engine and discussions are continuing with a wide range of suppliers.

Supercars New Zealand Limited have pulled together a wide cross section of motoring and motorsport talent. Spokesman Jock Freemantle: “When we approached many of the international companies we were surprised to find, in many cases, that an expatriate New Zealander was the person we were dealing with. New Zealanders have certainly made their mark in motorsport. It’s that impact that’s provided the impetus for the project. “Forty years ago, New Zealand was a driving force in international motor racing,” says Freemantle. “We had Bruce McLaren, Denis Hulme and Chris Amon in top F1 teams and the McLarens were dominating American CanAm sports car racing.”

“The McLaren-Amon team won Le Mans with Amon going on to be the leader of the Ferrari F1 team. And while the name McLaren lives on in today’s F1, few New Zealanders are aware of the connection. “Back home, we attracted international drivers here for our summer series, New Zealand drivers were competitive and we had the incredible talents of George Begg and Graham McRae who designed and built world-class Formula 5000 cars. We want to honour that period. “Much of the automotive engineering talent was exported...
Who was Denis Hulme?
The life and times of a Kiwi motor racing legend

Denis Hulme, or Denny, was New Zealand’s first, and so far only, New Zealand Formula One World Champion. He took the title in 1967 driving a Brabham Repco squeezing out his boss, Jack Brabham, and spoiling his shot at four world titles. Word is that Jack wasn’t all that pleased about it.

Denis Hulme was born in Te Puke, the son of WW2 VC winner Clive Hulme who ran a trucking business in the region. Clive was a tough old bugger and his son was a chip off the old block. Denis Hulme didn’t put up with too much nonsense and during his North American campaigns he was so gruff and grumpy at times and so difficult for the media, that he was labelled The Bear.

He learned his trade driving his Dad’s trucks and made his competition debut driving an MG TF sports car. His first appearances were mainly notable for his bare feet “so I can get a better feel of the accelerator pedal.”

The MG made way for more specialised racing cars and more success. In 1960 Hulme, and Whangarei driver George Watton were sent to Europe by organisers of the New Zealand International Grand Prix on the Driver to Europe scheme that had launched Bruce McLaren’s international career.

Sadly, Watton was killed at a race meeting in Denmark.

Hulme persevered in Europe, buying his own Formula 3 car and living on the smell of an oily rag and out of his car between races. Eventually he earned a place in the Brabham team after years of hard graft. He graduated through the lesser formulae, making F1 in 1966 and taking the title in 1967. While he was obviously delighted to win the title he was very much your archetypal Kiwi bloke and didn’t like what he described as “the bullshit” that went with it.

He had developed a close relationship with fellow Kiwi Bruce McLaren and when not driving F1 cars for Brabham was driving McLaren sports cars in the CanAm Series. It was inevitable that Hulme leave Brabham and move to McLaren.

Although further F1 successes were rare, he and McLaren dominated the Can Am scene to such a degree it was labelled “The Bruce and Denny Show”.

His greatest challenge was in 1970 after team boss and inspirational leader Bruce McLaren died testing a CanAm car. Hulme, his hands so badly burned from a methanol fuel fire in the McLaren indycar the weekend before that the bones at the tips of his fingers were visible, rallied the team and competed in the F1 race the following weekend despite the pain and the grief.

Denis Hulme decided to retire in 1974 after witnessing the fatal crash that took the life of his McLaren team mate Peter Revson. Hulme helped rescuers at the crash scene and admitted years later that his mind went blank after the crash and his next memory was standing in the shower at his hotel watching blood flush down the drain and thinking “that’s Peter’s blood”.

Well, he retired all right, but only for a short time and only from Formula One.

After a brief break from racing he returned to it with a vengeance driving trucks, sedans and sports cars.

You got the impression that he was not always a happy man within himself, but if a person could choose the way to die then Denis Hulme would have died happy.

October 1993 and he was competing at Bathurst driving a BMW M3. As he entered Con Rod Straight his car slowed and veered off to the side of the track, kissing the armcaps gently and coming to a gentle stop.

Denis Hulme, World Champion, had died at the wheel from a heart attack.

Allan Dick
Wayne Smith, who was involved in the Team New Zealand and One World America’s Cup yachting challenges, heads the team charged with Composite Engineering. Jock Freemantle is a long time automotive and motorsport fan. Born in Scotland, he’s lived in New Zealand since the early 1960s and imported one of the first BMW 2002s. In this car Freemantle competed at South Island circuits and in the 1970 Shell Silver Fern Rally.

We have been working on this project for over two years,” says Freemantle. “While the design is not absolutely finalised, we have the shape right and a quarter scale model is complete. We’re building the prototype and that will run in June. Next year we will be ready for crash-testing and we are going to need two cars for that. This is vital – we’re serious about marketing in the US, Japan and China.”

Supercars New Zealand plans to build two cars this year, 10 to 20 cars next year and after that 35-50 cars. A minimum of 150 cars will be made.

Well, is it a pipe dream? We think not. We were first made aware of the project mid-2003 when Freemantle visited us. He only divulged information after we signed a document assuring confidentiality.

We know details of the componentry and we know the ballpark figures for performance and price. We think it will succeed a) because it’s a New Zealand project and that carries cachet internationally and b) because we are convinced of the integrity of those involved.