

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Rolex Daytona: 50 watches go under the hammer](#)

Lead

2013 sees the 50th anniversary of the Heuer Carrera and the Rolex Cosmograph, both of which have achieved legendary status in the world of drivers' watches. But if we were forced to rate one ahead of the other in a horological race to the finish, we'd put our money on the Cosmograph taking the win.

Launched in 1963, the Cosmograph instantly hit the spot with drivers, thanks to being the first Rolex to feature a tachymeter scale engraved on the bezel for better legibility - something which proved useful, for example, to rally navigators.

So strong and immediate was the Cosmograph's link with motorsport that 1965 saw Rolex USA request that the name 'Daytona' be inscribed on the dial of American market models in tribute to the celebrated Daytona 500 race, which the brand had backed since the International Speedway first opened in 1959.

Win Daytona, win a Cosmograph

The 'Daytona' marking was extended to the entire line of Cosmograph models and, since the mid 1960s, the winner of the gruelling 24 Hours of Daytona endurance event (renamed the Rolex 24 at Daytona in 1992) has traditionally been presented with a Cosmograph Daytona as part of the prize.



Its most famous wearer was the late Hollywood star Paul Newman, who starred in 1969's 'Winning' as racer Frank Capua - playing opposite his wife, Joanne Woodward. Part of the preparation for the film involved Newman undergoing high-performance driver training for the race sequences - leaving him so hooked on motorsport that he took it up as a serious hobby in 1972.

To mark the occasion, Woodward gifted him a Cosmograph Daytona which he is said to have worn for the rest of his life. Perhaps unwittingly, the version she chose was a Reference 6241 with an 'exotic dial'. Produced for only two years (1969 and 1970), the model has come to be known as the 'Paul Newman' Daytona and examples are highly collectable, regularly selling at auction for up to \$100,000 - although in May this year, Antiquorum sold a unique version with a lemon-coloured dial for a world record \$850,000.

Christie's - holding out for success

Christie's will be hoping for similar success in a few days' time, when it holds a themed sale called 'Rolex Daytona - Lesson One' which aims to tell the story of the watch through 50 seminal examples carrying pre-sale estimates of between \$10,000 and \$30,000.

Highlights include a 'pre-Daytona' from 1963 that could realise up to \$80,000, while the most valuable watch is a previously unseen 1974 Cosmograph Daytona made especially for Sultan Qaboos Bin Said Al Said of Oman and marked with his signature in red on the dial. It is expected to realise up to \$500,000, while other offerings include heavily gem-set examples and several 'Paul Newmans'.



Among the latter is a rare, 1969 'John Player Special' variant with a black dial and gold case and bracelet (\$80,000 - 160,000), and a black dial/steel case example from 1971 that previously belonged to the French actor Jean-Paul Belmondo (\$60,000 - 120,000). Other celebrity Daytonas include versions worn by Eric Clapton, astronaut Walt Cunningham and - coolest of the lot - the actual watches awarded to Daytona race winners Bobby Unser and David Brabham.

The sale takes place at 8pm on 10 November at Geneva's Four Seasons Hotel des Bergues. The catalogue and full sale details (including viewing times) are available at christies.com. Every watch sold will be supplied in a special collector's case and teamed with a copy of the book 'Ultimate Rolex Daytona' by Italian Rolex guru Pucci Papaleo, who has helped to curate the sale.

Photos: Christie's

Gallery

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