

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## Baselworld 2011: Simon de Burton's Pick of the World's Biggest Watch Fair

□ **Attracting 1892 exhibitors, more than 100,000 visitors and 3000 journalists, Baselworld is the biggest watch and jewellery show on earth - Classic Driver returns from the front with news of some of the latest horological unveilings.**

□ **Alpina Startimer Pilot**

Alpina is one of the greatest watch brands you've probably never heard of. Founded in 1883, it was sold in 2000 outlets around the world before falling victim to the 'quartz crisis' of the 70s. But in 2002, the name was revived by Peter Stas (CEO of Austin-Healey watchmaker and Peking to Paris rally sponsor Frederique Constant) and is once again in the ascendant. This year Alpina has tapped into its heritage with the Startimer Pilot range, inspired by its 1930s military watches. The four-model collection ranges from a three-hand automatic to a chronograph, all with functional black dials and crisp, white markings. To coincide with the launch, Alpina has teamed up with Cessna Aviation and private jet specialist PrivatAir - so each watch comes with a scale model of a Citation Mustang. [www.alpina-watches.com](http://www.alpina-watches.com)

□ **Blancpain Villeret Demi-Fuseau Horaire**

This is Blancpain's first time zone watch and it's designed to be user friendly. That protruding pusher acts as a selector to enable the single crown to be used for adjusting date, timezone and reference time with a simple twiddle. Made with important 'emerging markets' such as India in mind, the watch adjusts in half-hour increments, displaying the 'reference' time on a small dial at 12 o'clock that is complemented by a day or night indicator at nine o'clock. That little indicator at four, by the way, shows whether the crown is set to adjust the date or the time. An especially nice touch is the 'demi savonnette' case which has an opening back.

□ **Breitling Montbrillant 01 Limited Chronograph**

Classic-looking pilot watches don't come with a larger dose of retro-cool than Breitling's Montbrillant, the wartime-inspired chronograph that's named after the street where the original Breitling workshops were located. This new version has a 40mm case and comes equipped with the brand's in-house manufacture movement, the Calibre 01, a self-winding, chronometer-certified column-wheel mechanism with 70 hours of power reserve which is proudly displayed behind a sapphire case back. A limited series model, 2000 examples will be made in steel and 200 in rose gold, all with 'Mercury Silver' dials.

□ **Bremont BC-Solo**

Bremont, the flight watch brand founded in 2006, appears to be soaring with its impressive range of chronographs - and now it has added to the line-up with the delightfully understated BC-Solo, a classic, three-handed pilot's watch with a chronometer-certified movement contained in a 43mm steel case hardened to 2000 Vickers, six times more than normal. The Solo is now Bremont's entry-level watch (it costs £2550) and is available in two subtle dial variants, one with white numerals and one with cream. We're also taken by the brand's new P-51 limited edition chronograph which incorporates parts made out of original metal from a 1944 P-51 Mustang fighter. Just 251 examples will be made

□ **Chanel J12 Chromatic**

Launched in 2000, the ceramic-cased Chanel J12 has proved a runaway success. Over the years, it has come to be available in black or white, as a chronograph, as a tourbillon, as a diving watch, as a piece of high jewellery and, fitted with an exquisite Audemars Piguet movement, as an example of high watchmaking. Now the big news is that the J12 has been given a colour makeover thanks to the use of 'titanium ceramic' which retains the original's scratchproof quality but provides an interesting, shimmering finish that oscillates between black and white. Available case sizes range from 41mm down to 33mm, with gem-set versions for the lay-deez.

#### ▣ **Chopard Rosso Corsa**

A few years ago, Chopard produced some limited edition sets of five Mille Miglia watches with dials finished in the 'racing colours' of different countries and presented them in a neat, miniature toolbox. The coloured dial theme is now being revisited in the Rosso Corsa, a special version of the 44mm Mille Miglia GT XL chronograph which has a titanium case and a red varnished dial with matching red strap stitching (all inspired by the paintwork of Chopard boss Karl-Friedrich Scheufele's delicious Ferrari 750 Monza). The model is limited to 1000 pieces available only through Chopard boutiques - stand by for further variants in BRG, 'Speed Yellow' (for Belgium), 'Vintage Blue' (for France) and so on...

#### ▣ **Chronoswiss Balance**

Car-crazy Chronoswiss founder Gerd-Rudiger Lang is often seen competing in European classic events such as the Mille Miglia in his XK Jaguar equipped with Chronoswiss 'Bordtimer' and 'Stopmaster' dashboard clocks. The brand's Timemaster chronograph is fast becoming a cult wristwatch in the historic motoring world thanks to its highly legible 44mm dial, 'turnip' winding crown and robust construction - but the brand's Baselworld highlight was the new 'Balance' chronograph that features double retrograde displays for both seconds and date. Every 30 seconds, the left-hand indicator flicks back to zero while the right hand one returns to one at the start of each month. The dial is made from Sterling silver and exquisitely engraved with a guilloche pattern. Steel or gold cases are available.

#### ▣ **Corum Golden Bridge**

Corum's Golden Bridge was something of a horological sensation when it was introduced in the 1980s thanks to its extraordinary 'linear' movement, a long, narrow, pillar-shaped affair that spans a case made largely from sapphire crystal designed to show the intricately decorated mechanism in all its glory. This year sees the introduction of a new tourbillon model limited to 10 examples in white gold and 15 in red gold, together with the first automatic version (pictured here) which features a winding weight that slides up and down a pair of vertical rods. This is limited to 180 in red gold and 70 in white.

#### ▣ **Ebel Classic Sport Chronograph**

Anyone who was expecting something truly exciting from Ebel to mark the brand's centenary year might be disappointed with the offerings from Baselworld, as there didn't appear to be anything truly new - but stand by for next year, as some extremely promising reincarnations of some of the brands best models from the 50s, 60s and 70s are apparently in the pipeline. For the time being, however, you can't go far wrong with the good-looking, functional and robust Classic Sport Chrono that gets a practical rubber strap in a choice of colours for 2011.

#### ▣ **Hamilton Pan Europ**

Hamilton is one of those watch brands which makes you question why its rivals' products are often so much more expensive. Not only do you get a great name (Hamilton began as an American company in 1892, joined forces with the Swiss in the 60s and is now part of the Swatch Group) but you get great mechanical watches at affordable money. As is popular these days, the brand has dipped into its archive to produce a new version of its funky Pan Europ Chrono-Matic chronograph that very much looks the part with its upsized 45mm case, blue dial and tan leather strap. The original Pan Europ was launched in 1971, the same year Hamilton was bought by SSIH, the holding company that later became Swatch.

#### ▣ **Hermès Arceau Temps Suspendu**

Oh, what will those crazy watchmakers think of next - here's a watch which is designed to stop. How useful is that? The whimsical idea behind the Temps Suspendu is that we should have the right to take charge of our own destiny instead of being ruled by the constraints of time. So, if you're enjoying a long lunch in the sun with a gorgeous-looking woman, for example, you simply have to press a button on your Hermès watch to stop time and make the moment last forever. Or at least until she disappears to the loo, at which point you press the button again, the hands return to real time and you nip off to your next assignment, leaving her to settle the bill.

#### ▣ **Hublot King Power Diver 4000**

One of the things I love about Hublot boss Jean-Claude Biver is that he always knows how to go over the top. The new King Power dive watch is no exception, being waterproof to a useful 4000 metres - that's deeper than the final resting place of the Titanic. Measuring a vast 48mm in diameter, the watch looks as though it could have served as a back-up anchor for the ill-fated liner, but being made from a choice of titanium or carbonfibre it's deceptively light. A heavily engineered crown guard ensures the inner bezel can't be moved accidentally, and the watch will be available in two limited editions of 500 pieces in each material.

#### ▣ **Hublot F1 King Power India**

Now in its second year as the official watchmaker of F1, Hublot has unveiled this special edition of its King Power model to mark the first Formula One India Grand Prix, scheduled to take place at the 3.1-mile Jaypee circuit near Delhi on October 30. Bristling with motor racing imagery, the new watch features a ceramic bezel designed to look like a brake disc, a rubber and Nomex strap and the orange, green and white colours of the Indian flag both around one of the sub dials and in the strap stitching, while the pusher to activate the chronograph is inspired by an engine 'start' button. Just 200 examples of the watch will be made.

#### ▣ **Longines 24 Hours**

The archive of the Longines watch company is so extensive and contains so many covetable models of old that the brand hardly needs to employ any designers - it could survive very nicely simply by reviving pieces from its back catalogue. That's just what it has done here with this new version of the 24-hour watch, supplied to the Swiss national airline during the 1950s. Oddly enough, however, this is one design that they didn't find in the stores - the watch that inspired it was privately owned and sent back to the factory for identification where it caused high excitement as a long-lost model. The problem is, you need to re-learn how to tell the time - what looks like 10 past four, for example, is actually 10 past eight. It provides a good excuse for coming back late from the pub, though.

#### ▣ **Louis Vuitton Tambour**

Louis Vuitton is upping the ante in its watchmaking department with two new men's models in the round and delectable Tambour case. Called the Voyagez collection (alluding to LV's long-standing association with the art of travel), the range comprises a flyback chronograph and, the one we like the best, an automatic chronograph with tachymetre scale and a dial design inspired by an old car dashboard. Measuring an imposing 44mm in diameter, the watch features a 24-hour sub dial, small seconds counter, a central chronograph hand and a 60-minute totaliser. Look out, too, for a new regatta watch 'launching' in a few months.

#### ▣ **Maurice Lacroix Masterpiece Roue Carrée Seconde**

It was only a matter of time before some genius watchmaker reinvented the wheel, and now Maurice Lacroix has created a square one that actually works. Unveiled last year in its Masterpiece Regulateur Roue Carrée concept model, where the minute is read from a single, large, conventional hand but the hour is shown through an aperture in the slowly revolving square wheel, the system is said to improve accuracy. Now the square wheel - or 'roue carrée' - has been incorporated into this watch to mark the passing of the seconds. Rumours that similar wheels will one day be fitted to automobiles are thought to be unfounded.

#### ▣ **Omega Speedmaster Professional Co-Axial Chronograph**

The first Omega Speedmaster chronograph came out in 1958 and quickly caught on with sportscar drivers, but it became a horological legend when Buzz Aldrin made it the only watch to be worn on the surface of the moon during the 1969 Apollo XI space mission and it remains one of Omega's top sellers. This new version has two sub dials instead of the three found on the standard 'Professional' model, as the 12 hour and 60 minute counters are combined - and the brilliant Co-Axial movement (invented by English horologist and Vintage Bentley enthusiast Dr George Daniels) can be admired through a full-width crystal case back. Steel, 'Orange gold' and platinum versions are available.

#### ▣ **Oris Big Crown X1 Calculator**

Like the aforementioned Hamilton, Oris makes great watches at affordable prices - and they're all mechanical. The new Big Crown X1 Calculator is another 'back to the future' job with a vintage look and was inspired by the Bell X1 aircraft that carried out the first manned supersonic flight in October 1947. In a nod to the fact that the Bell pilots undertook the feat without the aid of computers or electronic calculators, the new Oris features a Breitling-style circular slide rule around the bezel while the gunmetal colouring was inspired by the plane's copper finish. The case measures 46mm in diameter, and each watch is supplied with a DVD of the movie *The Right Stuff* about the 1947 flight, together with an instruction leaflet for the slide rule. The latter you'll certainly need.

#### ▣ **Patek Philippe Aquanaut Travel Time**

Patek Philippe's Aquanaut, with its rubber strap and 120-metre water resistance, is the elite brand's offering in the casual/sports watch sector and has long been a favourite among the international jet set (as opposed to the national jet set, who only fly between Aberdeen, Birmingham, Cardiff and Plymouth). It's no surprise, then, that the range has now been added to with this 'Travel Time' version that features an additional hour hand and a nifty indicator that tells you whether it's day or night back home, so you can avoid waking the mother-in-law with a three a.m phone call. Or not.

#### ▣ **Rado D-Star**

It was back in 1962 that Rado broke new ground by introducing the DiaStar, the world's first scratchproof watch made from pioneering 'hardmetal'. The modern version of the DiaStar is called the Original, but this year the brand pays homage to the watch that started it all with the new D-Star. An ultra-slim chronograph version called the D-Star Basel Special with a ceramic case and rubber strap was also unveiled - this will be made in a limited edition of 1111 examples.

#### ▣ **Rolex Cosmograph Daytona Everose**

The Cosmograph Daytona is up there with the Heuer Carrera and the Omega Speedmaster as one of the world's best-loved drivers' watches. This latest version uses the time-honoured combination of black and rose gold to give the Cosmograph a whole new look, but the beauty is more than skin deep - the bezel, for example, is made from scratchproof ceramic, the movement uses the patented, non-magnetic Parachrom hairspring and the 'Everose' gold won't fade when it's exposed to chemicals such as swimming pool chlorine. The delectable chocolate brown dial is complemented by a black alligator strap. Although the order book is now open, deliveries are not expected before the autumn.

#### ▣ **TAG Heuer Mikrotimer Flying 1000th Concept Chronograph**

Not content with unveiling the Mikrotimer 100th of a second chronograph last year, TAG Heuer has now created a mechanical watch which will record elapsed time down to a mind-bending 1000th of a second. It's the first time such a feat of micro-mechanical engineering has been achieved and, although the watch is currently just a remarkable concept piece, the research that has gone into its development is sure to appear in production models before long. Said to be 125 times more accurate than most mechanical chronographs, its oscillator (the regulating organ of a watch) operates at 3,600,000 beats per hour. Separate power sources drive the watch and the chronograph, which is mesmerising to see in action - the central hand travels around the dial 10 times per second.

#### ▣ **Zenith Stratos**

Back in the 1970s, Zenith produced a neat chronograph that came to be known as the 'Rainbow Flybacks' thanks to its brightly-coloured sub dial. The model inspired a new 'sports utility' range called the Stratos which includes this limited edition 'Pole to Pole' version which has been made to mark Swedish explorer Johan Ernst Nilson's planned attempt to travel from the North Pole to the South by foot, sea and, er, bicycle later this year. The Stratos Flyback 'Pole to Pole' has a case made from Alchroon (an aluminium/steel alloy) and contains the legendary El Primero movement. Another adventurer, Colonel John Blashford-Snell, is also to have a Zenith watch named after him - the limited edition 'Blashford' chronograph is a replica of the watch he wore during the famous Darien Gap expedition of 1971 in which he travelled by Range Rover along the stretch of land linking North and South America that comprises a combination of bottomless swamps and impenetrable jungle. The 100-mile journey took four months.

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