

# CLASSIC DRIVER



## How Jack Heuer invented the Carrera – and wrote watch history

01 April 2015 | Simon de Burton

*There are few more 'quintessential' drivers' watches than the Heuer Carrera - and the good news for lovers of the old-school Carrera look is that this year's Baselworld watch show saw the wraps pulled off a couple of new models that hark right back to the '60s originals...*

### **An amazing comeback**



Both carry the classic 'Heuer' marking (rather than the modern TAG Heuer), but the truest to the spirit of the original chronograph is the new, £4,800 Carrera Telemeter, a 39mm watch with a silver dial and contrasting black subdials that, save for the date window and the addition of the 'telemetre' scale, really does echo the '60s Reference 3647. The second piece, the Carrera Chronometer, is a

simple, three-hand watch featuring a COSC-certified Calibre 6 movement - and a tempting price tag of £2,600.

## It all begins at Sebring



For those who don't know the story of how the Carrera came into being, its existence can be traced back to 1963 when Jack Heuer, the great-grandson of Heuer founder Edouard, was attending the 12 Hours of Sebring endurance race at which the legendary Rodriguez brothers, Ricardo and Pedro, were driving for Ferrari.

The pair were idolised as Mexico's most famous racing drivers, and present on the day were their parents, with whom Jack struck up a conversation in the pits. Soon, talk turned to their country's most famous race - La Carrera PanAmericana - and Jack immediately became enthralled both by the idea of the event (which had been scrapped eight years earlier) and by the evocative 'Carrera' name.

## Carrera here, Carrera there



He quickly determined to use it for his next chronograph design and soon registered exclusive rights to it for watch use - at almost the same time, incidentally, that Porsche acquired the right to use it on its sports cars.

By December 1963, the new Heuer Carrera driver's chronograph was ready for launch. It featured a 36mm steel case, a Valjoux 72 manual wind movement and the reference number 2447D. Known as the 'Carrera-12' due to its 12-hour totaliser at six o'clock, the new watch retailed in the U.S. at \$98.45 - and quickly became the default choice of both professional drivers and enthusiastic amateurs.

## **Found on the arms of racing royalty**



As the years passed, the Carrera name appeared on numerous different designs of Heuer watch, ranging from simple 'time only models' to automatic chronographs with dual time-zone and date functions. In every case, however, the Carrera remained a rugged and functional 'tool watch' aimed specifically at drivers.

Over two decades of continuous production, Carreras of one sort or another were seen on the wrists of the world's leading racers, including Bruce McLaren, Jo Siffert, Ayrton Senna, Niki Lauda and Clay Regazzoni to name but a few.

## **Passing the baton**



The Carrera line was dropped in the early 1980s, but strong demand for its return by enthusiasts around the world resulted in its revival in 1998 with a 'Classics' series based on the 1960s originals. The reborn Carrera proved to be a major success and, during the past 15 years, the name has been applied to a wide range of TAG Heuer driving watches - but, in our opinion, few have captured the spirit of the originals as successfully as this year's Baselworld releases.

*Photos: Tag Heuer*

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