

CLASSIC DRIVER



This new Parmigiani watch is harder to get than a Bugatti Chiron

03 November 2017 | Alex Easthope

What makes Parmigiani Fleurier's new Bugatti Type 390 wristwatch so special that even most Chiron owners can only dream of getting one? We spoke to someone who must know — Etienne Salomé, the head of interior design at Bugatti and a dedicated admirer of complicated mechanical works of art...

The latest fruit of Parmigiani Fleurier and Bugatti's 13-year partnership, the limited-edition, 290,000 CHF Type 390 is said to embody the Chiron — the 1,500hp automotive tour de force that represents both Bugatti's cutting-edge future and illustrious past. Etienne Salomé, the marque's head of interior design, understands the brand's ethos better than most — he even crafts spectacular sculptures of past models in his spare time. We quizzed him about the ties between the timepiece and the car, and why it's the perfect watch for the Chiron owner.





In what ways does the Bugatti Type 390 embody the Chiron?

The Type 390 is a tribute to the fastest street-legal supercar in the world, and it's the latest creation from the 13-year partnership between Bugatti and Parmigiani Fleurier — the longest collaboration between a car manufacturer and watchmaker. Like the Chiron's 16 cylinders and four turbos, which deliver 1,500hp, the heart of the Type 390 is a unique 'engine'. The fruit of four years of development, the watch's cylindrical movement has been slimmed down to just 12.5mm and is no bigger than its flying tourbillon regulator. And the movement is entirely co-axial — a world first. This exceptional timepiece represents the perfect horological fit with Bugatti's ethics and one-of-a-kind automotive creations.

How did Bugatti's engineers help you to realise this incredible timepiece?

Bugatti helped with the design of the watchcase, but the movement was designed entirely by Parmigiani's watchmakers, under the guidance of Michel Parmigiani himself.



The Chiron's pièce de résistance is its engine — why is the cylindrical movement in this Type 390 so special?

This is a true showcase from Parmigiani Fleurier, the 'king's foul' of its collection. The movement is powered by two series-mounted barrels, to ensure a relatively constant torque and provide 80 hours of reserve power. The gear train comprises planetary gears assembled on top of each other. Each feature three of the smallest ball bearings in the world, measuring just 0.2mm. At its extremity, the

movement is regulated by a one-minute flying tourbillon oscillating at 28,000 vibrations per hour. A differential with conical gears enables the display of the power reserve on a sapphire tube framing the movement. Finally, a unique, smart worm screw is used for the 90-degree transfer of motion from the tubular engine to the inclined dial, to display the hours and the minutes.

What was the idea behind the unusual wedge shape of the watch?

The design link between the Type 370 from 2004 — created in homage to the Veyron — the Supersport from 2010, and the new Type 390 is that they're all drivers' pieces. On the Type 390, the time is displayed in a traditional way but on an inclined plane, allowing the time to be read while holding the steering wheel, especially at speeds over 400km/h.



While on the cutting edge of technology, the Chiron also pays homage to Bugatti's illustrious past. How does the Type 390 do the same?

The fluid curves of the sophisticated case were inspired by the creations of Jean Bugatti — holistic masterpieces of art, form, and technique that were made to last for generations. Fashioned from gold, the case is articulated. Large openings fitted with sapphire crystals provide rich views of the intricacies of the movement and the open-worked dial. And as you'd expect, the craftsmanship is superb. Even the parts you can't see are meticulously finished. It's also engraved with the initials of Ettore Bugatti, as though the visionary marque founder had personally approved the quality and design of this spectacular watch.

Has the watch been offered solely to Chiron owners?

It's been released in two limited editions of 10 pieces and offered to Bugatti and Parmigiani clients.

Which was your favourite Parmigiani Fleurier designed in collaboration with Bugatti over the past 13 years?

There have only been two tourbillons created during this partnership. As a concept, the Bugatti Galibier 16C had a one-off tourbillon integrated into its dashboard to celebrate the marque's centenary in 2009. But as a production piece, the Type 390 is really the most impressive from a watchmaking perspective. It's an incredible hub of innovations and new solutions, such as ultra-small ball bearings, triangular coupling, and an articulated case. It's the modular movement that will herald a new era in the watch industry, though, and it will surely find its way into Parmigiani's future creations.

Photos courtesy of Parmigiani Fleurier and Bugatti © 2017

