

S I M P L E M O D E R N C L A S S I C



It takes a brave man to admit the luxury Swiss timepiece on his wrist is nothing more than a utilitarian device, designed to tell the time, not the future. Admittedly, a watch is also a statement of personal taste and often indicative of how much you have stashed away under your mattress, but if your watch didn't first serve a purpose, you would never have thought to wear it. Nothing helps justify the investment, therefore, like adding purpose - which is where a complication like a second time zone comes in very handy.

Robin Swithinbank

According to a recent statistic, Britons spend 49 hours a year talking about the weather. Over a lifetime, that's six months devoted to discussion of greyness, dampness and, on the odd occasion, blue sky and sunshine. What a profound bunch we are.

Another British hobbyhorse is the time. How fast it passes, how little of it we have and (the only bit we can actually control) how we set our clocks to report it. The debate surrounding the annual switches from GMT to BST and vice versa is as old as the trees. During the last century over 70 pieces of legislation entered law, regulating whether Britain runs on GMT, BST or even GMT+2. Some of these are still so sensitive that they remain under lock and key in the National Archives.



Even if your watch budget is more charter-flight-to-Malaga than flat-bed-all-the-way-to-Sydney there are GMT options to suit your pocket

Some of our European neighbours have similar misgivings. Spain, for example, despite being on similar latitude to the UK, is an hour ahead thanks to General Franco, whose 1940 Presidential Order decreed his country should operate on the same time as his Nazi and Italian fascist allies. It's been argued Spain's laissez-faire attitude is down to the country being two hours ahead and out of sink with its mean time for much of the year. That argument could just as easily work the other way, but it's an interesting theory, nonetheless.

Politics aside, the history of keeping track of time zones via a timepiece starts with the dawn of the jet age. The first and most iconic GMT watch was the Rolex GMT Master, which was originally commissioned by Pan Am pilots in the 1950s. Like most contemporary mechanical GMT watches, its successors cost thousands of pounds, which leaves the internationally time-conscious individual with a teaser if his watch budget is more charter-flight-to-Malaga than flat-bed-all-the-way-to-Sydney. But not to fear - there are options in the sub-£1,500 category.

Glycine Airman SST 06

Glycine has been making pilots' watches since the early 1950s and the retro-looking Airman SST 06 takes its name from a 1960s Boeing project, the Supersonic Transport. The SST was an aircraft slated to carry 300 passengers at Mach 2.7 (a higher spec than Concorde), but it was mothballed in 1971 due to environmental concerns and disappeared into the graveyard of aeronautical legends. The watch carries a silhouette of the sleek SST on its reverse.

Less concealed are the watch's timekeeping functions, advertised by the two 24-hour chapter rings around the dial that give the wearer details of the time in an additional two time zones via a central hour hand adjusted by a crown at 2 o'clock. It also features a split-colour dial;

a black half representing the hours before midday and a grey half those after. Clever thinking.

The SST 06 sports a date window at 3 o'clock and under its stainless steel 44mm skin, it is powered by the dependable ETA 2893-2 automatic movement, which gives it a respectable 42-hour power reserve. It's also water-resistant to 200m.

As is fashionable at the moment, it comes with a choice of steel bracelet or a rubber or leather strap, while the dial is available with orange, blue or black bezel. The orange option looks a touch cheap to the educated eye, so better to opt for the black version on a black leather strap with white stitching, which will set you back £1,120 - a lot of watch for your money.

Glycine's Airman SST 06 was originally released in the 1960s. The current model features an ETA 2893-2 movement, a 44mm dial and is available with either a leather strap or a stainless steel bracelet.



Baume & Mercier Classima Executive XL Dual Time

Baume & Mercier's routes go back to the 1500s and to a family of artisans who made timekeeping mechanisms in the Jura mountains - now the promised land of watchmaking. It wasn't until 1830 that brothers Louis Victor and Pierre-Joseph Célestin Baume registered the family name as a manufacturer of watches.

Industrial pioneers, they set their stall on making watches of only the highest quality. In 1993, the company came under the auspices of the Richemont Group, home to top-end watch brands like Jaeger-LeCoultre, Cartier and

Panerai - which should fill a watch buyer with confidence.

At first glance, the Classima Executive XL Dual Time is classic looking, but take away the Roman numerals and it feels modern and minimalist, almost industrial. Simple lines and a clean 24-hour chapter ring with red Arabic numerals result in a watch that would look at ease on the wrists of both a younger man and his grey-templed father. It has a stainless steel case, features an automatic movement and a central hand that indicates the time in a second time zone, and is yours for £1,375.

Fitted with a black alligator leather strap, the Classima Executive XL Dual Time features a 30-minute chronograph and a date window at 3 o'clock.



Ball's Engineer Master II Aviator GMT

A third option is Ball's Engineer Master II Aviator GMT. I've written about Ball a number of times in *Simple, Modern, Classic*, and the more I find out about the brand, the more I'm convinced it offers one of the best collections at the price point. And that price point will likely climb as word spreads - Ball Watch Co doesn't have the highest profile in the UK, but give it time, or better still, get in early. At Baselworld 2010, the Ball stand neighboured Bell & Ross and Oris in Hall 1.0, which might be something to go by.

One of the reasons to like Ball watches is that they're all designed to fulfil a function. There's little ceremony, but plenty of usefulness. Ball watches are named after professions like Trainmaster, Fireman and Engineer. Add in a nod from the world of aviation in this case, and

you have a template for a watch that has been designed for a rigorous schedule of global travel.

Like the Glycine, the Aviator GMT is powered by the ETA 2893-2, but it references one rather than two further time zones, as indicated by a red central hour hand. Its reliability credentials are bolstered by shock resistance to 5,000Gs, 100m water-resistance and those wonderful micro-gas tubes that create luminosity 100 times greater than standard luminous paint and glow for an astonishing 25 years. With one on each of the hands and 12 more on the dial at each hour marker point, both time zones are clearly legible at any time of day or night. Ball's Aviator GMT, on a calf strap with a vintage-inspired pin buckle, comes in at £1,240.

On the Ball Engineer Master II Aviator the second time zone is displayed by a shorter red 24-hour hand, with the 24-hour markers on the inner dial. The date is displayed in a small window at the 3 o'clock position.

