

Postcards



As predicted by many, the mood at Baselworld 2010 was cautiously optimistic, with many brands adding line extensions instead of introducing brand new models. But as *QP's* regular contributors discovered, there was still a fair amount on show to turn heads.



Zenith's El Primero Striking 10th Chronograph €6,995.



Christophe Claret's DualTow Night Eagle. SFr.540,000.



The Eterna Madison Eight-Days. From SFr.10,000.



Cuervo y Sobrinos Historiador Pequeños Segundos (small seconds). SFr.3,200 in steel, SFr.11,000 in gold.



Breitling's Superocean II Splash. £2,220.



Hermes Self-winding Chronograph in titanium. £3,895.



James Gurney

It may have just been the weather, but there was a genuinely spring like atmosphere at Basel this year. As recent results from LVMH show, watch sales really are bouncing back from the troughs experienced last year and even if the outlook is not exactly rosy, the worst predicted scenarios didn't happen and the mood at the fair certainly reflected this. But as the watch brands have generally looked to adopt a cautious approach for the immediate future, this year's new collections were also lacking the extremes that grabbed the headlines of two and three years ago. The future might not be bright but it is at least there.

If more realistic collections were easy to predict, the generally high quality of what was on show was not. I know that many went to Baselworld expecting to be slightly underwhelmed as the conservative impulse swept all before it. Pleasingly there was quite as much genuine creativity in evidence as in any recent year, but with the added advantage of that energy being channeled more effectively. One of the reasons I enjoy watches is to do with the limitations of the form - watches do, after all, have to be wearable and capable of giving the time. The brands that stood out were those that remembered this basic requirement and avoided the higher flights of fancy. Breguet and Glashütte did this well in particular as did Zenith with its stripped down El Primeros.

For several brands the past year has apparently been a wake-up call and prodigal brands welcomed back for finally getting it right included Cuervo y Sobrinos whose simpler designs had a much more enticing feel, Eterna and Porsche Design for returning to what they are good at, but the special prize here goes to Corum - a company that suddenly looks like the top echelon watchhouse it always should have been.

There was also plenty to enjoy on the purely creative side from the amazing Palace and Christophe Claret's Dual Tow, through Max Busser's almost irritatingly clever 'Thunderbolt' to the latest offerings by Urwerk and Linde Werdelin.



Josh Sims

I'll come clean: movements can leave me a little cold. Dials and cases, on the other hand, can overwind the heart and set it racing. So while many a watcher of Baselworld is clamoring over the latest complication, I'm lusting after what some may consider the superficialities of a watch, but which I consider more the point of human/timepiece interaction.

Refreshingly, this point offered much to excite, as though the industry is coming to terms with, like it or not, increasingly being part of the broader fashion and design industries. With an overarching, on-going trend moving away from the outsized and, to my mind, cumbersome (with echoes of latent bling), the shift was towards much slimmer lines and a welcome (perhaps ideally recessionary) less-is-more aesthetic, together with a strong return for handwound pieces.

As seen at SIHH with pieces such as IWC's Portuguese Handwound, with its ever-so discrete 60-second marker in red, the tiniest splash of colour is seemingly another key trend for 2010. Check out the four candy colour options for Breitling's Superocean or Hermes' titanium Clipper Chrono which, if you can change the garish strap - and, really, I would - is an exercise in restrained use of 'branded colour'.

But for me the most elegant piece came on a chain. Yes, there may be only 25 of them, so this is more elite collector's territory,

but Glashütte Original's rose gold Pocket Watch No.1, with two-tone repeater hours and quarter hours, was, to borrow Patek's advertising, a true heirloom in the making. That many manufacturers have seemingly made reading the time off a dial so hard is a tacit admission that watches are no longer chiefly for that purpose. If we're happy to pull out a mobile phone for this, why not a pocket watch? Mark my words - the pocket watch is on its way back.



Ken Kessler

Unusually, the standouts at Baselworld 2010 weren't just individual timepieces: they were entire ranges. It's as if the manufacturers stepped back and admitted it was time to rationalise their vast and confusing catalogues, some containing hundreds of variants of what are actually very few models. For their clarity and taste, special mention goes to Bulgari, Chopard and, above all, Zenith, for new line-ups that exhibit intelligence, discretion and intrinsic worth, all wholly respectful of their heritage.

But which specific watches tormented this fanatic? It's tough narrowing it down to three, but fearful as I am of QP's editors, I shall do exactly that and produce a dream shortlist, should a gift certificate come my way. Bubbling under my Top 3 are the Hermes Clipper Chronograph, Longines' Expéditions Polaires Françaises, the Swatch Automatic Chronograph, the futuristic 'Elvis' Hamilton Ventura, a Tudor or two, a couple of Glycines, the Rolex Explorer, ad infinitum.

For the coolest diving watch of the year, my vote goes to Bremont's all-black Supermarine Descent Limited Edition. It features novel details, it's fully tested to professional standards, and I have a thing for robin's eggshell blue colour accents. For sheer orneriness, because the joke could wear off quickly, I have to admit to a hankering for one of the Volna 'nuclear logo' VolnaTomic-Radioactive watches - again, all black but with a bold yellow accent, as comfortable as a Big Bang, and certainly possessing a wittiness lacking in most watches.

And then there's the sublime Jean Dunand Palace, for which QP scooped the world in the last issue. To see it in person, to handle it, is to appreciate that the watch is a monumental achievement. Every detail elicits a sigh. Tamara de Lempicka should have lived long enough to see it. Alas, both my bank balance and my wrist are too small. But I can dream, can't I?



Tracey Llewellyn

As 2010 was my first experience of Baselworld, I was surprised at more regular visitors' comments that they found it quieter and more subdued than in previous years. With multi-levelled stands bigger than their Bond Street store equivalents, the brands in the main halls showed little signs of credit crunch scarring and with more than 100,000 visitors flooding through the doors, all indications seemed to be that international buyers were out in



Jean Dunand's Palace. Price TBA.



Bremont's Supermarine Descent. £3,195.



Glashütte Original Pocket Watch No.1. £32,000.

Bulgari Roth Tourbillon Lumiere £136,000.



Chanel's J12 with baguette diamonds and cognac sapphires. POA.



The Bell & Ross Vintage BR123 Carbon. £1,700.

full force. And although nothing too outrageous was on show - with obvious exceptions such as De Grisogono's super bling red carpet showstoppers and Chanel's diamond and cognac sapphire encrusted J12 - the more subtle and elegant offerings merely reflected the general current fashion trends. And fashion, as we all know, is cyclical so 2011 could well see the return of 'everything but the kitchen sink' pieces.

Patek Philippe certainly didn't disappoint in the chronograph department, with new designs ranging from the new steel on strap Nautilus chrono ref. 5980 with black dial and smokey Seventies-inspired finish to the sublime ref. 5950A split seconds chronograph with cushion case measuring 37x37mm and standing only 10.15mm high thanks to its CH 27-525 PS movement - the thinnest split seconds chronograph calibre ever made.

The much-debated collaborations of Bulgari with Gerald Genta and Philip Roth were debuted at this year's fair and, while the jury is still out on every watch blog in cyberspace about whether the co-branding can work, there was no denying that the new designs are actually rather good. The skeletonised Bulgari Roth Tourbillon Lumiere is an undeniable highlight of the collection, blending minimalist design and horological sophistication. The tourbillon itself comprises 82 separate elements, suspended in a super-lightweight cage and achieving a full rotation every 60 seconds.

Glashütte Original's Panorama Date was one of two new additions to the Senator Sixties collection, and features a domed glass that cannot be fully appreciated until seen in real life. Retro, yet contemporary at the same time, this 42mm-diameter men's dress watch in polished stainless steel has a panorama date aperture located above the 6 o'clock position and is powered by the in-house Calibre 39-47 movement. Classic and elegant with a nod to better times, it summed up the mood of the fair.



Robin Swithinbank

Independent pre-Baselworld reports had hinted 2010 would involve less back slapping and more chin-upping than in previous years - and from where I was standing, they weren't wrong. After a troublesome 2009, it was no surprise to see a more austere approach to watch manufacturing this year.

The upside of this - and there is one - was a return to 'less is more'. Good news for the stylish and understated, who have an in-built fear and loathing of garish excess. I saw much less rose gold this year, for example, and fewer show-me-the-money, diamond-encrusted numbers (although neither had completely disappeared), while stainless steel and black finishes were all the rage - if indeed anything can be austere and all the rage at the same time.

Being partial to black, it was good to see the finger of fashion pointing to the dark side. Among those black pieces to impress were Bremont's antimagnetic, anti-shock U2 watch, commissioned by pilots of Lockheed's iconic spy plane; Breitling's Flying B Chronograph in black steel with a rather nice polished carbon nitrate treatment; and from Bell & Ross the very convincing round-cased Vintage BR 123 Carbon.

Four other brands that deserve a mention: Glashütte for their quirky Senator Diary watch with its 31-day alarm feature; TAG Heuer for the ingenious Pendulum Concept, which employs magnets instead of the traditional hairspring to regulate the release of power; Zenith, who under the headship of new president and CEO Jean-Frédéric Dufour has revamped its product range with some genuine winners, including the El Primero Striking 10th chronograph which features a red central seconds hand that makes a full 360-degree revolution in

just 10 seconds and measures time to the nearest tenth; and Tudor for the Heritage Chrono, which was my pick of the retro pieces, not least on a black, grey and orange fabric strap - in a word, cool.



Alex Doak

There are many reasons why Baselworld was fantastic in 2010, in contrast to last year's misery. But it's not necessarily because of the watches. True, there was plenty of very decent fare and even a few highlights worth Tweeting about or reeling off at the nightly pub sessions - Bremont's sub-zero-cool U2 watch, for example; the Celsius X VI II tourbillon phone; Zenith's back-to-the-old-school foudroyante; and even Breguet's breakneck 10Hz escapement, dressed curiously incognito as the new Type XXII. But there was nothing incendiary. Certainly nothing approaching, say, Jaeger-LeCoultre's entire oeuvre at January's SIHH.

No, it was the odd little things that made all the difference this year. Like the fact the sun was shining, and my landlady Doris had finally given me the room with the balcony (I missed my first appointment thanks to both of these reasons). The fact I managed to escape the surreal, air-conditioned bubble that is Baselworld for at least one evening, for fondue with Mitch 'Watchismo' Greenblatt and Stepan Sarpaneva, whose full-dial grinning moon garnered so much interest around the table as to risk an untimely tumble into the boiling cheese. And then there was your editor and I's stylish arrival at the TAG Heuer 150th birthday bash, thanks to chauffeur de Burton's off-road exploits (I'm sure the smell of his clutch alone inspired guest of honour Leo DiCaprio and his environmentally themed speech). Not to mention the following evening's "I Heart Rolex" gingerbread medallions dished out at the Oktoberfest Breitling party - the top prize of Basel 2010.

But all of this pales into insignificance when you take into consideration my favourite little thing from this year: for once, I wasn't wearing new shoes. The relief!



Michael Balfour

Another invaluable and unrivalled international gathering, which even provided pale-faced Europeans with a hot and sunny day for a quick lunch outside, away from the worlds of repeaters, calendars and tourbillons and their attendant half-hourly appointments.

Several models stood out from the pack for me. The long-heralded chronograph version of the Instrumento Grande Chrono from De Grisogono. This automatic is full of design surprises. Across Exhibition Square in the exciting Palace tent, four outstanding fairly new watchmakers were grouped together: Christophe Claret, MB&F, Speake-Marin, and Urwerk. Each would have amply repaid sitting through a whole hour's presentation, such was the brilliance and complexity of their latest timepieces. No space here alas to describe them, but their websites do the job.

Rado brought an example of crystal clear modernity in watch design. It has cornered markets around the world with its ceramic cases and the new r5.5 Automatic is going to be another winner. Its designer is Englishman Jasper Morrison and its rounded square matt black dial has a radius of 5.5mm, mounted on a matt black bracelet. In direct contrast, TAG Heuer's Carrera Calibre 1887 Chronograph evoked envy in me. Its automatic movement is housed in a polished stainless steel case, with a tachymetre around its thin bezel. The baton markers, two small dials and date window together offer (that time-honoured cliché of) timeless elegance.



Glashütte Original Senator Sixties Panorama Date. £5,600 in steel, £10,400 in rose gold.



The Bremont U2. £3,100.

Celsius X VI II phone watch €500,000.



I am confident that most of my colleagues have included Patek Philippe's marvellous new chronograph ref. 5170 on their postcards. It goes straight into the pantheon of PP classics. But of course there were dogs in Baselworld showcases. One such was the automatic chronograph Ora #1 from the Ora Watch Swiss Watch Company in Ticino down south on Lake Maggiore. Its square case and dial are made from a single piece of titanium with eight screws around the bezel. Finally, I came across possibly the ugliest watch design anywhere in the fair: the Wonderland, by RSW.



Simon de Burton

With so much to relate from Baselworld and only a postcard-sized space in which to do it, please forgive me for not rambling on about the ambience, mood, weather etc - instead, I intend to encapsulate my most significant observations thus.

Most alarming price tag: Patek Philippe ref. 5950 split seconds monopusher chronograph. £298,300 - in steel! Watch I most wanted: Patek Philippe ref. 5170 chronograph in yellow gold - £41,000. Most pointless 'invention': Maurice Lacroix' 'square wheel' concept. Most magnificent example of horological artistry: Jean Dunand Palace. Most memorable watch: Chopard Tribute 'convertible' pocket watch. Least interesting new collections: Ebel and Tiffany. Best enamel dial:

Hermes Cape Cod Quadrige (based on a vintage scarf print). Most impressive watch from a fashion brand: Dior Chiffre Rouge T01 GMT. Most improved brand: Zenith, seemingly safe at last in the hands of Jean-Frederic Dufour. Best retro driver's watch: Tudor Heritage Chrono (sadly not available in the UK). Most laid-back and welcoming presentation: Bremont. Most sensible and overdue change: The use of Daniel Roth and Gerald Genta DNA in Bulgari watches. Best value dive watch: Oris Pro Diver Date. £1,480. Best after-hours event: Chopard Jose Carreras concert. Best-looking new movement: Hublot Unico. Most covetable pocket watch: Glashutte Original Number One. Best minute repeater: Blancpain Carrousel Le Brassus. Stunning finish and sound. Most daring modification: enlargement of Rolex Explorer case from 36mm - 39mm. Best futuristic timepiece: Seiko EPD 'electronic ink' watch. ☹

Seiko EPD 'electronic ink' watch. \$1,000.



TAG Heuer Carrera 1887 £2,350.



Patek Philippe ref. 5950A split seconds chronograph. £298,300.