

Postcards



In the first of our reports from Switzerland's biggest watch fairs, we ask eight of *QP's* regulars to give us their lowdown and their top picks from what was on offer at SIHH.



Cartier's Calibre, steel, white dial. £4,300. Image: Franck Dielman ©Cartier 2010.



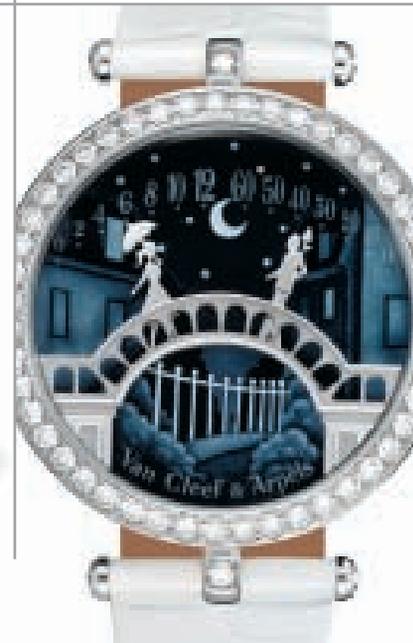
Roger Dubuis Excalibur automatic flying tourbillon with micro-rotor. £96,200.



Jaeger-LeCoultre, Grand Complication. £269,000.



IWC's Portuguese Yacht Club Chronograph. £7,950 in steel.



Van Cleef & Arpels Pont des Amoureux. £72,500.



James Gurney

It is a lesson re-learned at every Baselworld and SIHH; previews, press releases and the like all help, but nothing beats time spent with the watches and the people and companies behind them. Isolated images popping up via email and sandwiched between more urgent demands from production or accounts have a value, but do not really compare to the mix of product, people, context and ambience to be found at events like the SIHH. So, while previews confirmed the abiding popularity of 1950s and 1960s designs, the real story of the SIHH only emerged at the event itself and despite a gloomy year since the last Geneva Salon (relieved as the Salon opened to Richemont's much improved final quarter results), there was a positive feel to the event and plenty of surprises both in particular watches and in the mood.

Of the surprises and high or low lights, the stand-outs for me were:

Roger Dubuis - a little design goes a long way and 18 months on from Richemont's acquisition of the brand it was always going to be interesting to see what the group would do with one of the bolder watch companies. Apart from a vital and confidence-building programme to re-engineer the most ambitious movement offering in the business, the new management team has been demonstrating how much difference minor design changes can make. With little more than tweaks to the detail of hands and numerals, the new designs have made Roger Dubuis a much more accessible and approachable prospect.

Jaeger-LeCoultre has become an editor's nightmare. The sheer volume and quality of the Le Sentier company's output is astonishing and honestly quite difficult to digest in the time

available. Any one of the Géophysic Extreme Lab 2, the Tradition Astronomical Tourbillon and the Duomètre Moonphase would have been a sufficient highlight on its own, let alone the new Marc Newson Atmos and the various additions to the more regular collections. A cola-fuelled half-hour with fast-talking CEO Jérôme Lambert was barely enough to finish talking about the Duomètre. If you see too much Jaeger-LeCoultre editorial in *QP* this year please write to M Lambert at CH-1347 Le Sentier.

The Equation of Time theme was a real and enjoyable surprise as, traditionally, these watches have been seen as an acquired taste, a complication reserved for the more academic collectors. The difference in the variations served on this theme by the likes of Girard-Perregaux and Vacheron Constantin were an added surprise. Will this be the new tourbillon? Probably not, but it's a nice way to offer something different.

The final surprise was Cartier's new Calibre collection - named for its in-house movement. Far better in the flesh than the images suggest, the surprise was the reminder of just how good Cartier is across the whole range of watchmaking. The IDOne and other horological delights are fabulous in themselves.



Maria Doulton

Thank goodness that 2010's watch offerings left behind the lukewarm hesitancy of 2009, which was marked by failsafe re-editions of time-tested favourites. While the fight to well-loved classics is still evident (think Vacheron Constantin's and Piaget's re-editions of their ultra-slim models), 2010 will be remembered for being sharp and focused.



Panerai Radiomir Oro Rosa. £10,300.



JeanRichard's new version Diverscope. £7,200.

Sharp because innovation, where it was seen, was well-thought out and mainly of a practical nature, the prime example being Cartier's IDOne concept watch with the pedestrian - yet so far unattainable - aim of being the first adjustment free watch. A practical innovation that is so much more useful than another freak show coupling of fantastical complications. Or take A Lange & Söhne's new Zeitwerk that allows light to charge the luminous paint on the digits by creating a dial out of tinted sapphire glass that creates the opposite effect to sunglasses: a small detail but one that increases the utility of the watch.

Focus was evident in brands perfecting what they do best. Gone are the mad, bad old days of making say a diamond-set woman's diving tourbillon chronograph, just because everyone else has. Take IWC's Portuguese Yacht Club chronograph. IWC through to the core yet a model that adds to the integrity of the brand rather than haring off in another exciting direction.

Likewise Van Cleef & Arpel's journey into the land of fantastic jewel rich dials didn't settle for half measures. Californian landscapes rendered in carved stone, enamel and mosaic may not be everyone's cup of tea but Van Cleef is making a clear statement in where its women's watches are headed. My favourite from this house is the new application of the *en trainant* retrograde hour and minute movement that employs two enamel butterflies fluttering around the boughs of a jade tree to mark the passing hours and minutes.

Most of the surprises were good ones like Panerai's Radiomir in a new composite of aluminium that, thanks to a plasma electrolytic oxidation process results in a rich matte brown hue that immediately catches the eye and instinctively works. Other well-executed examples are Jean Richard's Diverscope Goldwaters and Girard-Perregaux's new full calendar in palladium or Piaget's new Altiplano with a suave blue dial.

If any trends stood out, then ultra slim watches were a timely backlash to the pre credit crunch mania for oversized watch. Quite inexplicably, Equations of Time were the favourites this year but for out of this world astronomical elegance the prize goes to Jaeger-LeCoultre's

exquisite Master Grand Tradition. A blue enamel dial of the firmament at night is the backdrop to the intricacies of the astronomical calendar. With ephemeral lightness, a flying tourbillon acts as an hour hand that marks the passing of celestial time while a little golden sun rotates the dial every 24 hours to indicate mean solar time. The minute repeater with crystal gongs adds yet another layer of other-worldly refinement. Now I can die and go to heaven - on time.

**Ken Kessler**

Previews - luckily - never tell the full story beforehand, so there were surprises galore at SIHH 2010. Alas, the new models only reinforced my self-image as a peasant, for the watches I coveted (and 'coveted' is a euphemism for 'lusted after with pulse racing') are unlikely to end up in my watch box.

It's enough that I've fallen head-over-heels in love with various Richard Mille pieces, especially their latest round model, RM 028, and I had already seen and adored Parmigiani's Bugatti Atlantic. But I did not expect to be wowed by a new entry-level Cartier, the exquisite Calibre. It combines all the details of a classic dress watch - round case, black Roman numerals on a white dial (and vice versa), small seconds - into a modern form, both by virtue of size and through clever details like the crown protection.

Van Cleef & Arpels tickled me with the cutesy image of two lovers kissing briefly on a bridge. JeanRichard made me crave a 2TimeZones all over again with the zirconium limited edition. I was dazzled by Montblanc's Metamorphosis. Jaeger-LeCoultre addressed wanderlust with the classy and elegant Master Memovox International world timer. But one piece alone was enough to make me wish for a lottery win. Even five numbers plus the bonus ball will do it.

For a dozen years, I've ranked the Panerai Mare Nostrum chronograph amongst the all-time favourites in my collection. What Panerai kept a lid on was an all-new version, a more exact replica of the original

prototype, including a plain bezel and a huge case measuring 52mm across. To make it even more desirable, the new Mare Nostrum has a split-level dial and - ohmigawd - a sublime, historical Minerva movement. Only 99 lucky enthusiasts can own this cooler-than-Jack-Nicholson wrist wear. Suddenly, I feel about as suave as Ed Balls.



Tom Stubbs

The airlift from the Milan menswear fashion shows directly to Geneva reasserts my style-biased view of the watch vista. The fashion world has had an ASBO (Absurd Style Banishing Order) served upon it post the global crash and much of the frivolity has gone. But can the same be said for the catwalks of SIHH? Very possibly - my favourite watch 'looks' were simple affairs or unfettered indulgencies.

The Radiomir 42mm is very fancy-able. In brushed pink gold with chocolate dial it's the first Panerai to get my horological blood up for seasons. The case hugs the wrist neatly and the colour scheme is first class. The new P999 movement affords a slimmer, lighter watch, quietly f agging up the sea change in sizing trends.

More handsome fair from IWC who presented a bevy of new Portuguese action. The hand wound models are utterly charming with clean, unfussy layout. I've never really got off on tourbillons - they get in the way. However two of the pesky things find their way onto my top five list. The IWC Tourbillon Hand Wound's brilliance lies in its boastfulness and I applaud the 'Tourbi-Windys' unabashed f aunting of technically prowess for the sake of it.

Cartier often confuses me by skeletonising everything, when all I really want is a lovely thin evening watch. The uninterrupted curve of the Tortue's case is delightful, and facilitates horological madness to break loose inside, without looking too complex and while skeletonisation allows voyeuristic inspection of the busy little Perp' Cal' keeping up its numerous tasks, the case is still the best bit.

And like many before me, I was mesmerised by the Midnight Tourbillon Nacre by Van Cleef & Arples. Sculpted arcs of mother of pearl relief as hour markers, a tourbillon and a power reserve. Nothing else. Like a watch from an elevated parallel realm, it blew me away. I'm not sure if "the magic of dawn softly lighting up trees" that the dial allegedly evokes got to me or if it was the emotional association with Roxy Music's *Mother of Pearl*. Post Milan fashion fatigue might have contributed, but either way I was moved by this rarefied idea.



Claire Adler

This year's SIHH saw an unusual emphasis on watches trying to resemble catwalk models, with an emphasis on thinness and beauty. Thinness by way of packing everything into slight and slender watch cases (at Piaget, Richard Mille, Vacheron Constantin, Baume & Mercier, Ralph Lauren, Audemars Piguet and Jaeger-LeCoultre) and beauty in the form of show-stopping art watches that celebrated a renewal of the rarefied old skills of engraving, enameling and gem-setting (at Vacheron Constantin, Jaeger-LeCoultre, Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels).

While size zero thinking has not traditionally been considered a complication, it has been responsible for a large number of Swiss micro mechanical engineers scratching their heads before pushing their abilities to the absolute limits and, if that's not a complication, then frankly I don't know what is. And anyway, brains and beauty are always the best - and hardest to find - combination.

While Piaget has come up with the P12, the skinniest automatic watch on the market at a stomach crunching 2.35mm, Vacheron Constantin has come up with the Ultra Fine 1955, the leanest mechanical hand-wound watch in the world, reflecting its own slimline history spanning the 19th and 20th centuries.

Vacheron Constantin is also on top of the game on the art front, with a series of drop dead gorgeous and highly innovative watches from its Metiers d'Art collection, whose dials have been decorated



Girard-Perregaux's 1966 Full Calendar Palladium. £12,500.



Panerai's Mare Nostrum 52mm. £22,800.

with the help of Japanese artists who have been transmitting their skills uninterrupted for centuries - not unlike our friends at Vacheron Constantin. The watch designs are influenced by the Zen calm and spirituality of Kyoto, a city that is home to 2,000 temples.

But these watches are far from the only ones around inspired by energy of place. The love affair between Van Cleef & Arpels and Paris is still holding strong, with Le Pont Amoureux - a romantic watch that tells the story of two lovers over a 24 hour period - with a movement from the hands of revered watchmaker Jean-Marc Wiederrecht, the multiple award-winning man with the prophetic surname (it means 'right again') behind Harry Winston's Opus 9 and Max Busser's Horological Machine Number 2. Other current watches with a focus on cities include Jaeger-LeCoultre's Grand Tourbillon Continents and the Roger Dubuis Excalibur automatic tourbillon, where you switch between cities using the corner of your credit card. Model thinking if you ask me.



Michael Balfour

The final visitor figures for the SIHH show an increase of about 10 per cent at 12,500, of whom some 1,200 were media representatives from over 30 countries, but I suspect that actual invitation numbers were down, or not taken up on cost grounds. And, although it seemed quieter and more relaxed moving through the aisles between the elegant booths this year, at the same time, the casual conversations and card exchanges, in and around the ever-appreciated bar and food areas appeared to have a keener edge than before.

It was the 20th edition of the fair, which I salute. In 1991 the five inaugural exhibitors were Baume & Mercier, Cartier, Daniel Roth, Gérald Genta, and Piaget. Two of them, Genta and Roth, were

resolute independents. This year the SIHH continued the tradition by welcoming two more: Greubel Forsey and Richard Mille who offered well attended press conferences, among our 18 almost back-to-back meetings.

The SIHH block booked 47 hotels in Geneva, with to and fro transport in white navettes (but please no radios next year). Evening receptions abounded. I really enjoyed the Olio restaurant SIHH gathering, on the über-fashionable rue de Rhône.

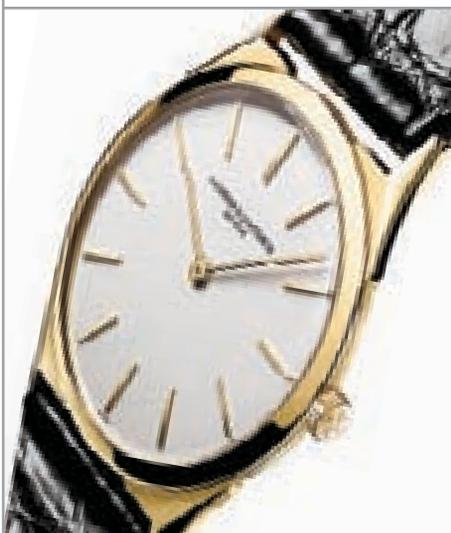
Among the new models on show, three in particular caught my eye. The long name of the first was the Ronde de Cartier Skeleton Flying Tourbillon, 9455 MC Calibre, Geneva Seal, with just three outsized white gold roman numerals supporting the movement, in an edition of 100 pieces. Newcomer Greubel Forsey showed us its fascinating Double Tourbillon Technique, a marvel in red gold. And, by complete contrast, Piaget's new Altiplano 43mm, plain and classical, houses an ultra thin 2.35mm movement. A remarkable achievement - just like the SIHH itself.



Caragh McKay

When faced with beautiful timepieces at every turn, mining out a few favourites, though not on a par with siphoning coal from mountains, turned out to be a rather daunting task - not least because this was my first time at SIHH as editor of the *Daily Telegraph's* watch supplement *Telegraph Time*. But, tough as it is, choose I must, so here goes:

With its slim case (3.4mm) and 42mm dial, at the most basic level, the Panerai Radiomir Oro Rosa is a surprisingly elegant offering. Throw a new in-house mechanical movement (P999), a brushed pink gold case and dark brown dial into the mix and this watch



Vacheron Constantin, UltraFine. £16,260.



Greubel and Forsey, Double Tourbillon Technique. £360,000.

pretty much cuts it on just about every other level too. Though smaller than the average Panerai, had they shaved a few more millimetres off the dial, the Oro Rosa would be a rather cool addition to the ladies' sports watch arena.

You see, size matters; hence I was also rather taken by the new Ralph Lauren Slim Classique 38mm version, with the original ultra-thin 2.1mm mechanism. To see this watch brought down from its original 42mm makes perfect sense to me. It just feels right - a little more contemporary, perhaps. It's got all the hallmarks of a future classic.

Talking of classics, nothing could quite prepare me for the little beauty unveiled by Audemars Piguet. A Ladies Royal Oak Offshore chronograph in steel - with 37mm dial! Small, solid and sans diamonds (though there are blingier options). It may not seem like a huge development but there's something brilliant about the fact that this iconic men's watch looks just as cool, and not too macho, when resized for a girl's wrist.

One suspects that no such girly developments are on the cards at Greubel Forsey. But then why bother when unique pieces such as Invention Piece No3, so exquisitely and passionately realised, seem to fulfil the loftier purpose of encapsulating the history of watchmaking itself?



Simon de Burton

Call me old-fashioned, but my favourite watch of SIHH was a(nother) revisited model in the form of Vacheron Constantin's fabulously elegant Ultra Fine 1955 which epitomises what VC does best - beautifully engineered, meticulously finished and effortlessly superior dress watches. Apparently it is part of a 'trend' for thin watches that emerged from this year's show. True,

there were a few skinny ones about (another notable was Piaget's Calibre 1200P), but hardly sufficient to constitute a trend, surely?

My liking for the past also drew me to the fabulously retro Girard-Perregaux 1966 chronograph that looks so in period that it's difficult to believe it is a product of the 21st century. The Sowind stable also provided another covetable 'back to the future' number in the form of the Jean Richard Aquascope that recalls the brand's 1960s dive watches. To create it, someone appears to have taken the best elements of a Rolex Submariner and a Blancpain 50 fathoms and melded them with JR's original, twin-crown monobloc case.

But there was more to SIHH 2010 than simply harking back - in typical style, Jaeger-LeCoultre showed that it is forging ahead with high-tech materials and design by unveiling the Extreme Lab 2 that was worn by Swiss mountaineer Stephane Schaeffer when he climbed a previously un-conquered Himalayan peak. Neat touches on the watch include a digital jumping minutes indicator for the chronograph, crown-push function selection and a non-magnetic escapement that eliminates the need for a Faraday cage thanks to the use of lubricant-free components developed for the Extreme Lab One. Another contemporary piece that caught my eye was Panerai's Radiomir Tourbillon GMT 'Lo Scienziato' that combines a skeleton dial with a black ceramic case that contrasts brilliantly with a vintage-look leather strap. It sounds like a dog's dinner, but it really works. And going back to where we started, I should add that I fell in love with Panerai's 42mm Oro Rosa which has a delectable chocolate brown dial and a hand-wound movement measuring just 3.4mm thick. OK, maybe this thin thing is a trend after all. ☺

Ralph Lauren, Slim Classique.
From £8,500.



Marc Newson's limited-edition Atmos 566 clock.
From £77,000.



Piaget's Altiplano. £9,300.