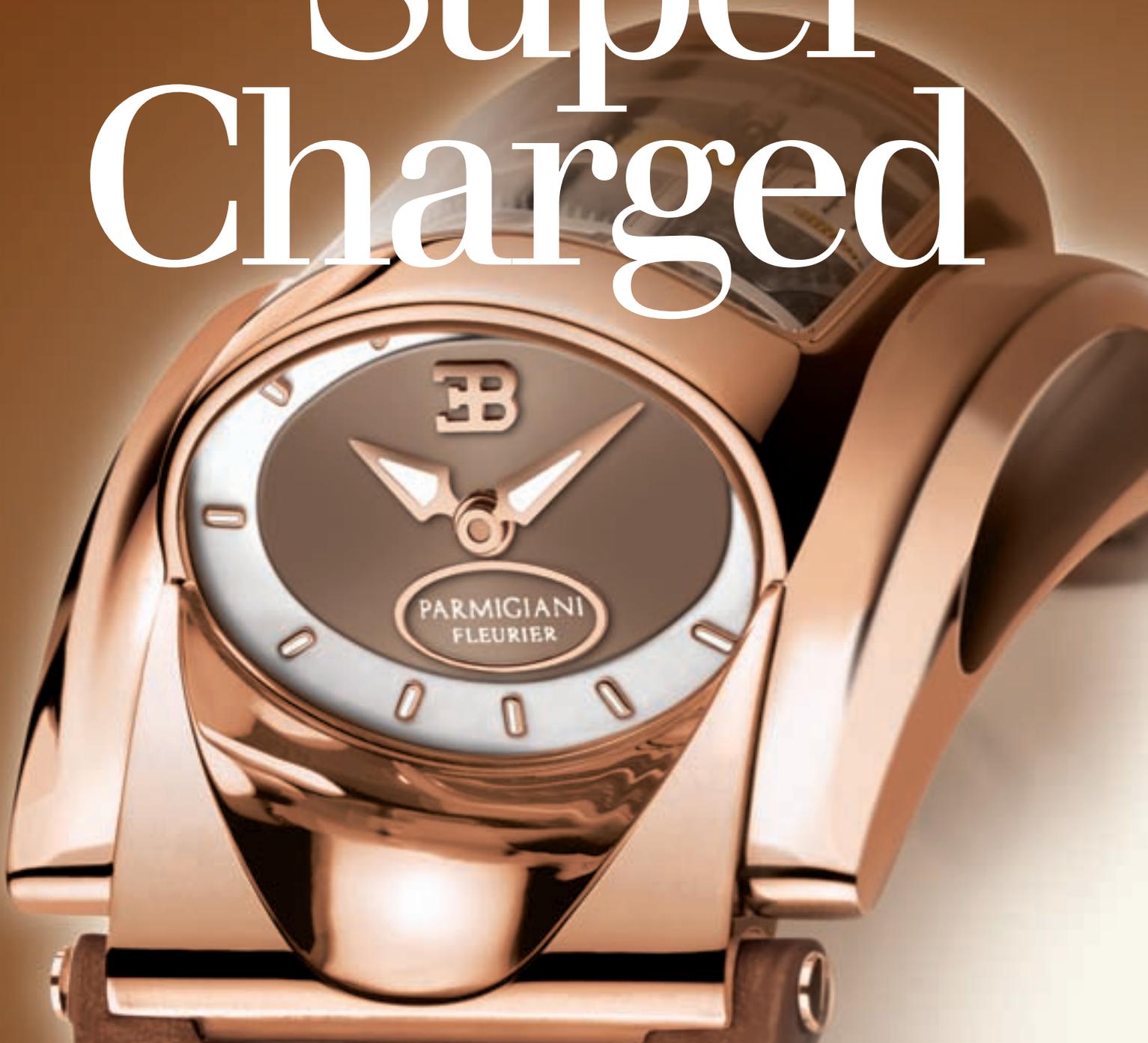




As far as a sense of occasion goes, nothing can top a centenary for inspiring awe. It was the 100th Anniversary of the birth of the Bugatti motorcar, marked on 11-12 September, that provided the opportunity for Parmigiani Fleurier to announce a selection of new watches, both to celebrate the marque's birthday and to provide a glimpse of the second and third generations of timepieces. With characteristic flair, Parmigiani CEO Jean-Marc Jacot, saved the best for last, surprising even the savviest of German watch journalists.

Ken Kessler

Super Charged





For a Bugatti enthusiast, there is little to match a visit to the Bugatti château and manufacturing site in Alsace. New owner Volkswagen has restored the buildings and grounds impeccably, such that even a die-hard purist Bugattiste would have a hard time complaining. And, as a partner to the brand, Parmigiani was able to set up an impressive display in the Orangerie. Visitors arrived from around the world, accompanied by their cherished Bugattis, the final tally of cars - appropriately - reaching around 100.

Bugatti and Parmigiani first joined forces in 2001, when the latter created a special new watch for the revived automobile manufacturer. Given that the new Bugatti Veyron would be one of the most outrageous, radical, over-engineered and awe-inspiring vehicles ever to touch tarmac, it was deemed then that any watch partnered with the Veyron would have to offer commensurate innovation, rarity, exclusivity and sheer presence. The result was the Type 370, unlike any wristwatch ever seen before.

In no way could the Bugatti watch ever be subjected to accusations of mere badge engineering, as is typically inspired by such marriages. While some, like Jaeger-LeCoultre's ingenious AmVox designs for Aston-Martin, do go the



extra mile, most are merely cosmetic exercises. For the Type 370, Parmigiani Fleurier created the first transverse watch movement, reminiscent - even without footnotes or the guiding hand of a salesperson - of an engine part, not least (for those of a certain age) of early superchargers.

Seen as a prototype in 2004, after nearly four years of research, development and fine-tuning, the Type 370 caught watch-lovers unaware. Michel Parmigiani had positioned its five main plates on a horizontal axis, which provided the designer with the opportunity to expose the bridges and train wheels. It 'out-skeletoned' the most naked of movements. This glimpse into the watch's innards referenced the exposed engine of the Veyron, a signature detail of the actual car. Rival manufacturers expose their engines too, but at best, with a see-through panel.

Near-cylindrical in shape, the Type 370 featured a small dial at its front, with only hours and minutes displayed. Cleverly exploiting the layout and the plethora of windows on the case, Parmigiani fitted a rotating drum bearing numbers that would show, through the top of the watch, the remaining time of the 10-day power reserve. It was simply bursting with novel details, including cone-shaped tooting for the power transmission gears, tiny wheels that were exact representations of the alloy wheels on the vehicle, the use of microscopic nuts and bolts instead of screws, and even a pen-shaped, powered tool to wind the watch.



The exceptional Parmigiani Bugatti Type 370, launched four years ago, is intrinsically linked to the world's most powerful car - the Veyron 16B. To end the production run of 300 Type 370s, Parmigiani has issued 10 white gold pieces and 10 in rose gold. Inspired by the Veyron Faubourg, the pieces have been dubbed the Bugatti Faubourgs.

With the pending demise of the Bugatti Veyron, after reaching its circa-300 production run, the Type 370, too, will soon end production. To bid farewell to the model, Parmigiani Fleurier has produced a pair of Type 370s, one in rose gold and one in platinum, both with the cases entirely hand-engraved in delicate patterns. These have been offered for £250,000 each, but one suspects that they were sold before they left the atelier.

Atalante: The prettiest Bugatti of them all?

A desire not to disappoint those who wished to celebrate the centenary with something wrist borne coincided with a need to create a proper family of timepieces. To this end, Parmigiani has come up with a limited edition model to serve as an interim timepiece between the parting of the Veyron and the Type 370, and the arrival of the next car/watch pairing.

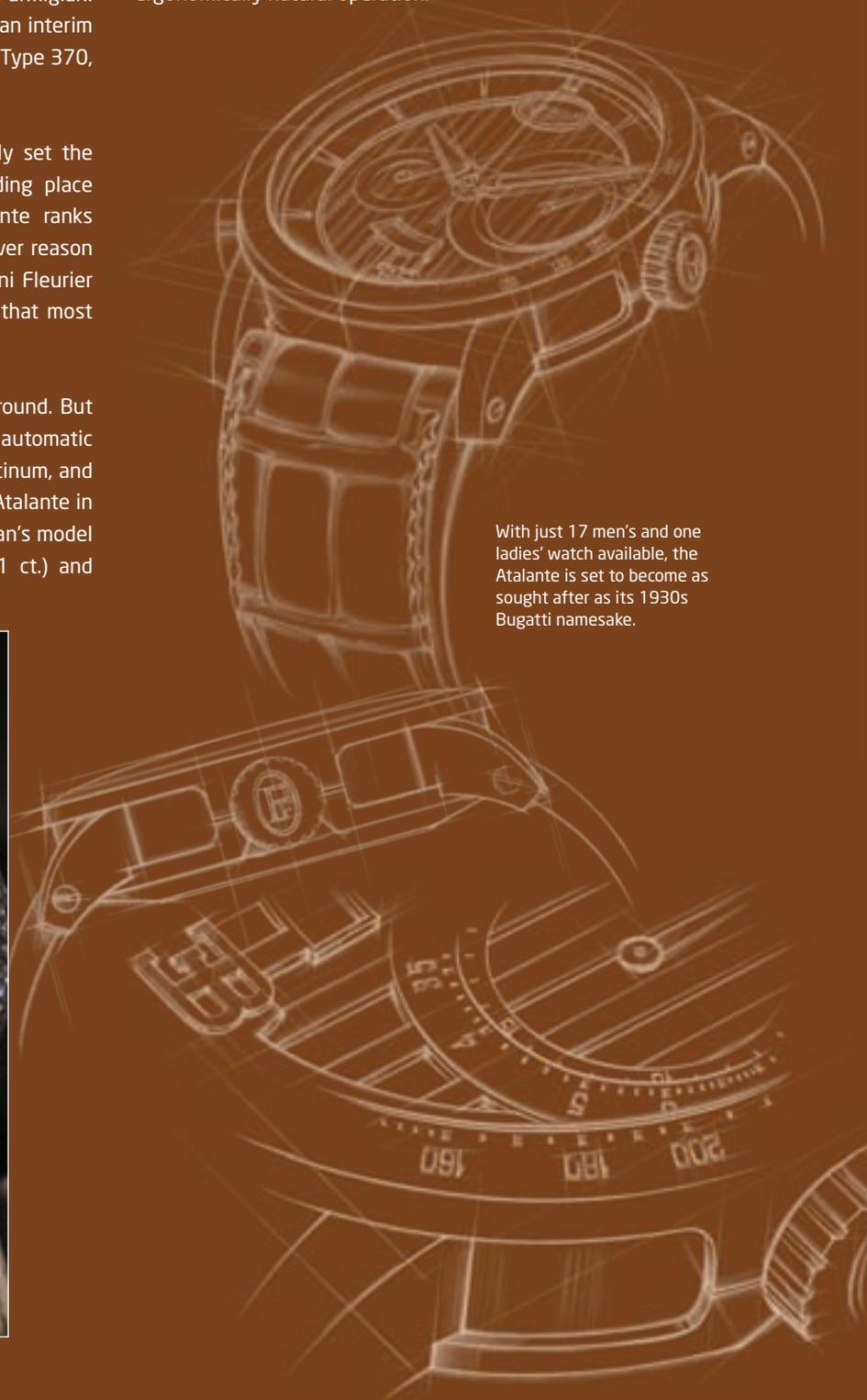
Perhaps it was because a Type 57 Atalante recently set the auction world alight when it returned from its hiding place after four decades. Maybe it's because the Atalante ranks among the most beautiful cars of all time. For whatever reason that they were so inspired by the Atalante, Parmigiani Fleurier has released a severely limited edition named after that most graceful of pre-war models.

Unlike the Type 370, the Atalante is conventionally round. But that's where convention stops, for this model is an automatic flyback chronograph - Parmigiani's first - cased in platinum, and limited to 17 pieces like the production of the actual Atalante in the 1930s. The company has also produced one woman's model set with 68 brilliant-cut diamonds on the case (1.1 ct.) and

146 diamonds on the dial (0.65 ct.). Reinforcing that sense of occasion, Parmigiani Fleurier has engraved 'Bugatti Centenaire - édition Spéciale Atalante' on the case back.

Parmigiani describes the look as a completely original aesthetic for the company. Noteworthy is the positioning of the chronograph pushers on the left, at 8 o'clock and 10 o'clock, rather than above and below the winding crown. This was chosen to optimise functionality, Parmigiani noting that the layout allows the user to press the pushers with the thumb to start and stop the chronograph hands, resulting in more comfortable and ergonomically natural operation.

With just 17 men's and one ladies' watch available, the Atalante is set to become as sought after as its 1930s Bugatti namesake.





Automotive details abound, not least the clever dial, which at first glance merely looks striped. But Bugatti fanatics will note immediately that the stripes recall the vertical bars of a Bugatti T57 radiator and they allow a glimpse at the movement's train wheels and the date disc. The profile of the satin-finished case, also reminiscent of Bugatti surfaces, sees the bezel and the case-back joining to form an area reminiscent of the air intakes found in the wings of vintage sports cars. At the 6 o'clock position is the immortal EB logo, formed by the initials of Ettore Bugatti, a symbol that graces every vehicle.

Inside the Atalante is Parmigiani's Calibre PF 334, made entirely in-house. Along with the standard chronograph features of a 30-minute counter and small second indicator, the Bugatti Atalante also displays two separate tachometric measurements. On the main bezel, the watch allows movement at high speed to be timed, while the second scale on the 30-minute counter's own bezel provides timing of slower speeds such as walking or running.

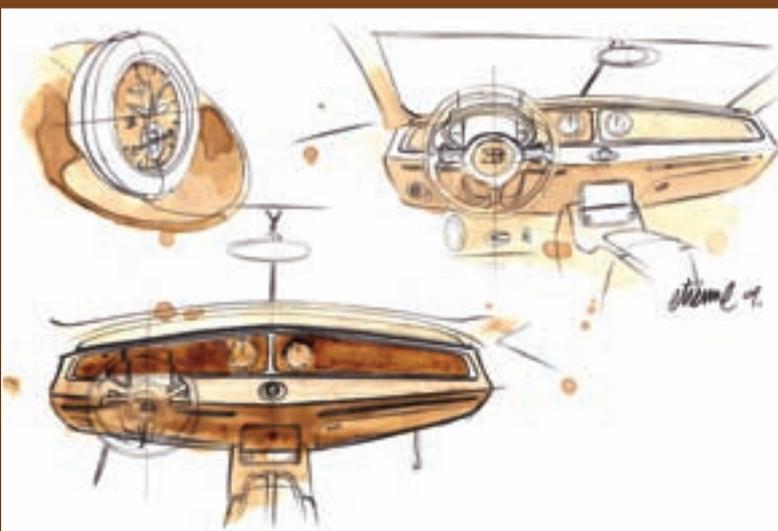
Other details include small seconds at 9 o'clock, the date under the dial and visible through an arced aperture at the 7 o'clock position and a quarter-second chronograph with large sweep seconds hand in the centre. Impressively sized at 43 mm in diameter, it's also a chunky 13.4 mm thick. As with all Parmigiani watches on straps, Atalante's is Hermes-made alligator, with 18 ct white gold deployant clasp. Priced at £80,000, the Atalante looks set to be a future collector's item; one might assume that the lone diamond-set piece has already been sold.



Galibier: new car, new watch

With the Type 370 soon to finish production and the Atalante of such limited numbers as to beggar the definition of 'serial production', it fell to an all-new watch to serve as the Type 370's sequel. Its raison d'être would be to accompany the second production car to emerge from the reborn Bugatti, a vehicle about which there had been whispers but nothing solid. It soon became apparent that the car would have its debut after the centenary events, shown to a select group of potential clients.

Called the 16C Galibier, the name referring to the coachwork of four-door, four-seater Type 57 Bugattis, the car itself is a sumptuous limousine to rival Rolls-Royce and Bentley. Opulent, elegant yet supremely competent, in all likelihood, it will do to



When it came to the Parmigiani Galibier, the challenge was to create a single timekeeper that could be used in all situations. The result was a piece that could be adapted with the greatest of ease for use either on the instrument panel of the new Bugatti car, as a wristwatch, a pocket watch, or a table clock.

that market sector what the Veyron did to the GT: dominate and devastate. Any watch associated with it would have to embody all of the Galibier's virtues.

With the secrecy palpable in the atmosphere, Jean-Marc Jacot held a breakfast press conference just before we were to depart Alsace and told us that the new watch represents a unique concept, in that it can be used in four ways. Blithely described by Jacot as "a simple tourbillon", the new timepiece is a manual wind model with 7-day power reserve and each watch can be customised to the owner's tastes. Jacot said: "We can match the dial colour to the colour of an individual car." Price is still being determined, but, as the car will probably sell for well in excess of €1 million, there is the remote possibility that the watch might be fitted as standard. There is also the possibility that Parmigiani's second watch for the legendary marque will be offered only to purchasers of the new vehicle.

Why create a watch to use four ways? According to Parmigiani, the challenge, "relates to how the timekeeper is worn and how it can always be kept close by, in all of life's situations". The trick was to make the watch easily adaptable to any of its four uses, for the sort of clients who buy Galibiers will not be individuals who care to fiddle around with unresponsive gadgets. And the four uses cover all the horological bases: a timepiece for the car's instrument panel, a wristwatch, a pocket watch or a table clock. The heart of the new watch is a removable case middle, reminiscent of the recently departed Japy range (which, ironically, produced a model to honour the Bugatti T23 'Tank').

For its primary function within the Galibier, the watch resides in a pod in the instrument panel, with a retractable, pivoting support custom-designed by Bugatti's engineers. The watch

appears when the ignition is started, and retracts when the car is shut down. The watch can be fitted or removed with a single action for use outside of the vehicle.

Its second use is as a wristwatch. For this, Parmigiani produces a strap and outer case assembly fashioned entirely from calfskin that complements the interior of the Galibier. Parmigiani designed the mechanism to mimic the action of a bonnet opening, while activating it requires only the pressing of two push-pieces positioned on the lower lugs. The bezel segment then lifts to allow the watch to be placed in the middle, held securely when the bezel is lowered.

For its third role, the watch can be adapted to serve as a pocket watch - not so bizarre an idea when one considers that pocket watches appear to be enjoying a revival. For this application, the watch is fitted to a gold-hinged case fitted with a chain.

Lastly, the watch can be housed in a leather-clad case that converts it into a table clock. With its 7-day power reserve, this adaptation is perfectly in keeping with most mechanical table clocks, but that's not enough for Parmigiani: the Bugatti Tourbillon is wound automatically on being placed in the housing. Within is a system that will regularly wind the movement via the crown, every five days.

Parmigiani Fleurier had tough precedents to follow, including the Mido Bugatti Radiator watch of the 1920s, the Breguet chronograph fitted to the steering wheels of the Bugatti Royales, and their own raising of the bar: the Type 370. If the preview images - and Jean-Marc Jacot's demonstration of the prototype - are anything to go by, it looks like Bugatti has inspired another watch worthy of Ettore's legacy. ☺

