

The QP Bookshelf:

An Autumn Selection

THE SWISS WATCHMAKING YEAR 2008

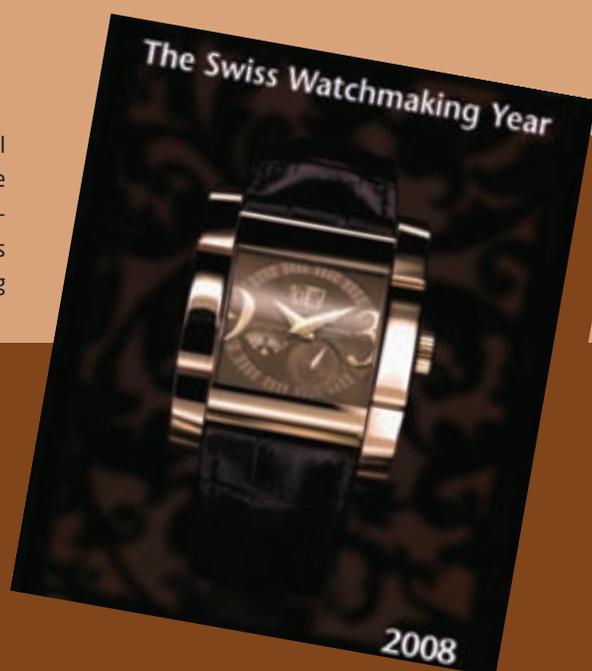
by Michel Jeannot, Flavia Giovannelli and others

Published by Promoedition SA,
35 rue des Bains, PO Box 5615,
CH-1211 Geneva, Switzerland.
Hard covers, 306pp, fully illustrated.
Price: Chf 55 plus Chf 30 postage.
(Order from <http://www.swiss-watchmaking-year.com/book/>)

Mention 'Watch Yearbooks' to most horological bibliophiles, and they'll assume you're referring to the annual attempts to list every new watch in a given 12-month span. For the majority of yearbooks, that's precisely the case, and they succeed or fail in varying

degrees. *The Swiss Watchmaking Year*, however, doesn't make that its priority, though a vast slice of the book - some 150 pages - focuses on new models.

Instead, this volume gathers together the salient information and events of the previous year, month by month, from the important to the trivial. The former includes items such as Osvaldo Patrizzi parting company with Antiquorum or the burglary at Jaeger-Lecoultre,



while the latter typically features reports of which company is backing which celebrity (i.e. who got free watches that year), and - invariably - a bunch of photos of watch company heads mugging with models at parties.

But this is supposed to be inclusive, not selective, so it is an annual repository of pretty much everything of note that happened in the previous year regardless of its levity or gravity. And you don't have to be part of the industry to find it fascinating: along with the social news and the purely commercial element, the book is rich with statistics, detailed company profiles, interviews and thought-provoking articles. You can either stick it on the shelf as a reference work, or sit down and read it cover to cover; it works both ways.

The 2008 edition covers October 2006 to September 2007, thus enabling it to be ready for year's end and certainly in time for the Basel and Geneva shows in April. Of course, a huge percentage of it is advertorial, but this is to be expected of such volumes. That

aside, in the latest edition there are readable, informative and beautifully-illustrated profiles of Victorinox, de Grisogono, Franc Vila, Montblanc, Roger Dubuis and many others, while a section at the back provides the reader with the industry's annual performance figures and global market breakdowns.

As a useful reference tool, thanks to a comprehensive index, this book is a perfect tonic to the internet. Better than that, it's a cogent reminder of what happened during a given year. Future historians, take note: this series does the work for you.



Above: Victorinox Dive Master 500 Limited Edition.
Below: Antiquorum before the departure of Osvaldo Patrizzi.



Roger Dubuis Excalibur ref. EX45 0829, features a minute repeater, perpetual calendar and tourbillon.





MONTRES MILITAIRES by Constantin Parvulesco

Published by ETAI, 20 rue de la Saussiere,
92100 Boulogne-Billancourt, France.
Hard covers, 176 pages, fully illustrated.
ISBN 272688760-8.
Price: 44 euros plus postage
(Order from www.amazon.fr)

Although we await an all-embracing and authoritative English-language book about military watches, industrious enthusiasts have been able to assemble a reasonable bookshelf on the subject. One existing volume deals exclusively with German military timepieces, another academic tome covers American timepieces, there's an out-of-print UK classic and a glorious picture book from Italy. Now it's France's turn, with a title that just may be the most satisfactory of all.

Close in format, if not concept, to Canetoli's *Militari Da Polso*, it ups the ante by containing considerably more text and historical photos rather than just sexy modern shots of well-worn timepieces. In addition to a mandatory plethora of mouth-watering, newly-shot illustrations, *Montres Militaires'* images range from combat shots to trade advertisements to war-time portraits. Even if you cannot read a single word of French, this book is worth every Euro just for the visuals.

But it's the text that makes this something special, and it begs an English-language translation. And while nothing can even come close to Konrad Knirim's over-the-top study of German watches for sheer mass, that book concentrates almost solely on the watches and clocks of the Fatherland (though it does reference other countries' materiel when necessary). Parvulesco's book, on the other hand, is not limited to the timepieces of one country's military, so its overall usefulness is far greater.

[Brief aside: When you consider that the British military always had the most interesting watches, it is almost scandalous that no well-connected military historian has come forth with a similar volume covering the RAF, the Royal Navy, NATO, *et al*, and their contribution to the evolution of the wristwatch. End of rant.]

Note that the first face to appear in this book is that of Isaac Newton, followed by George Graham, so you'll appreciate immediately that the book covers the very earliest military uses of timekeepers, commencing with the question of longitude. The author examines the applications of an assortment of pocket watches, deck chronometers and



other precision devices, from early pioneers including Ulysse Nardin, Le Roy, Lange & Sohne and others, before reaching the first bespoke military wristwatch, the legendary model Girard-Perregaux produced for the German Navy in 1880. And its modernity is shocking, especially the bracelet.

From that point on, Parvulesco uses the most sensible device of all for categorising the development of the timepieces: the chapters include 'The Great War', watchmaking between the wars, World War II and the Cold War, plus a separate chapter for submarines and divers. Alas, in a nod to commercial realities, the author also gives far too much credence to military-style watches - timepieces that I sincerely doubt were ever specified by any genuine army, navy or air-force ... though I'd love to hear from any of you which soldiers, sailors or pilots have been issued an Arnold True North Perpetual, a Graham Chronofighter Oversize or a Bell & Ross tourbillon.

Negatives are few: the lack of an index, scant coverage of the watches used in more recent conflicts such as Viet Nam, the Middle East, etc, and - most regrettably - a table such as that found in Canetoli's work deciphering all the various case marks and identifiers. Equally, the book does include a handy section at the back dealing with the current typical market values of over 50 highly collectible models.

Omissions? I'm hard-pressed to name an important watch or personality the author missed, and copious space is given to milestones: Lindbergh and Weems, the IWC Mk 11, Breguet's Type XX, the various Smiths, Panerai's, military Rolexes and Vacherons, the Blancpain Fifty Fathoms. Indeed, the work is so thorough that I am forced to forgive Parvulesco his indiscriminate coverage of modern pretenders. File under: Essential.

Rolex Military Submariner.

Vintage Luminor Marina Militare.

IWC Mark 11.

