




Straighten Up & Fly Right

 Giles and Nick English seem to make it all seem so easy that it is quite tempting to go out and start a watch brand right now, except that you know that making things look easy is the mark of the expert and disguises both inspiration and perspiration.

James Gurney

Top of climb

From behind the smokescreen of affable English amateurishness, the brothers have come up with a cleverly conceived and well executed watch. The brand back story effortlessly equals and even exceeds the pilot ambience other much larger companies strive day and night to create - how many pilot watch designers even know what a PPL is? And as if that wasn't enough, their passion for vintage aircraft brought the respect and friendship of people like Charley Boorman, Ewan McGregor and Bear Grylls, a PR coup that established luxury houses would need teams of people, agencies and money to match.

The watches not only look good and touch all the right buttons - B-EBE2000 steel hardening technology is

probably more than real life needs, but sounds fantastic - but were actually on sale within six months of the launch. As actually delivering watches taxes even established watch companies, it is apparent that there is both a determination and a hardness behind those affable grins. And if this piece sounds a little breathless in their praise, the decision of Robert Bensoussan (ex CEO of Jimmy Choo) and John Ayton (co-founder of Links of London) to join the cause, is pure commercial analysis.

Pilot report

According to Nick English it really does come down to their love and fascination with all things aviation. And if that plays down necessarily long and hard negotiations with the whole panoply of dial makers, case makers and other, usually over-loaded and recalcitrant suppliers,



The EP120 is one of four airworthy examples of the Mk V Spitfire left in the world. The machine was used by the RAF in 1942 and spent time in numerous squadrons. Its success in battle marks it as potentially the most credited fighter plane of WWII and it was also the lead Spitfire in the 2000 Hollywood film, Pearl Harbor.

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the new Spitfire watch shows not only why they bother, but encapsulates what makes their situation and their offer unique.

EP120 is a legend in fighter aircraft history. One of four airworthy MkV Spitfires still in existence, EP120 was credited with destroying seven German aircraft while part of the RAF's 501 Squadron making it one of, if not the most, successful aircraft in the history of the Second World War. And as Nick English puts it "EP120 is no hangar queen, it flies regularly at air displays and equally important, EP120 is a living plane, not just a reconstruction around a registration plate". This combination of history and life is what makes EP120 special and is what Bremont are trying to give their watches. Making a watch specifically around the EP120 was an idea that came with the genesis of Bremont itself.

Angle of incidence

Taking the mantra that brand DNA has to be integrated into watch designs at more than face value, Bremont's EP120 chrono incorporates materials from the salvaged EP120 panels as well as design cues from the MkV. When EP120's airframe was overhauled, some of the replaced aluminium airframe panels landed in the hands of the English brothers - another legacy of their reputation in the world of vintage aviation - and subsequently the watches.

Hearing Nick English talk about the watch and the way it is imbued with the spirit of EP120, the enthusiasm and belief is remarkable. More pertinently, that enthusiasm comes across in the design and the detail Bremont have worked hard to incorporate.

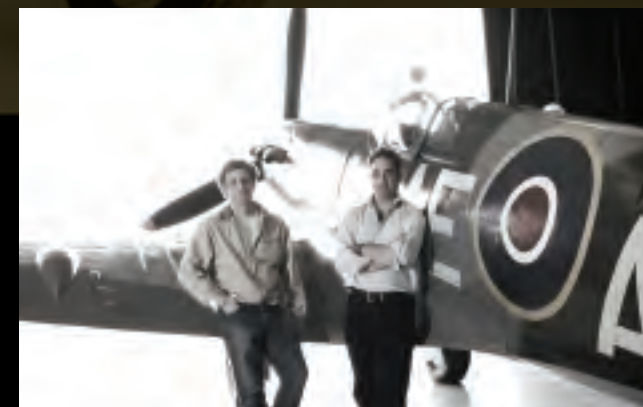
The case, like the rest of the Bremont collection is finished and hardened in England and then given a DLC (Diamond-Like Coating) treatment, the idea being to create a compromise between a desirable watchcase and the black-painted aluminium instrument panel of the Spitfire. The hands, naturally, follow the form of the instrument clock while the 12 o'clock sub-dial is aluminium taken from EP120's airframe - a painstaking and difficult task given the brittleness of aluminium that thin and exposed to a lifetime of stresses and strains.

Thrust reversal

The back has a sapphire glass to show off the propeller shaped rotor arms that are cut "raw" from the airframe skin and are used as is, except for markings to show the edition number (120 obviously enough - though there might be enough material left for a 20 piece precious metal edition). This too presented the sort of technical challenge that strains relations between component suppliers and maker, as the aluminium is both very light, having an adverse effect on the efficiency of the rotor, and brittle, limiting the weight that can be reliably supported, again meaning adjustments to the winding system. Even the cap holding the rotor arms at the centre had to be endlessly redesigned so that it is easy enough to remove without damaging the rotor but sufficiently firmly fixed to remain in place while in use.

Bremont believe that they have solved the engineering problems and are currently testing the watch prior to a planned launch in May, while delivery of the watches is expected late autumn this year. ☺

Nick and Giles English, with the EP120



Further information: www.bremont.com