

Technical Specs

Model: Eterna KonTiki Diver
Movement: Self-winding ETA 2897
Functions: Hours, minutes and seconds; certified chronometer; date; power reserve
Special features: Water resistant to 1,000 m
Dimensions: Diameter, 46 mm; thickness, 16 mm
Case: PVD coated titanium case; dual-directional rotating, non-ratchet stainless steel bezel; spring-loaded buttons; rotating flange with diver mark via bezel.
Price: £2,835



Longines: Legend Diver

Already deemed to be one of the hottest watches of 2007-8, Longines' Legend Diver is a spot-on reissue of a 1960 diving watch with its roots in the Swiss-designed "Trieste" bathyscaphe's pursuit of the depth record in 1953: Longines supplied the on-board instruments. Thus, in keeping with the KonTiki, Longines could have dubbed it the 'Trieste'. Although undeniably retro in its styling, the reborn Legend Diver features sapphire glass, two screw-in crowns and screw-down case back to assure water-resistance to 300 m, and is powered by the L633 automatic mechanical movement with 45 hour power reserve. One of the two crowns activates a rotating internal disc that assists in determining remaining dive time. Luminescent numerals on a lacquered black dial, a 42 mm stainless steel case with screwed back, engraved with a diver, water-resistance to 300 m - both street cred and seabed cred for only £1,060.

Further information: www.longines.com

Eberhard Scafodat 500

Although Eberhard is best known for chronographs with a motoring connection, the company recently launched something special for divers. Surpassing all the qualities mandatory in diving watches, legibility seems to have been the priority. Oversized hands and triangles at the 3/6/9/12 marks render this as readable as it gets... and they make the dial a dead-ringer for that of Eterna's KonTiki. An impressive beast, the automatic Scafodat's steel case measures 44 mm across, while other details include date at the 3 o'clock position, rotating and graduated bi-directional 60 min scale accessed through screw-down crowns positioned at 2 and 4 o'clock, an automatic decompression valve, 3 mm thick anti-reflective sapphire crystal, screw-down back and water-resistance to 500 m. Available on a rubber strap or a bracelet with extender system, the Scafodat sells for around £2,600 in the UK. If you're lucky enough to find a stockist.

Further information: www.eberhard-co-watches.ch



Modern Classics: Eterna KonTiki Diver

If they had wanted to, Rolex could have called the Explorer 'the Everest' and the early Oysters 'the Channel Crossing'. Omega's Seamaster Professional could have been re-named, officially rather than colloquially, 'The Moon Watch'. These represent but three of a select group of watches deservedly associated with genuine exploration, and with real-world adventures. But at least one brand has committed a model name to such an historical achievement, and the event so honoured is a bona fide *Boys' Own*-grade exploit.

Ken Kessler

Eterna's KonTiki pays tribute to an event that, though now fading into the dimmer recesses of the collective consciousness, held the world in a state of awe in 1947. The name itself refers to the raft built by Norwegian explorer and author Thor Heyerdahl, who assembled it with 100 percent authenticity to replicate a voyage from antiquity.

Kon-Tiki was named after the Inca sun god, a fitting figurehead for the mission because Heyerdahl was setting out to prove that a Pre-Columbian society from South America could have settled in Polynesia in the South Pacific. In order to prove conclusively that this was possible, Heyerdahl believed that the voyage would have to be replicated by using an ocean-going craft designed to plans that were recorded by the Spanish conquistadors.

What made this challenge so daring was the insistence that the craft was assembled using only the materials and technologies available at the time in question; this would demonstrate that both the ship design and seamanship of that era were sufficient for a long crossing over open sea, with no safe havens in-between.

Voyage of re-discovery

To affect this, Heyerdahl and his crew went to Peru, where they built what was a rather flimsy-looking raft made of balsa logs and other primitive materials. Heyerdahl and a crew of five set

out on 28 April 1947, staying at sea for over three months. They covered an impressive 4,300 miles before smashing into a reef in the Tuamotu Islands on 7 August 1947. And although some of you might think this is cheating, they *did* have a minimal cargo of modern equipment: a radio and their wristwatches.

Heyerdahl turned the epic into a best-selling book, which lads of a certain decade read with the same fervour that today's remaining handful of literate children might read Lewis Hamilton's biography. In 1952, a documentary film of the expedition won an Academy Award. And in 1958, Eterna, made a version of Heyerdahl's timepiece available to the public.

Heyerdahl knew that he needed some aids to assist in navigating toward Polynesia. And while detractors might argue that using a modern chronometer gave him an edge over the fearless adventurers he set out to emulate, it's also arguable that his predecessors had their own, possibly lost methods of navigating by the stars. Suffice it to say, anyone prepared to cross the Pacific on a raft made from nine balsa logs, with no nails or screws, deserves a little leeway.

Desert island luxury

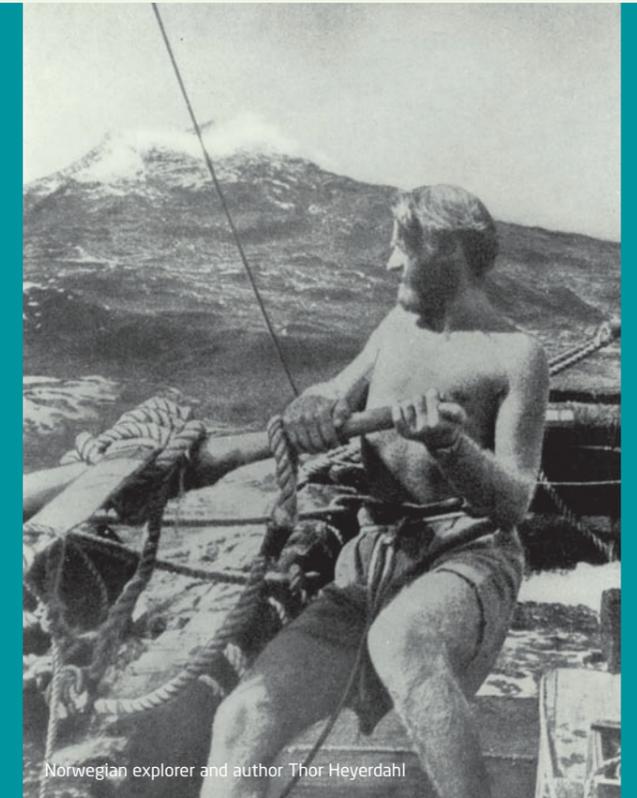
When it came to choosing a suitable watch, Heyerdahl approached Dr Rudolph Schild-Comtesse at Eterna, who - according to noted



Eterna KonTiki Diver



KonTiki



Norwegian explorer and author Thor Heyerdahl

author Gisbert L. Brunner in the definitive work *Eterna: Pioneers In Watchmaking* - 'didn't hesitate long.' He assigned a watchmaking team to develop 'especially waterproof and durable wristwatches' for the journey. And the internal name for the project was 'Kon-Tiki'.

Exactly 50 years after the launch of the watch for sale to consumers, and just over 60 years after Heyerdahl undertook the voyage, Kon-Tiki is an established, core line for Eterna. What started out as a highly legible, rugged, waterproof stainless-steel chronometer of appeal to professionals has yielded interesting variants over the decades.

Even in its original form, the Kon-Tiki 20 of 1958 is an undated design classic. The first commercial model featured a five-row link bracelet, dagger hands and four enormous triangles at the 3/6/9/12 position. (As with my best ever Omega Speedmaster Professional and a gorgeous Jaeger-LeCoultre Memovox, it is to my eternal shame that I let a friend coax me out of a Series 1 Kon-Tiki in superb condition.)

Modern adventure

Eterna has allowed the watch to evolve, with even white-dialled ladies' versions appearing - same case, same bracelet, smaller dimensions. Along the way, they issued models with grey

dials exclusively for the Italian market, certified chronometers, models with a date in an aperture at 3 o'clock, forgettable and bling-y quartz versions and even chronographs. Naturally, collectors are partial to the older models, especially the Super Kon-Tikis of the 1960s and 1970s, with rotating bezels and bracelet extensions to allow them to be worn over wetsuits.

Of late, however, the brand has realised just how iconic the KonTiki is, and that's great news for enthusiasts. Last year, I couldn't resist buying the KonTiki Four Hands, which is an oversized near-replica of the original, with the addition of a short hand from the centre that points to the date on an inner chapter ring. And I'm glad I bought it: the watch garners more compliments from fellow enthusiasts than just about anything in recent memory.

The Diver

But it's the latest KonTiki Diver that truly demonstrated Eterna's on-going commitment to the model line. This radical approach to diving watch design naturally features the key elements of highly visible hands, numerals and indices, along with a power reserve indicator that's marked with a bold yellow arc. Also *de rigueur* in the Noughties is a rubber strap, a light and rugged titanium case and water resistance to 1,000 m.

Where Eterna went the extra, er, fathom was in the case design. The movement is housed in a hinged 'sub-chassis' connected to an outer frame. As Eterna describes the concept, 'the designers took a technically sensible approach by separating the two functions, watch movement protection and wrist attachment, completely from each other. The mechanical movement is sealed watertight in a so-called container, which is securely anchored to the bridge.'

In order to set the time or adjust the rotating inner bezel for elapsed time indication, the inner case must be flipped out to expose the crowns. Once securely shut, the inner section is locked into place, thus preventing any chance of accidental and unwanted re-adjustment. And absolute eye-opener, the new Kon-Tiki diver immediately joined the ranks of other cult diving watches upon its introduction in 2006.

While the meaning of the name might be lost on an audience more familiar with motorcycle-riding adventurers such as Ewan MacGregor and Charlie Boorman, 'Kon-Tiki' is just about as pure a name for an explorer's tool as it gets. Whether or not wearing one will inspire you to catch fish with your bare hands is another matter entirely. 