

# Watchismo's TIMEWARRP



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## #4. Lip-Smacking Good

Stars shine their brightest before they blow up. That's also true for innovative French brand Lip, first established by Emmanuel Lipmann as far back as 1867. As the company began the final stages of an implosion in the mid-Seventies, revolutionary French designers were beamed up to save Lip with a fleet of futuristic wristwatches.

Prince Francois Baschmakoff, an illustrator and package designer, was the first to push Lip into hyperspace, hired by Fred Lipmann before his (forced) exit ended over 100 years of family control. Claude Neuschwander then led the company into wackier territory with designs by the likes of Roger Tallon, Isabelle Hebey, Michel Boyer, Marc Held, Michel Kinn, and Rudi Meyer. Tallon was a successful industrial designer, famously known for the TGV train. His Mach 2000 watches for Lip are the most recognisable of the group and have since become an icon for the company. Most prevalent is the asymmetrical chronograph (Valjoux 7734 movement) with protruding multi-coloured balls for the pushers and crown, which fit inside the spaces cut from a D-shaped case. (Alain Silberstein is clearly a fan.)

Michel Boyer, an interior designer, might have been the most foreshadowing of all. He was responsible for 'Les Candides', an inexpensive line of colorful mechanical plastic watches produced in large numbers for 'expendable' mass production - a whole 10 years before the first Swatch watch was produced.

The only Swiss contributor to Lip's aesthetic experimentalism was Rudi Meyer, a graphics designer and subway cartographer. Producing a wide variety of mechanical and electronic watches for Lip, his square screw-top models evoked cockpit gauges - much like today's Bell & Ross BR01 Instrument, another French brand defined by design. Meyer's series was more traditional though, with round cases and simple dials, but unquestionably bold.

Isabelle Hebey, who turned her pencil to everything from the Honda logo to Concorde's interior, created very modern ladies' watches for Lip. A series of rectangular shapes with a variety



▲ Mach 2000

Valjoux 7734 chronograph designed by Roger Tallon.



▲ Cockpit

Remind you of another French brand's iconic 'Instrument'?

▶ Classic

Another Rudi Meyer model, more in keeping with his classic style than the Cockpit.



◀ Mach 2000 'Night'

Brand-new, quartz Mach 2000 model (£149), from Lip's latest revival.

▼ Les Candides

Michel Boyer's plastic fashion collection, launched 10 years before the Swatch watch's 1983 debut.



of minimal dials and extended and hinged lugs - one of my wife's absolute favourites to wear.

Sadly, Lip shut its doors in 1976 only to be revived a few times in the following decades. Lip has recently returned under new ownership, reintroducing many of its designer models in the 'Revival '70s' and Mach 2000 collection. All are quartz, some are faithful to the original designs, others with liberties taken to appeal to a younger crowd, and many with entirely new looks.

Like Halley's Comet, Lip seems to keep returning to Earth. ○