

Next Action Hero

TechnoMarine's
RoyalMarine is no mere
'vacation watch'...

James Gurney



TechnoMarine's first 'grown-up' collection, RoyalMarine (£2,600) boasts a La Joux-Perret 8150 automatic chronograph movement with big date (base Valjoux 7750), a 44 mm steel case with sapphire caseback, and a complex, well-designed dial in four butch finishes: silver côtes de Genève (main picture, foreground), silver bouchonné (main picture, background), black carbon fibre, or black guilloché (pictured left).

Simple, clear, well designed, apparently well made, with a quality movement and a competitive price. Add a still-chic name to the dial and a few fashionable touches to the design (the screwed-on dial rings, since you ask) and you should set at least a few mouths watering at the local watch boutique. Not forgetting relatively small production numbers, ensuring the watches will not suffer from overkill in the year ahead.

So far, so simple. But what's not entirely obvious is that the brand behind these watches should be TechnoMarine. TechnoMarine has blown hot and cold since it hit the big time in 1999 with its diamond-set steel and gel watches - the original "vacation watch", as company founder Franck Dubarry has it. While TechnoDiamond and its variants sold over 150,000 pieces and the Marvel Comics superhero watches of 2004 became minor cult classics (see Issue 7), other mainstays of the collection have been less well conceived.

All the same, the surprise that this is TechnoMarine is not entirely justified - despite aberrations such as the Maori.

The success of TechnoDiamond spawned a veritable tsunami of copies, particularly in cheaper market segments, and, as night follows day, the flush was busted to no great surprise at TechnoMarine. It was time to move on in another sense too; the concept of single-season luxury has mutated to encompass the numberless 'tribute' watches that take the plastic treatment to the most iconic and desirable of watch forms. So while TechnoDiamond still does well, the competition and changing tastes have made it necessary for Dubarry to look for new directions for the brand.

Enter the RoyalMarine. Smaller numbers, higher quality, harder to copy and more expensive too, as every good brand consultant would advise. Of course, following the approved strategy is one thing and actually creating a product to match the aspiration is another. We think Dubarry and TechnoMarine have it right in this case - from the asymmetric dial layout to the Hublot-esque case. Whether the wider world is ready for a TechnoMarine that is quite so grown up and smart is an entirely separate question. ○