

Stealth

The Chaumet Dandy has fast become a badge of quiet sophistication

Alex Doak



Style

The most telling member of the men's wristwatch collection at Chaumet isn't, in fact, a wristwatch – it is a pocket watch. This elegant anachronism neatly positions 'Dandy' – as the collection is appropriately known – within a rather select group; one that values style and subtlety over status and statement. (After all, unlike the wristwatch, a pocket watch is rarely on display.) It speaks of vintage pedigree and classicism, while avoiding any fusty associations, thanks to its contemporary styling. And thankfully, this theme – a decidedly French one – is redolent throughout the entire Dandy range.

Fashionably, the pocket watch is joined by a set of cufflinks and a couple of understated rings, all taking their design cues from the 'squared-off circle' that frames each Dandy wristwatch. But while these sartorial accoutrements are clearly designed to accompany a tailored ensemble, it's surprising to find a men's wristwatch alluding to such a style so deliberately. As these pages often remind us, cuffs are becoming wider and wider by necessity rather than design, meaning it's always nice to find a slender, dressier offering amid the behemoths of Baselworld. And even nicer to find one revelling in its cultivation, with the Dandy's asymmetric 'Bayadère' stripe running through the straps and dials, just like the satin trim on a tuxedo.

Of course, not even the Belle Epoque jeweller could resist bulking-up its dapper chap, adding two complications last year (see 'Suited & Booted', Issue 16) – clearly enjoying privileged access to the resources of LVMH stablemate Zenith. But as the Boutique Manager handed me the first of several new models on Sloane Street last month, I could see that none of Chaumet's grace has fallen by the wayside in its pursuit of overt, high-

The time-only Dandy, in steel (£1,790 with satin strap and £2,010 with bracelet). Note how the date window and small-seconds chapter ring reflect the 'squared-off circle' case shape.



With mother-of-pearl dial and diamond bezel, this Dandy chronograph (£15,660) still pulls off an air of masculinity. Powered by an ETA 2894 movement.



The Dandy pocket watch (£1,490) - an appropriate anachronism if ever there was one. Could this, and the collection it represents, spell a welcome resurgence in dress watches?

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end watch status. Mother-of-pearl, pink gold and even diamonds all manage to avoid bling-bling, tending instead to that other style cliché of our times: the metrosexual (a term somewhat diluted nowadays, as male vanity becomes ever-more ubiquitous and profitable). The effect is surprisingly masculine though, thanks to the bold, cushion-shaped case - instantly classic in design, and nicely complemented by the subdial chapter-rings and date windows.

What waits to be seen is how far Chaumet is willing to take Dandy at the risk of detracting from its simple brief. With such a strong aesthetic profile, the possibilities are endless (just look at how the similarly shaped Panerai, or the Royal Oak have evolved), which could mean losing sight of the Dandy's unique selling point as an underplayed, sartorial accompaniment. It is difficult to envisage any further complications that wouldn't spoil the watch's all-important lines (please not a tourbillon!). But hopefully, Chaumet being Chaumet, the strength will remain in its subtlety and sophistication. And while the jarring 'Edition Automatique' label on the chronograph dial is slightly over-indulgent, the Parisian marque deserves credit for building a strong range that pays such close attention to details and quality. Too many luxury brands' forays into the watch sector end up becoming licensed-out, entry-level products that bank on the name alone - but here is Chaumet with a watch of its own, which aficionados will want for all the right reasons. Even better that it's a watch that will make you pull your socks up. ○

Further information: Chaumet Boutique, 49 Sloane Street, London SW1X 9SN, Tel: 020 7245 0045, www.chaumet.com



Two new limited-edition Réserve de Marche Dandies - a model that uses a hand-wound Zenith movement. (Left, with diamonds, £12,680; right, in rose gold, £7,080.)

