



Prima Donna

Zenith unveils a sparkling tourbillon for the discerning diva

Maria Doultou

"This is an *haute couture* watch. It is like a dress that needs to be tried on," enthuses Thierry Nataf, President of Zenith at the launch of his latest brainchild last February: Starissime. "I go wild when I am designing for women," he continues, with a twinkle in his eye, passing the watch around. Nataf is not known for understatement, but this time however, he was being modest: the Starissime Star Tourbillon is a showstopper. As is its price tag: £165,000.

Not only does this sparkling timepiece contain the famous El Primero movement but it is also Zenith's first tourbillon for women. What is more, the Star Tourbillon is 'Open' - something of a house speciality - showing the beating heart of the watch through an opening in the dial. As the diva of Zenith's ladies collection, it is resplendently decked out in diamonds - 9.8 carats to be precise.

Get your rocks on

Its 40-mm white-gold case is larger than most men's wristwear, but Nataf insists that it is still a women's evening watch. "It is big, but it doesn't look awkward. It is all in the cut." But despite Nataf's sleight of hand in the design department, this is not a watch for wallflowers. No opportunity to shine is missed, and there are even diamonds between the chronograph push buttons. The characteristic swirling numerals seen on earlier Star models are now dusted with round gems, set off against a serene grey mother-of-pearl dial. Generously cut baguettes surround the bezel and case while five diamonds form a star that sits on top of the tourbillon bridge. Turn the watch over and even the oscillating rotor is set with little stones.

Despite 1/10th second precision, this watch has dispensed with chronograph subdials. In their place are two diamond stars that twirl the seconds and minutes away, in a representation of time, rather than measurement.

Star appeal

At the Starissime's launch earlier this year in Geneva, the 'diva' theme was paramount. In a fantasy that bore the hallmark of Nataf's extravagance and fertile imagination, a young opera singer was the protagonist of the evening. But opera singers excepted, who might be found wearing the Star Tourbillon? After heated debate at QP Towers, one name came forward - "habemus stellam" Catherine Zeta-Jones, the diva with the presence to wear such an opulent creation. A healthy dose of self-confidence from the deep valleys of Wales is the best foil for the big and bold Star Tourbillon. And talking of deep, a husband with these sorts of pockets brings Zeta-Jones closer to our perfect wearer profile. Michael Douglas is besotted with his wife and if we are to believe Nataf that this is "The watch that says 'I love you,'" it may well be too much for Douglas himself to resist.

With a beach house in Mallorca, Catherine should consider practical matters and the technical information confirms that the Star Tourbillon will easily stand a dip in the Med, as it is water resistant to 30 metres. But while the wool and silk Ottoman strap may not do so well, she might be encouraged to forgo reason and follow the advice of Monsieur Nataf: "Without craziness, life would not be life." ◉

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Further information: Zenith UK, Tel: 020 7371 6160, www.zenith-watches.com