



# Postcards

## Back from the edge: QP reports from April's watch fairs

⌚ As ever, the Basel and Geneva trade shows were a mixed bag of hits, misses and plain anomalies. With barely a moment to draw breath, your authors return from the fray with their freshly digested impressions of this year's watch launches. From the most outrageous to the most understated; from the funkiest to the classiest; from the most pointless to the watch that you would actually be willing to kill for - opinions within Team QP are predictably rife.

## Designs of the Times

James Gurney

The kaleidoscope of new watches that pass the eye at Basel and Geneva can be difficult to immediately resolve into distinct patterns and tendencies - first impressions are inevitably dominated by the extremes. Patterns do emerge once the dust has settled, but for now it is still those watches that surprise or even shock that make the strongest impressions.

As might be guessed from this issue's cover, Breguet's La Tradition was the pick of the shows for this editor (see p.28). It is probable that in the long term, the excellent offerings from Vacheron Constantin and Patek Philippe may be more desirable. But the Breguet remains the choice for two reasons, quite apart from the surprise it generated (very few outside Breguet even bothered to claim advance knowledge). Firstly, the watch connects past and future in a way that is entirely unique to Breguet. Secondly, the watch is a radical design in its own right.

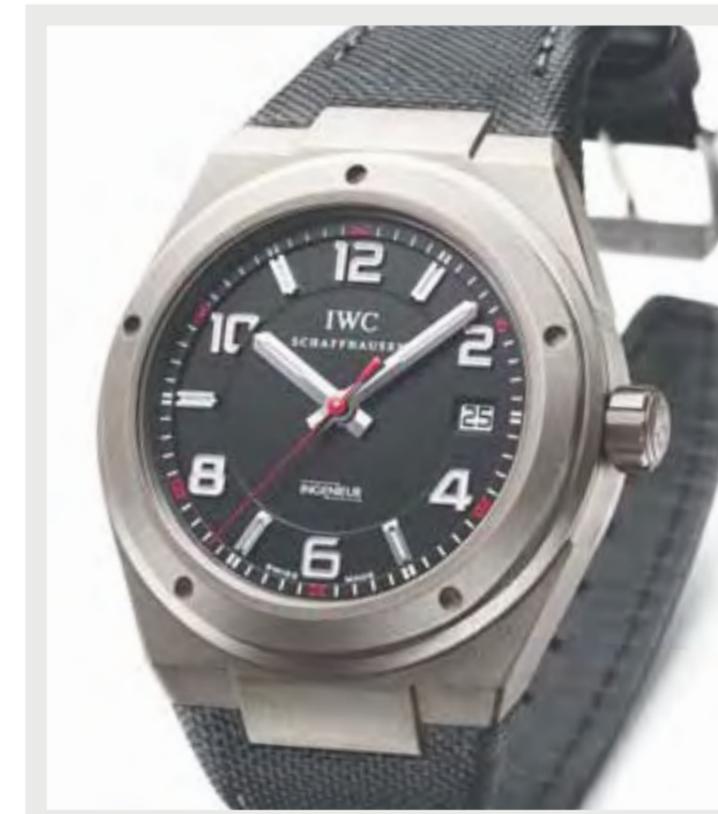
Another surprise was Rolex's new Cellini Prince. Though there had been rumours of the re-appearance of the iconic Prince, I cannot imagine that anyone could have guessed at the manner in which Rolex realised the idea. Opinion as to the success of the project is fiercely divided, making this at least the most interesting Rolex for years.

TAG Heuer's 360 Concept Chronograph had been the subject of some advance leaks, but still managed to surprise in the final design and presentation. Descended from the original 1/100th second stop-watches, the 360 was expected to be quite classic in design, possibly as part of the Carrera collection. However, the 360 translated the concept into something very modern and very cool.

If there is a pattern emerging from the slew of new watches at the shows, then it is that of a new genre of design - the mechanical watch as cutting-edge technology. A contradiction in terms at first sight, numerous designs have emerged that wear high-tech credentials on their dials. Richard Mille, Jaeger-LeCoultre's Compressor watches, IWC, TAG Heuer's 360 and V4 all use a very technical design language that is miles from the classic dress that complicated watches were always presented with. Gérald Genta is a good example whose design is more at home with pocket PCs than pocket-watches.



(Above) New for 2005, the De Bethune DB175 'Subscription' watch, with gold wheels train and white-gold case (€65,500). Features include a perpetual calendar, revolving moonphase and eight-day power reserve. (Below) Bill Prince is a fan of IWC and Mercedes-AMG's "stunning" new Ingenieur watches. This is the Automatic model, with titanium case (€3,500).



## Flair and Functionality

Bill Prince

This year's fair had fewer all-new pieces than last's (so well done TAG Heuer for following last year's V4 with the 1/100th second Carrera 360 chronograph) but then it was more about consolidation and reiterating powerful stories (IWC's saga is once again 'grounded' with the stunning Ingenieur).

Trends were easy to spot this year. Rose gold is the new yellow gold - far less ostentatious and therefore much more in keeping with the more circumspect noughties. Puff Diddy may be a name change away from obscurity but bling is still in - according to Bvlgari, Chopard and some daring non-jewellery brands, diamonds are a New Man's best friend. As expected, the chiming watch is the new tourbillon, and Jaeger-LeCoultre's Grande Réveil sounds lovely. Speaking of which (whisper it), useful functions are the new unnecessary complications. Elsewhere, Van Cleef & Arpels' Monsieur pieces were once again exemplary and it was good to see Jaeger's Memovox movement being put to good use in the new watch for Aston Martin.

Which leads to another increasingly dominant trend: despite strong competition from a flotilla of nautically derived pieces in time for the 32nd America's Cup in 2007 (from the likes of Audemars Piguet, Girard-Perregaux and Corum), automotive collaborations are still in good supply. There are good-looking watches from IWC (the aforementioned Ingenieur in cahoots with AMG), Chanel (the souped-up Superleggera) and Audemars Piquet's tie up with Maserati (see p.54).

Finally, miscellaneous props go to Oris for continuing to offer mechanical movements at an unbeatable price; Dunhill's Tom Bolt for finding flair and functionality in the brand's history for the military-inspired City Drifter and the dual-cased SP-30; and Bell & Ross for answering the question no one thought to ask: "Why can't a wristwatch double as a pendant and a desk clock?". The BR01 is not to everyone's taste, but no one will forget they're wearing one, that's for sure.

Bill Prince is Deputy Editor of GQ magazine



(Above) Rado's Original Chronograph (£750) reinterprets the 1962 DiaStar - the world's first scratchproof watch, made of the famous 'hard metal', combining the hardness of tungsten carbide with the tenacity of cobalt. (Below) Roger Dubuis' new Excalibur collection premieres two new movements with grand complications. This model, the EX 08, contains the RD08 movement - automatic, with double micro-rotor, minute repeater and a flying tourbillon.



(Above) Girard-Perregaux's Richeville Joaillerie. The white-gold case shimmers with 287 diamonds and is set off by an anthracite satin strap. The crown is set with a black onyx cabochon. (Below) The Rolex Prince was arguably the biggest surprise of BASELWORLD, reinterpreting the classic model originally introduced in 1928, now part of the Cellini range. For the first time in a Rolex, the brand new movement is on show through the caseback. Ref. 5441/9 pictured, in 18 ct white gold.



## And the winner is...

Alan Downing

Kitsch is a traditional feature of Swiss watchmaking, and it was gratifying to see it so lavishly displayed at this year's watch fairs. It means there is new money about and lots of it.

Despite a strong showing by favourites Chopard, Frank Muller and Roger Dubuis, this year's *Haute Horlogerie Grand Prix de Kitsch* went to the outsider, Zenith, for its Star Tourbillon chronograph: "A starry dream which combines feminine glamour with the spirit of the *Manufacture*."

Purists shudder at the outrages committed in watchmaking nowadays - notably the deplorable tendency to expose naked column-wheels. It is thus gratifying to see the *Grand Prix de la Plus Haute Tradition Horlogère Indépendante Genevoise* go once again to its usual winner, Patek Philippe, for decorously keeping its column-wheels under a polished cap. Note that the winner does not actually own this 24 billion dollar cash prize.

In other categories, readers of *UhrenWeltPassion* magazine voted overwhelmingly for Maurice Lacroix to get the *Gold Waste-Paper Basket* award for failing to blue its screws to the bottom of their slots. Conversely, Philippe Dufour predictably won the *Best-Finished Watch* prize. His tireless pursuit of perfection ensures your watch will still be finished in the next generation.

Finally, a new category: the *Breathless Drivel Prize* for the longest and least informative press kit, which had the jury in turmoil when it was discovered that all the entries were virtually identical. The announcement that Breguet's 3000-word entry won by a close margin sent the audience delirious. "Breguet's prose is about as emotional as a wet sock," gushed one supporter.

Rolex failed to match last year's shocking Daytona Leopard, but still maintained interest with its new version of the much-loved Prince.



## Absolutely Fabulous

Claire Adler

Dior's Malice Romantic Flowers and the whole Dior Logo flowers collection is adorable and shamelessly girly. It is all about making the watch the epicentre of your outfit and letting the accessories do all the talking - something I am utterly in favour of. Lifting a theme directly from its fashion pieces, Dior also unveiled its Detective collection by John Galliano at BASELWORLD. The full range of clothes and accessories, originally inspired by Christian Dior's own 'Bar Suit' from 1947 is being revisited this year and the watches are simply stunning.

(Above) Dior's "adorable and shamelessly girly" Logo Flowers range was a hit with Claire Adler. (Malice on leather bandage pictured; £495). (Below) Gerald Genta's new Arena Sport Retro €6,900) has frosted windows in the dial, so the luminous coating on the hour indexes can charge before appearing in the opening.

At the more serious end of the horological spectrum, Breguet's Marine 5817 with rubber strap is a beautiful watch - understated and sophisticated. Seamlessly bringing together one of watchmaking's richest histories with a super cool look, it is perfect for lovers of conservative watches wanting to look hip.

Being a huge fan of anything with jumping hours, I also loved Cartier's Tank a Guichet. This head-turner takes its influence from 1920s vintage Cartier and has one window for hours and one for minutes. Franck Muller followed-up the Crazy Hours with the Totally Crazy. The mixed-up dial not only features jumping hours but jumping dates too, proving that, despite the brand's recent corporate upheavals, it still has a great sense of humour.



## In a Spin

**Simon de Burton**

Are watch companies making complications look too simple? That was the thought that kept following me around BASELWORLD and SIHH, as tourbillon fever swept through the halls. If there were lots of tourbillons last year, there are even more this year – all of which seemingly created at the drop of a hat. I bet Abraham-Louis Breguet didn't find it so easy, but then he didn't have the benefits of CAD.

The most interesting one I found was in a suite of rooms at the President Wilson hotel in Geneva, where fledgling brand Jean Dunand (named after the art deco craftsman) was showing the first of its 'Pieces Uniques' – a wristwatch with a one-minute flying tourbillon that orbits the dial once an hour on a revolving movement designed by Christophe Claret.

A Lange and Söhne also impressed with its Lange 1 Time Zone model, as did Jaeger-LeCoultre with its interpretation of the multi-time watch, the Master Compressor Extreme World. Beautifully made and reasonably priced at £7,400.

Rolex failed to match the shock and awe provided last year by its outrageous Daytona Leopard, but still managed to maintain interest by unveiling a new version of the much-loved, rectangular Prince originally conceived during the 1920s but discontinued around 50 years ago. The finish of the pieces seems exceptional, although a Prince to me must have a striped dial, which, sadly, was not to be seen in the new range.

My choice of realistically priced, day-to-day watch, however, would probably be Omega's new Seamaster Planet Ocean, which has the benefits of the Co-Axial escapement and costs below £2,000. I was particularly keen on the version with the orange strap and matching bezel.

Hats off to Patek and its retro Calatrava ref. 5296, which dared to be just a really nice watch.



(Above) JeanRichard's new Paramount Square (£3,880), with an unusual linear power reserve display at half-past one, looks "just right," thinks Jonathan Scatchard. (Below) Maria Doulton takes her hat off to Patek Philippe and its Calatrava ref. 5296G (£10,200), "which dared to be, well, just a really nice watch." Inspired by the ref. 96 from the 1930s.





(Above) The second phase of Tom Bolt's Dunhill overhaul takes its characteristic British eccentricity even further. Inspired by Alfred's famous Motorities products, the power reserve on the new Wheel Watch Petrolhead mimics a petrol gauge (£1,850). (Below) "Sounds lovely" - Jaeger-LeCoultre's new Master Grand Réveil alarm watch (pictured in platinum; £33,900) can also be switched to a 'vibrate' setting, for a more discrete awakening.



Tom Bolt did it again - another range of Dunhill watches so witty that the joke will be lost on anyone who isn't British.

## Rolex on a Roll

Imran Khan

Rolex's premieres this year were both predictable and completely surprising. After the commercial success of the 50th Anniversary Submariner, the 50th Anniversary GMT model was certainly expected (although we believe it should really be the 50+1 model, as the GMT was launched in 1954 according to many experts!). We certainly got a little more than a green bezel here.

Not so expected was the return of the Prince model. So much for Rolex not redoing past models, although, to be fair, the cases *are* completely new. True to the vintage models, the new models feature the duo dial or 'doctors' dial. The original prince was also available in steel and platinum so it is a pity that this current model is subject to the gold-only policy. The sapphire back is a radical move for Rolex, and the movement is finished with the same pattern as the dial.

Whilst most of the attention will undoubtedly focus on the new GMT, what we already have are the most important clues to the direction that Rolex is heading. The new model serves the art of optical illusion splendidly: it looks and feels bigger than it is whilst not surpassing the 40 mm barrier. This illusion is most candidly exploited on the new yellow, pink and white Rolesor Datejust models, which make it almost impossible to believe they are still 36 mm. So Rolex is aware of the growth in the oversize market but has chosen a way to explore it without jeopardising the future, should the big watch fall out of bed. So will we see the changes being introduced on all the professional models? Well, unless the market utterly rejects the new GMT, I expect so. Maybe with the designers being so nostalgic for all features vintage we may even see 'Submariner' in red lettering?

## Back to Basics

Maria Doulton

Beyond the noise and horological pyrotechnics on display, what stood out at Basel and Geneva this year was that a few felt brave enough to offer a nice watch, good at simply telling the time.

Back from the fray, the purists still stand out like beacons. For sheer self-confidence, hats off to Patek Philippe and its retro Calatrava ref. 5296, which dared to be, well, just a really nice watch. Breguet's La Tradition brought a quiet elegance to the table, often forgotten amidst all the noise.

Over the years, Rado has singlehandedly wedged itself into the monochrome, futuristic corner, before surprising everyone this year with a funky, brightly coloured Original chronograph, fresh out of its 1970s archives. This shows a new direction for the house, which must surely be smarting from Chanel's use of its sole differentiating factor: hi-tech ceramic.

More than ever, women have so much to choose from. Patek even commented that men are now asking for women's models. How the tables have turned! Since the rise in complicated watches for women, I welcome the arrival of workhorses - albeit elegant ones - in the form of mid-range mechanical chronographs. See Bvlgari's Ergon with its colour mother-of-pearl dials and Chopard's outsized Tycoon. All are *bona fide* mechanical movements in stylish casings; practical enough to wear everyday, yet offering the satisfaction of a mechanical timepiece.

Girard-Perregaux is only using sapphire casebacks for its manufacture-made movements, showing up the ridiculous trend for crystal-backing any watch one echelon above quartz. And it was at G-P that I saw one of my favourite watches in another guise: the ladies' Richeville, set with diamonds.

Carlos Dias' claim that the Roger Dubuis RD 08 movement is "Accurate to one thousandth of a second" was not the best received assertion of the week, but as Dubuis has the best chocolates in Geneva, who am I to quibble with a technicality?



(Above) The Panerai Luminor 1950 Chrono Flyback (£5,200), "reflecting true 'Panerismo' better than anything the brand has done since the takeover," according to Ken Kessler. (Below) From Anonimo's new Dino Zei collection, the 'Nemo' chronograph, with characteristic window in the caseback.



## Brand Integrity

Jonathan Scatchard

Top of my list (and many others') is Breguet's La Tradition. The master himself was famous for making the world's finest pocket watches and this wristwatch perfectly combines both wrist- and pocket-born disciplines. The gilded movement is just like looking into the back of a great quality pocket watch. One could glance at this watch several times before noticing the time!

After much rumour and speculation, the next generation of Patek's 30-year-old Nautilus was finally unveiled to gasps of relief. The new ref. 3712/1A moonphase is the perfect development of an iconic watch. Usually I would say "if it ain't broke don't fix it," but this takes the watch to an even higher level of desirability!

Other highlights included the JeanRichard Paramount Square Linear Power Reserve - a clever watch that just looks 'right'. In a similar vein, Omega's Museum is a faithful interpretation of a classic from the brand's back catalogue. Rolex should take note, my least favourite April launch being its resurrected Prince. Rumoured to be on re-release for many years, I could not wait to see a new version of perhaps the finest vintage watch ever. It was a total let down; just a rectangular, rather clumsy watch. Where are the flared case and tiger stripes?



(Above) One of the biggest launches at BASELWORLD, and hot on the heels of last year's 'V4' headline-grabber, TAG Heuer's Calibre 360 Concept Chronograph won your Editor, James Gurney's heart for translating the concept into something modern and cool.  
(Below left) The hotly anticipated evolution of Patek's Nautilus ref. 3712/1A, with new moonphase and power reserve features (£12,150).

The 360 was expected to be quite classic in design, but TAG translated the concept into something very modern and very cool.



## Group Mentality

Ken Kessler

It is impossible to mention a mere handful of memorable pieces when no visitor could possibly leave the Basel and Geneva events without lusting after a dozen or more. For me, this year, it was not individual models that were memorable, so much as whole collections.

### Classiest Range: De Bethune

In less than four years, this brand has gone from birth to true manufacture. Put one on your wrist, and you will never want to remove it: artistry, workmanship, technology - it is what *haute horlogerie* is all about. Make mine the single-button chronograph.

### Most Intelligent Collection: Jaeger-LeCoultre

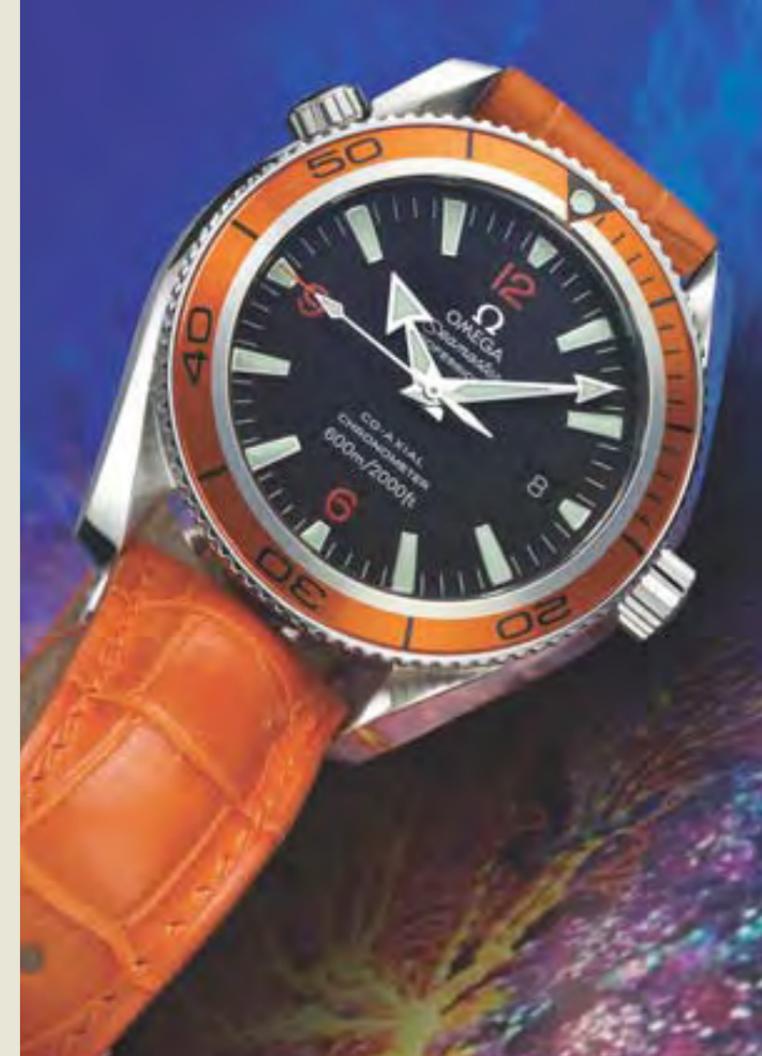
Jaeger, for the most part (there was, after all, a diamond-encrusted Reverso), showed how it is simply one of the greatest manufactures by eschewing nonsense. You just know you are handling quality timepieces, especially with the Master Compressor Chronograph.

### Best New Editions: Patek Philippe Calatravas

Patek visitors' jaws dropped for the new split-seconds chrono, but for me it was the models at the other end of the price scale: Patek took its most venerable model and gave it a makeover that defies time. The Calatrava ref. 5296 with white dial, inspired by the observatory models of yore, is the most perfect example of a watch for all occasions.

### Best New Series: Anonimo's Dino Zei Collection

Anonimo shocked fans of its butch diving watches by hiring one of the industry's Top Guns: Dino Zei, former boss of Panerai from the 1970s right up to its purchase by Richemont in 1997. You want credibility? It does not get more real than this. My personal favourite moment was walking into Anonimo, smack into my hero.



(Above) Offering the Co-Axial escapement in a classic model, Omega's colourful Seamaster Planet Ocean for just £1,675 - Simon de Burton's favourite "day-to-day" watch from April's fairs.

### Watches I Would (Almost) Kill For: Panerai 1950s

Panerai countered Anonimo's scoop by unveiling its first in-house movement, and it is a monster. This delicious cake has been iced with the most sublimely 'correct' pieces the brand has ever issued. Collectors will soon be scratching each others' eyes out over the new Slytechs, but the 1950s reflect true 'Panerismo' better than anything the brand has done since the takeover.

### Funkiest New Range: Dunhill

Tom Bolt et al. did it again - another range of watches so witty that the joke will be lost on anyone who isn't British. But it is not just style: Bolt also came up with sublime features and functions, such as a case made of metal and ceramic. And who can possibly resist a power reserve meter masquerading as a fuel gauge?!

### Most Pointless:

Anything covered with diamonds containing quartz.