



Technical Specs

Movement: Cartier quartz calibre 057

Dial: Silver grained

Crystal: Cambered sapphire

Water resistance: 30m

Case: 18-ct yellow gold; circular-grained crown, set with a sapphire cabochon

Patek Philippe Twenty~4

Patek Philippe's Twenty~4 is that rare thing - a product that redefined its maker, changing not only the public perception, but the entire dynamic of the company. An instant bestseller, the Twenty~4 became the watch women wanted - whether in restrained but elegant everyday form or multi-stoned sugar-daddy gift form. From the 'entry-level' 4910/10A at £4,865 to seriously expensive platinum and diamond versions, the Twenty~4 looks set to become a lasting classic.



Vacheron Constantin 1972

For the men - although there are plenty of feminine models in the line-up - we are taken by Vacheron Constantin's handsome, asymmetrical 1972. It actually looks like a Tank that's been elongated and squeezed - a wry take on the formalism of the Cartier. Not that Vacheron has to bow to others for inspiration, let alone longevity; when the phrase below your logo states 'Depuis 1755', seniority is a given. The choice in the 1972 family includes hand-wound mechanical movements or quartz, plain or gem-encrusted, in most metals and with bracelets or straps. We recommend the manual-wind 'Large' ref. 37510 model in yellow or pink gold, with silvered dial, without diamonds, on a strap, from £7,000. Pictured is the ladies' white-gold ref. 25521, set with a total of 270 diamonds and with black satin strap (£13,300).

Modern Classics: Cartier Tank



Such wonderful irony: a watch named after a fearsome piece of military hardware evolving into the quintessence of elegance. Cartier's Tank - beaten only by its stable mate, the Santos for sheer longevity - was so-named for its shape's resemblance to the footprint of the armoured vehicle that made its debut in WWI. It was conceived in 1917, reaching what you could call a definitive version around 1919 - visually indistinguishable from current offerings. And of the latter there are plenty to choose from: the Tank has spawned as many variants (and fakes) as the Rolex Oyster.

Ken Kessler

It is a watch that speaks of an era when grace and sophistication were mandatory qualities for *haute société*, or even those merely blessed with both deep pockets and taste. Replace 'bling bling' with 'chic'; Victoria Beckham with Charlotte Rampling, David with Michel Platini and you have some idea of the values the Tank represents. If maturity appeals to you, it predates both the Jaeger-LeCoultre Reverso and the Patek Philippe Calatrava, with uninterrupted production. Above all, the original, 'plain vanilla' Cartier Tank is so understated and visually perfect that there is no occasion for which it is unsuitable - except, perhaps, the MOBO awards.

Over the decades, it has been fitted with numerous movements, including those made by Jaeger-LeCoultre, and it sired variations in case dimension and shape from as early as 1921. A perfect example is the elongated edition, the Tank Cintrée, which lives on in today's curved Tank Americain. Tanks have been diamond- or gem-clad, have worn straps or bracelets and enjoyed complications including moonphase and chronograph functions. There are models with two dials for dual time-zone indication and there are skeleton editions. The Tank Basculante has a flip-over case while the ladies' Baguette of 1931 has a bezel that serves as the folding buckle for the strap. Who would have imagined that a small, square watch with only hours and minutes indication could have generated so many variants? For our purposes, though, it is the standard model that we are honouring. And whether you covet new or vintage, it will not be a simple decision. This author recalls visiting one

of London's finest vintage watch dealers a few years ago and noticing a tray just for Cartier Tanks. There were nine or 10 pieces, all yellow gold on black straps, all regular models, all in near-perfect condition. And yet the prices ranged from under £1,000 to over £5,000. It took an expert's knowledge of the movements, near-invisible detail variations and age and rarity to know what was what. The ultimate? Probably 1997's 150th anniversary model in platinum with mechanical movement, of which only 15 were made. For the modern customer, the models to consider will be the Tank Solo or Tank Louis Cartier (pictured) commencing from £995 for a small, quartz version.

If there is a downside to Tank ownership, it is no different from the stigma attached to most Rolexes. Just as the popularity of the latter amongst the *nouveau riche* should not obscure the fact that Rolex makes superb watches, so should the potential owner banish thoughts of Cartiers on the wrists of past-it rock stars. Instead, recall that Tanks have graced the wrists of Yves Montand, Alain Prost, Alain Delon, Andy Warhol, Jackie Kennedy Onassis, the aforementioned Ms Rampling and Warren Beatty.

Finally, if you are one of those dazzled or simply amused by the appearance of watches in films, such as Bond's Submariner or The Terminator's AP, it does not get much cooler than this: for his last film role, in 1926's *The Sheik*, Rudolph Valentino insisted on wearing his own Cartier Tank. ○

Further information: Cartier UK, Tel: 020 8080 0330, www.cartier.com