



Bank On It

Linde Werdelin's clip-on/clip-off digital instrument bank will keep you fully equipped, from the slopes to the cocktail lounge

Simon de Burton

In recent years, an eclectic range of products produced by firms such as Tissot and the Finnish precision instrument manufacturer Suunto have become *de rigueur* among ski fans, climbers and scuba divers the world over. By providing a host of additional data, ranging from altitude to depth, these wrist-worn electronic devices have proved a big step up from the digital watches with 100th-of-a-second timers and calculator features that once seemed so ingenious to schoolboys and adults alike.

But for those who appreciate a wristwatch as much for its aesthetic appearance as for functionality, these never really cut the mustard. Now, however, a Danish team claims to have hit upon a design that combines the best of mechanical watchmaking with a cutting-edge databank, without compromising horological integrity or electronic potential.

Former investment banker Jørn Werdelin and his business partner Morten Linde – a leading product designer who has worked with Bang and Olufsen and watch companies TAG Heuer, Georg Jensen and Mexx – expect customers to take delivery of the first examples of the new brand this summer.

Called the Linde Werdelin 'Bifometer', the core of the product is a high-quality, Swiss-made mechanical wristwatch, designed to accept a range of clip-on/clip-off, 3.5 cm² electronic screens, which weigh just 40 g.

Known as 'instruments', the detachable screens have been designed to the themes of 'land', 'sea' and 'air'. They will be capable of recording, a bank of data, from the wearer's heartbeat, to oxygen intake, ambient temperature variations, altitude, weather conditions, speed and even a history of the day's activities.

Linde Werdelin's mechanical Bifometer watch allows you to attach and detach a sophisticated digital 'instrument', which displays your physical performance on a hi-res display.



The red variant of the Bifometer watch, sans instrument. This is a rendering of one of the first 222 'Founders' Watches'.

Computer renderings of Linde Werdelin's forthcoming instrument.

Clearly targeted at outdoor pursuits fans and professional sportsmen, the Bifometer is said to take the concept of the wrist-worn, electronic instrument to a new level. However, for horological aficionados, perhaps the best feature of the Bifometer is that, at the end of the day's activities, one can instantly detach the instrument, leaving behind an elegant analogue wristwatch.

Striking a balance

Werdelin, 40, enjoyed a successful financial career with the major global banks Morgan Stanley and Lehman Brothers before he and Linde decided to concentrate purely on the Bifometer project in 2002.

"My family had a watch and jewellery business so I have always had an interest in horology," explains Werdelin. "But what really inspired the Bifometer is my love of skiing. In 1999, I bought one of the new Suunto sports watches which were capable of recording a limited amount of data but were entirely quartz digital. The following year, I was back on the slopes and I noticed that almost everyone seemed to be wearing one. I loved what the watch could do, but I don't want to wear a black plastic watch all day - I want to wear a watch that I like and can wear all the time."

"Whatever anyone says, I just don't believe that digital displays and traditional analogue watch dials go together," persists Werdelin. "They are a total compromise, and the small amount of available space means the functionality in both areas is severely limited."

"The Bifometer, however, is intended to eradicate the compromise by being two totally separate items, designed to work together. Its design is unique; the clip-on, clip-off concept is unique; the user

"What inspired the Bifometer is my love of skiing. In 1999, I bought one of the new Suunto sports watches - I loved what it could do, but I want to wear a watch that I also like aesthetically and can wear all the time."

interface is unique; the presentation is unique. This is a powerful computer which becomes part of your wrist."

The Bifometer instruments can be left unused for months (they are ready to go as soon as they are re-attached to the watch) but, cleverly, if an instrument has been stored for more than three months it automatically offers the wearer an on-screen 'refresher' course in how to use it! In addition, the screen uses the same 128x128-pixel resolution as a laptop computer, providing high-quality graphics.

Made to accept a 1 MB wireless communication system, the instruments have potential value to professional athletes and amateur fitness fanatics such as runners and cyclists whose exact heart rate, oxygen intake and calorific burn can then be relayed instantly to a trainer.

Initial run

The undeniably striking Bifometer mechanical wristwatch that carries the instruments was designed and developed in Denmark and Switzerland and will be assembled entirely in Switzerland using quality manufactured components. The basic model - without the instrument - will retail at just below £2,000, with a more sophisticated dual-time-zone version (known as the Two Timer) costing around £2,500. Cases will be made from steel or a combination of gold and coloured aluminium and several different straps will be available.

Initially, customers will only be able to purchase the 'land' instrument, which will be alloy-cased and available in a range of three different colours (red, black or plain). Each watch will be supplied in a tough, practical 'toolbox' capable of holding and protecting the watch, plus an entire range of instruments, for travel and storage purposes.

The first 222 watches produced will, in homage to the Bifometer's dual capability, be reserved as 'Founders' Watches' for the first 222 Linde Werdelin customers. These privileged few will get the land instrument and accessories free of charge.

So far, the fledgling company has already taken more than 100 firm orders for the first models. The watch is due to go on general sale in Britain, Italy, Switzerland, Japan, France and the US in the summer. From the slopes of Aspen to the depths of the Red Sea to the social heights of the ambassador's reception, this year's essential accessory might just prove to be an intriguingly cubic yet super-sophisticated object, married to a watch whose integrity thankfully remains intact. ○

Black variant of the 'Founders Watch'.



Further information: For an information pack, contact Linde Werdelin on 020 7727 6529 or see www.lindewerdelin.com