



The QP Bookshelf Part 6:

Single Brands

QP continues to charter the swathe of brand histories populating the watch book market

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Try though we may to keep an eye on the expenditure of your bibliophilic passions, there is no escaping the fact that acquiring this month's quartet of titles will be costly. They are either intrinsically pricey (like the new single-model Rolex book promised to you last month) or they may involve trawling eBay. Sorry folks.

Although we are grouping books according to type – this month's Bookshelf plunders brand histories – we could not resist including the Rolex Submariner title, despite it dealing with a single model. This is because it could prove to be the hottest watch book of 2004, doubtless thanks to the subject matter alone. Should it have turned out to be decidedly below par, it would still enflame the lust of the single most passionate, borderline-psychotic breed of collector in the entire watch world. Desperate Rolex collectors are not a people I would challenge during any heated auction. Just wait until they see the recently published history of the Daytona...



Girard-Perregaux: Horloger Par Vocation

Hardback, 90 pages.
Published by Girard-Perregaux SA, 1991.

One of the strangest, yet most desirable watch books of recent years, this trilingual (including English!), landscape-format history of Girard-Perregaux declares no single author nor even an ISBN number. In addition to telling the G-P saga, it is also a catalogue of the range as it was in the early 1990s. It clearly had a promotional purpose: the copy examined for this issue of *QP* came in a slipcase with an eight-page folder concerning a limited edition chronograph (999 pieces) that G-P produced for Lancia. The folder also indicates that the book was issued in a limited run of 5,000 copies.

Those of an historic bent will note that it marks two histories, for G-P celebrated its 200th birthday in 1991, while Lancia was celebrating its 85th in 1992. Alas, this means that car enthusiasts as well as watch collectors will crave copies, so the amount it would fetch from a specialist dealer is anyone's guess. Suffice to say, given the page count, the history portion is brief but cogent and the photos are superb. But a marque as grand as Girard-Perregaux clearly merits a new, definitive history. After all – as with Lange below – a lot has happened to the company since '91.



A Lange & Söhne: The Watchmakers of Dresden

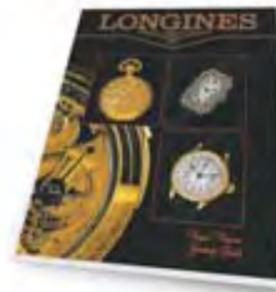
By Reinhard Meis

Hardback, 383 pages. Price: ca.£100
Published by Callwey & Co/Antiquorum Editions, 1997. ISBN 2-940019-23-1

Some would argue that A Lange & Söhne now produces the best watches on the planet. This slip-cased book arrived not long after the re-launch of the brand, as a way to convey to serious clients the *genuine* history the brand can call on (as opposed to the bogus links to numerous brands of unrelated historical names). The story is told in an absolutely thorough manner, with pages reproduced from the founder's notebooks, facsimile reproductions of a vast amount of documentation and more. To the company's credit, the book does not gloss over World War II (you should see, for example, how VW dealt with Rolls-Royce's wartime effort when it briefly owned the brand) and the tale of the rebirth is worthy of a feature film. This ranks as one of the best books of its type.

Further information:

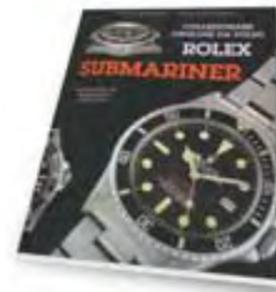
For more information on any of these books, contact Rita Shenton Horological Booksellers, 142 Percy Road, Twickenham TW2 6JG. Tel: 020 8894 6888, Fax: 020 8893 8766

**Longines**

By *Daria Marozzi & Gianluigi Toselli*

Hardback, 388 pages.
Published by Edizioni Giada SRL, 1990.

Despite its age, this wonderful book, with Italian, French and English text, is an absolute must-have, for reasons threefold. Firstly, it is as ideal a work as you could want, because the authors clearly enjoyed Longine's approval – hence access to the archives (Rolex, are you listening?). Secondly, it is well-balanced, the authors having squeezed in just the right amount of history, hardcore technical info and numerology accompanied by a dazzling array of photos and watch values (admittedly only valid in 1990). Thirdly – and most importantly – it reminds collectors that Longines was once amongst the most innovative brands, producing watches that rank alongside the finest and most desirable of all time, including the various Weems models and the chronographs from the 1950s. Considering the company's masters recently treated Tissot to a truly wonderful book, would someone at the Swatch Group please authorise an update of this masterpiece?

**Collezione Orologi Da Polso: Rolex Submariner**

By *Guido Mondani and Lele Ravagnani*

Hardback, 306 pages. Price: €210
Published by Guido Mondani Editore & Ass., SRL, 2003. ISBN 89-900514-8-5

Hard to say which hurt more: paying for this monster or carrying it in my hand-luggage back from Milan. Uniform with Mondani's long-running series of Rolex guides – co-produced with Antiquorum's Osvaldo Patrizzi – the co-author is now a top authority and collector who is already at work on a sequel covering the chronograph and moonphase models.

Alas, this sublime volume is already the subject of controversy. One expert posited that some of the watches are fakes – as in 'made up'. If true, then it undermines the book's worth as a definitive guide. But I am amongst those who argue that every Rolex book is intrinsically flawed, if only because of Rolex's lack of involvement. Instead, enjoy this book as a visual feast so lavish that it borders on the pornographic. Of the few 'cons', the rarities are so rare that collectors are unlikely to come across them outside of an auction; and the book is only available in Italian, which may deter those looking beyond the sumptuous illustration. But do not ignore the one key 'pro': it is a simply overwhelming achievement; a book chronicling the Submariner in all its forms. As with other Mondani titles, it includes a separate guide with market values, which the company updates periodically. My colleagues' reservations aside, this book is worth every last Euro.