

# Anglo Time

## Radford Templar's crusade to revive English watchmaking

Simon de Burton



Paul Suchet is a man with a mission. In fact, two missions: the first is to put English horology back on the map and the second is to create a watch brand that will be regarded as a serious rival to Switzerland's finest.

These are bold ambitions, particularly considering that Suchet's background in horology is, by his own admission, non-existent. Nevertheless, he has gone right in at the deep end with his Radford Templar watches, which start at a stellar £15,000, rising according to the client's requirements. Once he has found some people to buy them that is...

### Tailor-made

With no web site, no advertising and a decidedly low-key marketing campaign, Suchet, an Indian-born financier, is relying on shock, awe and word of mouth to convert us to the entirely bespoke Radford Templar brand. And it is a bit of an eye-ful.

So far, eight have been made for demonstration purposes, although the whereabouts of the first is unknown after it was ripped from Suchet's wrist in Paris. The mechanical examples use the ubiquitous Valjoux 7750 movement, but it is the craftsmanship applied to the cases and dials that he hopes will attract buyers.



(Left) The front of the white-gold Victoria Beckham watch, with the '7' – David Beckham's shirt number – picked out in England red.

(Below) The back of the minute-repeater chronograph, with lion's head engraving, characteristic of all Radford Templar watches.

particularly proud of the fact that he has removed the standard Valjoux rotor and replaced it with a platinum version "engraved, pierced and inlaid with red and yellow gold to give the perfect weight and dynamics, so the movement works at its optimum capabilities." Something the Swiss must have overlooked.

One of the completed Radford Templar watches I was shown carries a slightly distorted, enamelled image of Victoria Beckham on the back complemented by the number seven of her husband's soccer shirt, an engraved Cross of St George and of course a lion's head. It was produced, naturally enough, with the intention of getting it onto David's wrist, but so far this magical piece of product placement has yet to be achieved. If Suchet pulls it off however, Radford Templar might just be the next big thing. And the Swiss had better watch out. ○



### Best of British

Along with his silversmith business partner Paul Jones, Suchet wants to use the watches to showcase British talent. "The intention is to revive English craftsmanship – I was horrified when I discovered that the names of the great British makers such as Graham and Arnold now belong to a French company. So I decided to produce a watch using English chasers, enamellers, engravers and dial makers."

And that name: Radford Templar. What inspired it? Apparently, the 'Radford' bit was borrowed from someone Suchet met in 1962 called Hugh de Crecy Tempest Radford, "who wore a green corduroy jacket, Clarks desert boots and drove a burgundy MG with a leather bonnet strap." Suchet reversed the order of the words and converted the Tempest bit to Templar, "after thinking long and hard back to the time of Richard the Lion Heart and the Knights Templar." It does not come much more English than that.

### All in the detail

The lion is a recurrent theme in the watches produced so far, which are generally busy with shotgun-style engravings of floral motifs and chased initials adorning every part of the case, from the bezel to the lugs to the crown. Suchet is

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