



The QP Bookshelf Part 5:

# Single Brands

QP suggests a choice crop of recent volumes that document the rise and occasional falls of some of the world's biggest watch brands

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Single-brand histories range from small 'freebie' paperbacks given away by retailers to lavish, slip-cased works of art. The trouble with all of them is that they go out of date with the next run of new models. But that should never deter you: once you own the histories of your choice, you can keep them up-to-date just by collecting every annual catalogue. That is why I have no hesitation in recommending the books I have chosen for this instalment of the QP Bookshelf. Only two are current and a couple are out of print, but all of them are definitive studies on their respective subjects. At the very least, they will give a basic history of the brand; at worst, they may be so detailed that you overdose on information.



### Breitling Timepieces: The History of a Great Brand of Watches, 1884 to Present

By Benno Ritsher

Hardback, 176 pages. Price: £39.95  
Published by Schiffer, 2000. ISBN 0-7643-1006-2

Now in its second edition, this is more of a well-annotated collector's guide than a history *per se*. Although there is plenty to read, the bulk of the space is devoted to fantastic photos, helping you identify just about any model you can imagine, while no less than 17 pages give you the serial and reference numbers of every Breitling movement and calibre. If you own a vintage Breitling and cannot date it with this book, then it must be a fake. One particularly nice touch, if – like me – you hate having to refer to an appendix in the midst of your reading, is the inclusion of estimated current values next to each photo caption. Of course, they have no bearing on reality, but they do amuse (who prices the stuff in these books? Gordon Brown?). If Breitling in particular or chronographs in general float your boat, this book is essential.



### IWC – International Watch Co. Schaffhausen

By Hans-F Tölke and Jürgen King

Hardback, 238 pages.  
Published by Verlag Ineichen, 1987. ISBN 3-906500-15-2

Alas, this book is probably out of print now – the sort of thing you have to trawl for on eBay. I had to borrow the IWC UK office copy to include it, but it is too righteous a book to ignore. OK, so it misses out on all the juicy stuff like the return of the Portuguese, the myriad derivatives of the Mk 11 and even the assorted grand complications. But any tale that begins with a Yank named Florentine Ariosto Jones is bound to be a fantastic read. Speaking of bound, the slip-cased copy I fondled was number 73 of the extremely rare white leather-bound edition. Expect to pay at least £200–£300 for a mint copy without the hides, and whatever the market will bear for the leather clad version.

**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

**Omega Designs: Feast For The Eyes***By Anton Kreuzer*

Hardback, 224 pages. Price: £49.95  
Published by Schiffer, 1996. ISBN 0-7643-0058-X

Why do I love this book so much? Because it strikes a perfect balance between a history and a collector's guide; not so over-the-top as to make it unaffordable; and not so big that you need a table to support it while you read. From Louis Brandt's beginnings this book only covers the story up to the early 1990s, thus begging a second edition; if only because it misses out on some of the most significant points in the company's history, including the arrival of the George Daniels-designed co-axial movement, the rise of The Swatch Group to its current monolithic girth, the arrival of the Museum series, the continued success of the Speedmaster and Seamaster lines and more. But despite that its cut-off point is a decade ago, it is still worth every penny.

**Tissot: 150 Years Of History 1853-2003***By Estelle Fallet*

Hardback, 352 pages. Price: ca.£75  
Published by Tissot, 2003. ISBN 2-940333-09-2

Not only is this proof that you do not have to be an exclusive high-end brand to produce a book to die for, it is also a case of how to drive punters crazy. From what I can gather, this anniversary publication was given away with Tissot's 150<sup>th</sup> special anniversary model watches such as the Anniversary Chronograph, while purchasers of lesser Tissot watches in 2003 received a cute but bizarre paperback history that reads like a novel. Anyway, this book is – theoretically – available from any Tissot retailer, but I cannot find out the price, or anyone who stocks it. But it's worth the chase, for this is one of the most comprehensive, readable and beautifully produced watch titles I have ever seen. Plenty of photos, full colour on every page, matte lamination on every photo, serial numbers, details of movements – this is how it should be done. Check out the 1917 Banana watch and learn where today's hot brands get their ideas. This book is an absolute delight. It has even given me cause to covet a few vintage Tissots.