

THE HOT, HOT, HOT MARKET FOR MEN'S VINTAGE WATCHES

BY JULIE CARTER

'AS RECENTLY AS THE 1980s, TO BE A WATCH COLLECTOR WAS TO COLLECT 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY POCKET WATCHES. THREE DECADES LATER, THE BRANDED WRISTWATCH - THE NUMBER ONE ACCESSORY OF THE 21ST CENTURY ALPHA MALE - IS UNDISPUTEDLY KING.'



The watch companies were no strangers to product placement. Sean Connery wore a Rolex Submariner in several James Bond movies of the 1960s, including in key underwater scenes. Steve McQueen was a genuine fan of the same watch - in 2009 his personal Submariner sold at auction for US\$234,000. McQueen was also associated with the Heuer Monaco Chronograph, but only through movies; unlike the Rolex, he never wore the Heuer Monaco off screen. Paul Newman began wearing the Rolex Daytona in 1972. He only ever wore it on a 3-piece military Fatstrap... and his endorsement made the Daytona one of the most popular watches in the world.

IT'S CURRENTLY FASHIONABLE FOR 40 TO 50-SOMETHINGS TO BUY A WATCH THAT WAS MADE IN THE YEAR THEY WERE BORN...

These are the words of journalist Roland Arkell writing in the June 20, 2015 issue of the UK trade newspaper *Antiques Trade Gazette*. He goes on to say that vintage or modern mechanical wristwatches are one of the world's few universal currencies, and are today collected across six continents.

But it wasn't that long ago - think back to the 1970s and '80s - when the so-called 'quartz crisis' seemed to be signaling the death of the mechanical watch-making industry. So what happened?

In fact, the first mass marketed quartz battery powered watch had been developed in 1954, when Swiss engineer Max Hetzel developed an electronic wristwatch called the Accutron. Marketed by Bulova in 1960, it was

launch of the Swatch brand in 1983 was marked by bold new styling and design. The quartz watch was redesigned and Switzerland was once again established as a major player in the wristwatch market.

But it's not the Swatch watch that collectors are looking to buy today. Instead it's the vintage or modern mechanical watches that fell from favour so heavily - and are now back at the top.

"There is greater demand than supply," said watch auctioneer Aurel Bacs, the former head of the watch department at Christie's Geneva and who now works in partnership with Phillips, in an interview with Arkell for the *ATG*. It's an indication of the growth in the market that in the decade Bacs was at Christie's, from 2003-13, sales rose from US\$8m to US\$127m.

Underpinning the market, writes Arkell, is the excellent 'value retention' of iconic designs by marques such as Rolex (comfortably the number one brand) and Patek Philippe, whose timepieces were the subject of a remarkably popular exhibition at London's Saatchi Gallery earlier this year. "The market craves these two names in the same way that most sports car buyers will choose a Ferrari or a

a game-changer. Incredibly accurate, the Accutron was the forerunner to the incredibly cheap Japanese quartz movement that in turn created the quartz crisis that saw a decimation of the Swiss watch industry, which until that time enjoyed around 90% of the world watch market.

The quartz technology was offered to the Swiss manufacturers but they refused to embrace the change. Others were less reticent, and in 1970 the first mass-produced quartz watches with analog display were introduced. Within eight years, the quartz watch had overtaken the mechanical watch in popularity and the Swiss watch industry was in crisis. By 1984, two-thirds of the Swiss watchmakers had closed their doors and the number of employees in the industry had dropped from 90,000 to a low of 30,000.

And then came the Swatch watch. Originally intended to regain the entry-level market share lost to the aggressive Japanese companies of the 1970s and early 1980s, the

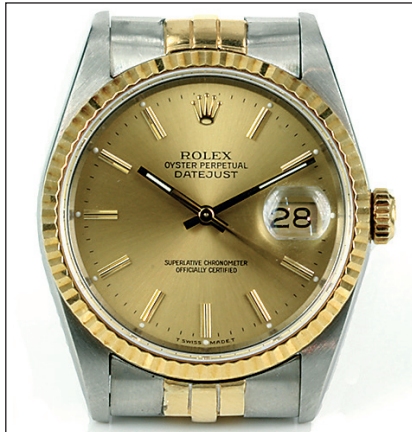
Porsche before anything else," notes Arkell. "In particular, well-preserved Rolex sports models - the Explorers, Daytonas, Submariners bought by their original owners as 'tools' to aid their working day - have proved a spectacular investment."

He offers as an example the Rolex Tudor Oyster Prince 'Big Crown' Submariner c.1959 that was auctioned in the UK in June this year. Ten years ago it would have been possible to buy this gently aged watch, complete with original strap and box, for around \$3000. Today it carries an estimate of \$30,000-40,000.

"The good-looking and high quality chronographs produced by Universal Geneve into the 1970s are currently riding a wave of enthusiasm," notes Arkell. So, too, the wide range of military issues by middle-market Swiss brands such as Longines, and Smiths of Clerkenwell. And there is a premium to be paid for a market-fresh watch in unrestored condition. "These watches show signs of wear and tear but have not endured the regular



WHILE CORPORAL CLIVE NUTTING WAS A PRISONER OF WAR HE ORDERED A REPLACEMENT ROLEX OYSTER 3525. REMARKABLY, ONE WAS DELIVERED TO NUTTING AT THE PRISON CAMP STALAG LUFT III. THE ROLEX WAS USED TO TIME THE MOVEMENTS OF THE NAZI GUARDS AND AIDED IN THE EVENTUAL ESCAPE FROM THE PRISON CAMP. THIS STORY LED TO THE MAKING OF THE FILM *THE GREAT ESCAPE* THAT STARRED STEVE McQUEEN.



Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust model 16233 in 18ct gold and steel with champagne coloured dial, c.1990, \$6750. www.kalmarantiques.com.au

episodes of restoration (replacement dials, new hands etc.) that can lead to questions over originality,” says Arkell. “Original condition is often what distinguishes between two apparently very similar but quite differently priced watches.”

Sometimes it can be a lack of popularity that causes collectability. In the mid-1980s, the Rolex Daytona Chronograph was being sold at a discount in the United States because nobody wanted it. Some enterprising dealers began buying the watch in the

USA and selling it in Italy, where demand was high. The market price of the Daytona reached around US\$35,000 with the Italian buyers, just before Rolex announced it was being discontinued – and caused a run on all of the older model Daytonas. (A new model Daytona was released in 1991).

There is no doubt that the internet has contributed massively to the collecting trend. Buyers can research prices and trends daily, and arm themselves with technical data that informs buying choices. And the uncertainty of traditional investments has seen the wealthy redirect their money towards something that they believe will hold its value. “We had clients tell us, ‘I am not earning any money in the bank, so I’d rather put it into something I can wear, enjoy, and that’s holding its value,’” said Sam Hines, a Christie’s vice-president and head of watches in New York in an interview with *Bloomberg Lifestyle* in April 2010. In that year, all of Christie’s watch sales were led by Patek Philippe, with the most expensive lot of the year being a 1942 model featuring a perpetual calendar in 18-carat gold; it sold for US\$2.77m.

But most people don’t have a spare couple of million to splurge on a watch, and if that’s the case for you, it will probably make more sense to look for a vintage piece from the 1960s, when the mechanical watch was durable, reliable and stylish enough to blend in today.

Rolex Datejust

Introduced in 1945, the Oyster Perpetual Datejust is considered iconic. It has a classic appeal, sleek design and a movement that is practically bulletproof. It got its name because the date was just, all the time – the date aperture at 3 o’clock changes automatically at midnight. Writing for *ForbesLife* in April this year, collector Oliver Hoffmann said, “You can wear a timepiece like the Rolex Datejust in stainless steel at any occasion and not have to worry about day-to-day wear.” A fully serviced, cleaned and ready to go 1960s Datejust sells for around \$4500.

The Rolex GMT Master

Launched in 1954, the GMT Master was designed in cooperation with Pan Am. Because flying distances were increasing, there



Rolex GMT Master with Pepsi bezel 1675, c.1981. Value approximately \$18,000. www.ukspecialistwatches.co.uk



was a need for pilots for a watch that would tell them the time in multiple time zones. The GMT stands for Greenwich Mean Time and when the watch was first introduced it was as a modification of the Turn-O-Graph with a new bezel and movement. The original Bakelite bezel insert was replaced with metal in 1956. In 1964, the James Bond character Pussy Galore wore a GMT Master. Examples of this watch can be priced between \$6000 and \$20,000. “The Rolex GMT is interesting,” notes specialist dealer Damien Kalmar from Kalmar Antiques in Sydney. “It came with the red and blue ‘Pepsi’ bezel and the red and black ‘Coke’ bezel, as well as the all black bezel. Rolex, in their divine wisdom, discontinued this in 2007, and the price of the Coke and Pepsi models increased by a few thousand dollars very quickly. So much so that Rolex re-introduced the red and blue Pepsi bezel back to the market in 2014 – in 18ct white gold for a cool \$44,000!”

Rolex Milgauss

The Milgauss was designed as an anti-magnetic watch to be worn by people working in places such as power plants, medical facilities and research laboratories. Because an electromagnetic field greater than 50 to 100 gauss would greatly disrupt the timing of a watch, scientists and other similar professionals either accepted a dysfunctional watch or didn’t wear one at all. The Milgauss was able to resist magnetic

LEADERS OF INDUSTRY KNOW *the Value of Time*

Pilot, production specialist, administrator, and fearless executive . . . President Pease's concept of defense needs is stressed by Republic Aviation's delivery of nearly 400 Thunderbolts . . . to the U. S. Air Forces and our allies overseas.

A dynamic leader whose day starts with an 8:00 A. M. plane tour correlating the multiple problems of more than 22,000 employees, Mandy Pease heads the company which, in 1952, built more than half of all our jet fighter aircraft.

Recognition of Republic's vital contribution to our expanding defense pattern is emphasized by the holding of more than a billion dollars in defense orders . . . with the new Thunderbolt now coming off production lines.

It is to be recalled to guard the precious moments, even seconds, of such men . . . and for you . . . that the incomparable Rolex Datejust and other Rolex chronometers are made available throughout America.

The tale of this wonderful watch is available in a sincerely written and beautifully illustrated booklet . . . "The Blueprint of Supremacy" . . . which will be mailed free to those applying on business or personal stationery.

The Rolex Red Seal, at left, identifies each watch as an incomparable gem of watchmaking skill, precision, and accuracy. It is a mark of approval, signifying that it has passed the rigorous tests of Government tests and been awarded an Official Timing Certificate. The watch is the incomparable Oyster Perpetual DATEJUST.

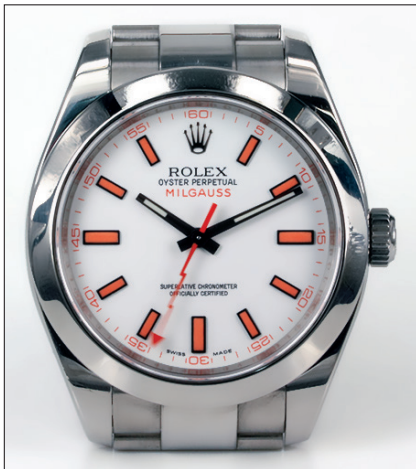
In this our handsome wrist Chronometer are combined all successful inventions conceived and developed by Rolex since the introduction of the wrist watch over 50 years ago. The date of the month appears automatically and clearly in a small window without the inconvenience of an extra hand. It is rose self-winding, has an Officially Certified Chronometer movement . . . completely protected by the famous, unopened Super-Oyster Case. 18 Kt. Gold Case and Bracelet . . . \$1,000. Original Rolex Chronometer priced from \$150. OFFICIAL TIMEPIECE OF PANAMA

ROLEX

A landmark in the history of Time Measurement

THE HOT, HOT, HOT MARKET FOR MEN'S VINTAGE WATCHES - CONT.

fields of up to 1000 gauss and its release in 1956 was a huge technological advancement. The watch was released in only two models – the original, and a modified version in the 1960s – and in 1988 it was discontinued. In the 1980s and '90s it was quite cheap to pick up on the secondhand market, but today it's recognised for its rarity, technological innovation and modern size and examples can sell for up to \$30,000. Rolex released three new versions of the Milgauss in 2007.



Rolex Milgauss model 116400 with white dial and complete with box and papers. Stainless steel Rolex Oyster band and Rolex lightning bolt sweep second hand, c.2008. www.kalmarantiques.com.au

Rolex Submariner

Introduced in 1953, the Submariner was the first divers' watch, being waterproof to a depth of 100m. It features a rotatable bezel that allows divers to read their immersion time and was a favourite of Jacques Cousteau and the British Royal Navy. When Auguste Piccard and his son Jacques attempted a world diving record in 1953, they took with them a Submariner; all three created a new world diving record of 10,335 feet. In 1955 Rolex released the Submariner model 6204 for sale to the general public, but it took



Vintage Rolex Gilt 3 6 9 Submariner. www.chronometrictime.com



James Bond to really put it on the map; Sean Connery wore a Submariner in several Bond movies of the 1960s, including in some famous underwater scenes. Incidentally, some vintage Submariners feature text written in red instead of white, making them more collectable; and the value will also increase if it features a black lacquer dial in gilt printing as opposed to the standard silver printing. The Submariner, which originally retailed for around \$200, starts at \$8000 for an example in good condition. "But a 5513 Submariner will easily cost you \$250,000+," says Damien Kalmar.

Rolex Chronograph/Daytona

A chronograph is a wristwatch fitted with the capacity to time events while simultaneously keeping the time of day. Rolex introduced five new chronographs in their 1937 catalogue. Their reliable but economical movements were made by a company called Valjoux. The early chronographs were very simple, featuring one button that started, stopped and reset the timer function, but by the late 1930s the two-button chronograph had been introduced. The first Rolex chronograph featuring the Oyster case in



Rolex Daytona model 116520 with black dial, c.2004. www.kalmarantiques.com.au

conjunction with three buttons was introduced in 1949. But the chronograph failed to gain much public traction until 1961, when it was released with a more modern appearance under the name Cosmograph. Eventually both the chronograph and the cosmograph became known as Daytona watches, and Paul Newman was seen as the unofficial ambassador after he was photographed wearing one given to him by wife Joanne when he started racing in 1972.

The collectability of the Paul Newman-style Daytona is driven entirely by the dial, which features three sunken subdials at three, six and nine o'clock and stylized, Art Deco numerals. Some have a red track encircling the outer circumference of the dial, and the different levels create an attractive 3-D effect. Ironically, these dials – which are so collectable today, they sell for a premium of up to \$50,000 over a Daytona with a standard dial – were not popular when they were introduced and few were made.



198ct yellow gold 1930s vintage Cartier Tank watch, \$9800. www.kalmarantiques.com.au

Cartier Tank Cintree

The Cartier Tank was designed in 1917 after Cartier was inspired by the top-down view of the world's first armored tank during the First World War. The first examples of the watch were presented as a 'victory gift' to US General John Pershing, commander of Expeditionary Forces in Europe, and his officers in 1918. The curved case was designed to hug the lines of the wrist, with the lugs being integrated into the design of the case, creating one of the most enduring design features in watchmaking. It has been suggested that no more than 50 of the Tank Cintree watches were produced in each decade of the 20th century, making them extremely sought after.

Vacheron Constantin Minute Repeater

If you're looking for rarity, look no further. Vacheron Constantin produced just 36 examples of minute-repeating wrist-



The Vacheron Constantin Patrimony Minute Repeater Perpetual Calendar, produced from 1946 through 2006. www.wearyourlifestyle.com

watches between 1942 and 1951. Presented in yellow gold, white gold and platinum, they have very simple dials that indicate the hours and minutes. However, when the wearer slides a tiny lever on the left side of the case, an alternating sequence of chimes indicates the exact time. The movements for these watches, while highly complicated, are remarkably thin. The Vacheron Constantin Minute Repeater can sell for up to \$230,000 in yellow gold, with prices between \$200,000 and \$350,000 for a white gold or platinum model.

Audemars Piguet Royal Oak

Inspired by the clunky nuts he saw securing a diver's helmet, watch designer Gerald Genta designed the Royal Oak in one night – and in so doing, came up with the world's first stainless steel luxury sports watch with fully integrated bracelet. It was launched at the Basel Fair in 1972 with a price of 3300 Swiss francs – at a time when cheap quartz watches were flooding the industry. Audemars Piguet's competitors were delighted – with a price tag that was ten times more than a Rolex Submariner, they were sure the watch would bankrupt the company. It took more than a year for the first 1000 watches to sell; today they are worth between \$20,000 and \$40,000 each. The Royal Oak became the company's most



The revolutionary Audemars Piguet Royal Oak steel watch was characterised by an octagonal shaped bezel secured by eight visible hexagonal gold screws, visible water resistance gasket and a dial adorned with exclusive blue petit tapisserie motif. www.timeandwatches.com



In 1965 the Omega Speedmaster became standard flight equipment for every astronaut. www.kalmarantiques.com.au

successful watch and the masterpiece of Genta's career.

Omega Speedmaster

Introduced in 1957 as a sporting and racing chronograph, the Omega Speedmaster complemented Omega's position as the official timekeeper for the Olympic Games. It also became the first watch to be worn in space. In 1962, NASA purchased six chronographs with the task of finding the best watch available for their astronauts to wear in space. Each watch was subjected to a series of tests and processes, but only three of the six survived the pre-selection stage. The remaining watches were subjected to 11 different tests, which have been described as the most rigorous trials ever endured in the history of horology. And the only one to survive every test was the Omega Speedmaster. Thus the Speedmaster became the first watch to journey into space, attached to the arm of Ed White during the Gemini 4 spacewalk in June 1965. It was also an Omega Speedmaster that was on the wrist



How can a man in a \$27000 suit settle for a \$235 watch?

The Apollo-Soyuz spacesuits, like those for every preceding space mission, were designed especially for the job. Not surprising either. You'd hardly expect to find the equipment for the flight through space to this historic America-Russia meeting ready-invented in the shops.

Yet that's how the astronauts found the Omega Speedmaster, their watch.

In 1965 NASA picked up a Speedmaster, as simply as you do in your local jewellery shop. And they made it standard flight equipment for every astronaut because, unlike any other chronograph tested, whatever NASA did to the Speedmaster, it stood up.

If you're wearing an Omega Speedmaster you can be proud of it – numerous space missions, six moon landings, and now, almost unbelievably, America and Russia together. For any other watch, the shock would be too much.

1. Omega Speedmaster Professional Chronograph
2. Omega Speedmaster 43, chronograph
3. Omega Speedmaster 43, chronograph
4. Omega Speedmaster 43, chronograph

OMEGA

of Buzz Aldrin when he stepped onto the moon's surface on July 20, 1969. Steel versions of the Omega Speedmaster sell for around \$5000 to \$10,000.

Jaeger-LeCoultre Reverso

One of the most iconic watches in the world, the Jaeger-LeCoultre Reverso came about because of a polo match in India. Swiss businessman and watch collector Cesar de Trey was attending a game between British army officers, when one of the officers, who had just broken the glass on his watch, challenged de Trey to create a watch that could survive a polo match. The result was an elegant watch with a dial that could flip, protecting it from shocks. Introduced in 1931, the Jaeger-LeCoultre Reverso was soon established as an Art Deco classic, with the flat back being personalised by engravings and even enamel miniatures. The watch lost favour in the late 1940s when the round watch became more popular, and production of the Reverso was eventually halted until the 1980s. It has become popular again over the last twenty years or so and prices average around \$10,000.

Breitling Navitimer

Conceived in 1952 and introduced in 1954, the Breitling Navitimer featured a combination of chronograph and slide-rule bezel that meant it was capable of executing



The dial of the original Reverso featured only hours and minutes hands. It was only in 1934 that LeCoultre introduced a version with small seconds counter at six o'clock. www.timeandwatches.com

THE HOT, HOT, HOT MARKET FOR MEN'S VINTAGE WATCHES - CONT.



Right: Patek Philippe Sky Moon Tourbillon. Features include: chime, perpetual calendar, hours and minutes of mean solar time, day, month and leap year in apertures, moon phases, blue enamelled gold dial, gold applied numerals, dial centre in cloisonné enamel, 10ck gold dial plate. Sidereal time, sky chart, phases and orbit of the moon.
www.patek.com



A Breitling Navitimer from 1954 (the Navitimer name is an assemblage of navigation and timer). The first watches were produced with a black dial and Arabic numerals, the AOPA logo and venus 178. www.breitling-museum.com

the Omega Speedmaster and Hugh Jackman for the Mont Blanc TimeWalker. It's a fair bet they're being paid a significant amount for their brand endorsements, money that the companies would not be investing if they didn't think there was an ongoing market for the man's prestige wristwatch.

"As a refinement of technologies established four to five centuries ago, the mechanical wristwatch carries a prestige unmatched by 'throwaway' mass-market timepieces," writes Roland Arkell in the *Antiques Trade Gazette*. "It is no coincidence the market for mechanical wristwatches enjoyed its unforeseen renaissance just as its existence was

threatened in the 1970s and '80s. For that reason, makers and vendors of mechanical watches don't anticipate a re-run of the quartz crisis as we enter the era of the smart watch. The Apple watch is a gadget for a different type of wearer and it won't cost the sale of a single prestige mechanical watch."

Reference:
Antiques Trade Gazette (Roland Arkell)
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Bloomberg Lifestyle, April 2010
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ForbesLife April 2015
www.forbes.com/forbeslife

every inflight calculation needed by military and professional pilots. An advertising campaign targeted at pilots created a huge demand and Breitling was installed as the official supplier of board instruments for all the major aircraft companies. The stainless steel version of the Navitimer, whilst being the easiest to find, is also the most popular, with the later gold plated editions being less collectable.

Patek Philippe Sky Moon Tourbillon

The most complicated of the Patek Philippe wristwatches, the Sky Moon Tourbillon currently retails for around US\$1.2m. A double-faced wristwatch, it features a sky chart and moon phases and orbit, as well as a minute repeater, tourbillon, perpetual calendar, retrograde date and side reel time. It's so intricate, with 686 movement components, that only two or three pieces are made each year. The head of the Patek Philippe company handpicks the buyers, who must be serious, long-term clients of the brand and who are required to undergo a qualifying interview before being permitted to purchase. For this reason, very few come on to the auction market.

Modern watch ambassadors continuing in the tradition of Sean Connery, Paul Newman and Steve McQueen include John Travolta for Breitling, George Clooney for

Watches to look out for

The following watches are not yet particularly collectable – but probably should be...

The **Heuer Bundeswehr flyback chronograph** (shown below top left) is a military issue for pilots and features a robust design. It's a modern size, is great looking and is incredibly accurate. Often seen on the market for under \$4000.

Another pilot's watch, the **IWC's Mark XI** (shown below top right) was originally launched in 1948 and was built to the specifications of the British Ministry of Defence. It was subjected to a 44-day testing period and was the inspiration for countless more pilot watch designs. Usually priced under \$5000.

The **Breitling Top Time** (shown below bottom left), which can be bought in mint condition for under \$3000, is very similar to the early Heuer Carrera – which is itself very similar to the Rolex Daytona. Except the Breitling gives you the same look at about one-tenth of the price. Plus James Bond wore a Top Time...

And then there is the **Omega Chronostop** (shown here bottom right), which usually comes in at about \$800 in second-hand sales. Not quite a chronograph – it essentially features a 60-second timer – the watch was made in a wide range of dials and cases but it has never really taken off value-wise.

