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CHRONOMETERS



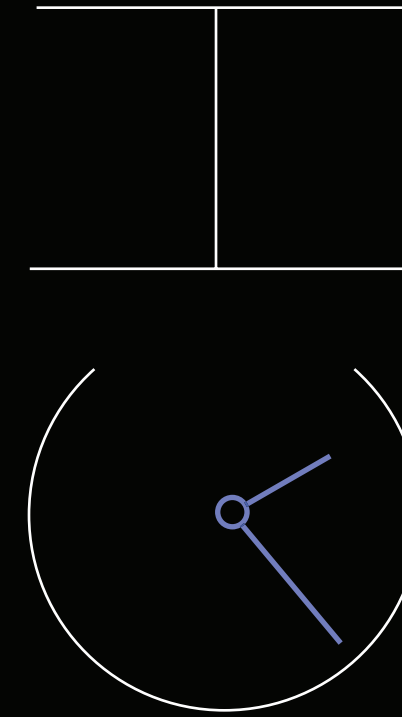
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YOUR STYLE

There's no time like the present to expand your watch wardrobe.

BY KEITH W. STRANDBERG

It used to be that a person bought one watch, and they wore it their entire life. A watch was seen as a tool, its purpose to provide the time. These days, time is all around us, our phones ready to display its passage with the push of a button. Wearing a watch for time-telling's sake is no longer a necessity, but wearing a timepiece for the sake of style? That will never go out of fashion.

Watches have evolved from a utilitarian accessory to an expression of personality, mood, and taste. And there is a spectacular timepiece to suit every penchant.

With all the great watches on the market today, you can easily have one watch for work, one for play, one for going out, one for sport, one to dazzle with diamonds, one for whimsy, and—well, you get the idea.

The watch you wear matters. It's an intimate item, something that sits on your skin, on display, and says something about who you are and what you value.

What do you want your watch to say about you?

Here is a look at some of the best companies in the industry and what they have to offer for your watch wardrobe.

Shown here: Ballon Bleu de Cartier Tourbillon in white gold



CARTIER ➤

Combining Great Design with High Watchmaking

Cartier has made a complete shift in its focus over the last few years. When it came to watches (which it has been making since the early 1900s), Cartier was primarily a design company until 10 years ago. Cartier has reinvented itself as a high watchmaker, manufacturing complicated timepieces itself, using in-house movements, and working hard to innovate and do things differently. This new direction for Cartier came from the very top, as in Bernard Fornas, the former chairman of Cartier and now the head of the Richemont Group. He wanted Cartier to be a force in high watchmaking without abandoning its position as a design house. “We are based on design and beauty and at the same time we can be a real watchmaker, with the right movements, the right complications, and the right precision,” he details. “I don’t want just one side; I want both sides, especially for men’s watches. It’s like with cars: you want the right designs and the right engines. I made the decision several years ago to have a Cartier engine in Cartier watches. I want to make sure that my customers buy for the design and the mechanics.”

Cartier has developed a number of interesting complicated watches recently, including perpetual calendars, tourbillons, mystery watches, and jumping hours, but the design for which Cartier has historically been known is still an important part of its efforts. Take the Ballon Bleu, for example—a highly technical timepiece that showcases Cartier’s watchmaking prowess, while its flowing lines and curves echo Cartier’s more traditional pieces such as the Tank and the Santos.

Shown here: Ballon Bleu de Cartier Tourbillon in pink gold



ZENITH ➤

Authentic Pilot Watches

Zenith has been making pilot watches for so long, it was the first company to use the word “pilot” in a watch name. Founded in 1865, Zenith is known for its excellence in mechanical watchmaking, especially chronographs. The El Primero is considered one of the best—if not the best—chronograph movements ever manufactured.

Recently, Zenith made the news on the wrist of Felix Baumgartner, who set the record for the highest free fall (more than 23 miles) when he jumped out of a space capsule and dropped back to earth. When asked if he was scared before he jumped, Baumgartner replied, “No, because I know I’m going home.”

The watch he was wearing for that jump—the only watch to ever break the sound barrier—is the Stratos Flyback Striking 10th, pictured here. It uses the El Primero chronograph movement and has a unique feature: instead of the 60-second time it normally takes a chronograph hand to go around the dial, Stratos Striking 10th’s chronograph hand whirls around the dial in 10 seconds, allowing the chronograph to time to 1/100th of a second.

Zenith also pioneered the “open” trend in mechanical watches with its Chronomaster Open, where you can see into the movement through an aperture on the dial. In addition, Zenith is an exclusive group of manufacturers that rely on the company’s own know-how and expertise for the development of its watches.

Shown here: Zenith El Primero Stratos Flyback Striking 10th



⬅ ROMAIN JEROME

Incredible Designs

The watch that put Romain Jerome on the map was the Titanic DNA, the timepiece that used metal recovered from the actual *Titanic* in its production. The watch was a hit, and not just because of the historic steel—the design was captivating and unlike anything seen before. The company went on to develop a number of projects using interesting “DNA” —moon dust, metal from the DeLorean sports car, ash from the Icelandic volcano that erupted a few years back, and more. As a result, Romain Jerome has come to be known as a brand not afraid to take risks and push the envelope.

The latest offering from this Geneva, Switzerland-based company is the Octopus, inspired by the menacing creature in Jules Verne’s *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Eight is one of the driving forces of this watch, a nod to the number of tentacles on the octopus. The timepiece is water-resistant to 888 feet; there are eight octagonal head screws on the front and the back of the case and eight rivets on the two crowns (one for timesetting, the other for the elapsed-time controller); and this is a limited edition of 888 pieces. A harbinger of things to come for Romain Jerome, the Octopus is the brand’s first sports watch, but not the last.

Shown here: RJ-Romain Jerome Octopus

RAYMOND WEIL ➤

Elegance and Great Value

A family company since its founding in 1976, Raymond Weil has long been known for elegant, classic designs, inspired by the universe of arts and music. The resulting timepieces marry harmony, elegance, and technical sophistication.

Recently, Raymond Weil announced its partnership with Artists Den Entertainment, an innovative music platform best known for presenting *Live From The Artists Den*, a televised concert series featuring extraordinary artists performing in nontraditional, often historic settings that airs nationally on PBS and internationally through various networks. Other partnerships include the BRIT Awards, *Wired* magazine, and the VH1 Save the Music Foundation.

Fiercely independent, Raymond Weil is proud to be a family company with an emphasis is on creativity, reinvention, and innovation. Today, president and CEO Olivier Bernheim, the son-in-law of Mr. Raymond Weil, has been joined by the third generation of the family, his sons Elie and Pierre Bernheim.

One of Raymond Weil’s strengths is its ability to evolve and meet the needs of the market. When mechanical watches began to become popular, the brand widened its range of Swiss Made mechanical timepieces. And ever since the worldwide economic crisis, more emphasis has been placed on opening-price-point collections.

The watch pictured here, the Maestro, represents Raymond Weil’s values perfectly. A Swiss Made chronograph, it has an elegant and beautifully finished silver dial with sun-ray guilloché decoration in the center. The well-placed chronograph counters make this watch traditional and modern at the same time.

Shown here: Raymond Weil Maestro Automatic Chronograph



◀ BREMONT

Heritage with a British Twist

Bremont was founded in England by Nick and Giles English, two brothers with a passion for watchmaking. Though most of luxury watchmaking occurs in Switzerland, the brothers English were committed to reintroducing watch production in England. Focusing on technical watches with an aviation or a vintage theme, Bremont has succeeded in opening a watchmaking workshop in Henley-on-Thames, England, and it does as much in England as possible, including assembly and regulation, testing, and case-making.

One thing that has made Bremont stand out is its involvement with interesting projects. It makes a watch with the Martin-Baker ejection seats company—designed and tested to survive an actual ejection; it works with a number of military groups to make squadron or unit watches; and last year it introduced the Bremont HMS Victory, using real materials from Admiral Nelson’s actual ship in the production of the watch.

In 2013, Bremont introduced a limited-edition timepiece called the Codebreaker, dedicated to the people working at Bletchley Park, headquarters for the code-breaking efforts of the Allies during World War II. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of these watches goes to benefit current restoration efforts at Bletchley. The watch is a vintage-inspired flyback chronograph and uses historic material from the code-breaking effort in the construction of the watch (metal from a German Enigma machine, wood from Hut 6, central to the code-breaking effort, and punch cards from the code-breaking “computer”).

The Codebreaker is limited to 240 pieces in steel and 50 in rose gold.

Shown here: Bremont Codebreaker



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Sports Watches with Legitimacy

From a historical perspective, the Carrera is the watch that changed TAG Heuer from a timekeeping and dashboard instrument company into a true timepiece brand. The Carrera, which celebrated its 50th anniversary last year, was the first TAG Heuer timepiece that was really mainstream. Before that, the brand was very heavily positioned toward sports. The Carrera opened up TAG to a broader audience.

For the design of the Carrera, Jack Heuer worked to create a timepiece to meet the needs of professional drivers—tough, uncluttered, and easy-to-read. In fact, the chronograph counters were inspired by the dashboard instruments of the era, and the straps and bracelets were based on the perforated leather gloves favored by the drivers. The resulting timepiece was an iconic watch for TAG Heuer.

TAG Heuer and sports are a perfect match, as the company started out as a timing company and then moved into watches. These sports-inspired timepieces go through the most strenuous torture tests to make sure they can stand up to what watch wearers will dish out.

Shown here: TAG Heuer Carrera Calibre 16



< CHOPARD

Jeweled Watches, Watchmaking Heart

Chopard is an established company with a long history of excellence in watchmaking. At the same time, Chopard pioneered the use of precious stones in watchmaking with its Happy Sport, the brainchild of Chopard's co-owner Caroline Scheufele. When it was introduced 21 years ago, the Happy Sport was a breakthrough in watches, combining whimsy with diamonds on a sporty timepiece for women. The Happy Sport has been an incredibly enduring style for the design house.

On the other side is the high watchmaking effort, where Chopard has been very successful with its in-house movements and savoir faire.

In 2013, Chopard introduced the Happy Sport Automatic to celebrate 20 years of the groundbreaking, extremely popular timepiece. Powered by an automatic movement for the first time, the Happy Sport Automatic has been designed to bridge the two sides of the company, marrying the jewelry with the watchmaking.

Shown here: Chopard Happy Sport Medium Automatic



NEW BRAND TO WATCH:
ALOR SWISS WATCHES

A new addition to the luxury-timepiece playing field, Alor Swiss Watches made its international debut during Baselworld 2013. The contemporary timepiece collections are the latest offering from the established Alor jewelry brand, the designer of covetable Charriol cable jewelry. These watches are sophisticated, wearable, and attainable; prices start at under \$700. – SW

Shown here: Alor Valenti



ALOR®
Swiss Watches



HUBLOT ➤

Bold, Statement Watches

If you want to fly under the radar, Hublot is not the brand for you. The watches from Hublot are unapologetically in your face, combining cutting-edge designs with solid Swiss watchmaking, including an in-house movement, the Unico. Hublot works with a number of high-profile ambassadors to help spread the word about its statement watches, including the world's fastest man, Usain Bolt; NBA champions Dwyane Wade and Kobe Bryant; and tennis legend Ilie Nastase. Hublot is also the official watch of the Euro soccer tournament and the official watch of Formula 1.

Until 2004, Hublot was a sober brand that focused on understated elegance in one basic case design, the porthole, which is what "Hublot" means in English. Then, the Big Bang was born and the brand took off. This bigger, bolder look took the watch world by storm, introducing for the first time a fusion of technique and materials, melding traditional watchmaking with cutting-edge designs signifying the future. Hublot has been introducing interesting variations of the Big Bang, including the Big Bang All Black, Big Bangs with high complications, and the diamond-encrusted Million Dollar Bang and Five Million Dollar Bang.

In 2009, Hublot introduced a new collection, the King Power, which is an oversized (48mm) timepiece, pushing the design of the Big Bang to higher levels. High complications, like the tourbillon, are available in the King Power collection.

Hublot continues to innovate with its MP line, a collection of watches that focuses on high watchmaking. ■

Shown here: Hublot Big Bang Zebra Bang in red gold



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