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Collecting Moonphases
Speake-Marin's Spirit**

Piaget looks East **Dragon's Den**

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The Art of Time

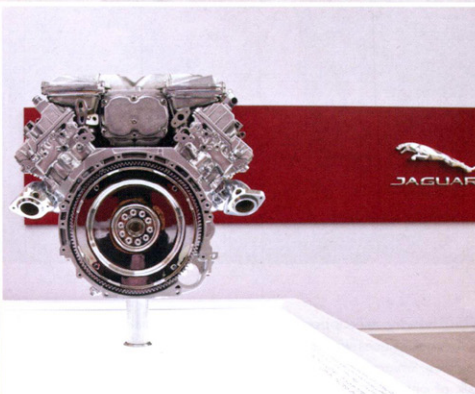
For three days last November, QP Magazine brought the very best of the world of horology to Chelsea's Saatchi Gallery for SalonQP 2011. If you were not lucky enough to be among the thousands of visitors, here's a small taste of what you missed. **Ken Kessler**

Up close and personal – that's the joy of a *salon privée* for watches or any other delights. No salesperson pressuring you, the presence of personnel from the actual brands to advise you, even a few genuine watchmakers... it's no wonder that SalonQP 2011 – the third time the event has taken place – was a resounding success. As an opportunity for watch aficionados to savour the latest treasures, there's nothing quite like it.

Moving from One Marylebone to the Saatchi Gallery, thanks in no small part to the Salon's annual growth, the display was reminiscent more of the elegant SIHH held in Geneva in January – a trade-only event for Richemont brands – than the massive Baselworld. This is a value judgement of neither, which are not comparable due to the size difference of 18 brands vs a couple of thousand. Instead,

it's a reminder of the former show's relative intimacy. Only at SalonQP do 'civilian' watch lovers get to experience the treatment that watch journalists, retailers and distributors take for granted.

A perfect example – one that still thrills me – was being able to talk with Roger Smith, and on English soil. Now the keeper of the George Daniels flame, the legendary watchmaker being Smith's mentor and having passed away shortly before SalonQP, Smith showed two new versions of his Series 2 timepiece, in time-only form or with calendar. These are truly bespoke pieces, and even though the prices seem unattainable to the vast majority of enthusiasts, they are bargains in the world of *haute horlogerie*. There could be no better living testimony to George Daniels' achievements, enhanced by Roger's unique flair.



Bring on the new

For this jaded hack, who is used to a steady flow of press releases, it was an opportunity to examine watches I hadn't seen before in the metal. John Isaac Genève's elegant cushion-shaped pieces, the latest in British watchmaking from Schofield, the brilliantly cool retro of March L.A.B – all made me share their newness with the delight of a less-spoiled, more pure enthusiast. Two high points, inspiring huge grins, were the Manufacture Royale Opera Tourbillon and Minute Repeater, which opens up to look like a miniature of the Sydney Opera House and John C. Taylor's magnificent Chronophage.

One of two 'non-wristwatch' surprises, the Chronophage had me returning time and again to the lounge area to observe this clock's little ballet. A giant insect, constructed in the finest steampunk manner of aged metals, rests atop the golden disc of a stylised sun.

With every second that passes, its claws hook the disc's circumference, looking like it's doing the rotating. A series of blue lights indicate the hours, minutes and seconds, with random sequences adding a disconcerting sense of something sentient rather than electro-mechanical.

For the second non-watch moment, it was the opportunity to examine a powerplant from Jaguar, the horological link being Bremont's dashboard clocks for the company's recent prototypes. Seen on display, like the work of art that it is, was the gleaming AJ V8 Gen III 5.0 litre engine, delivering 510BHP. It was a reminder that the car engine is just like a fine watch, only bigger and with more components. And several lucky visitors even got the chance to test drive the Jaguar XKR-S.



Class of 2011

With the new models attracting all and sundry, the opportunity to re-acquaint one's self with recently launched pieces was irresistible. I couldn't wait to ogle Jaeger-LeCoultre's Reverso Tribute to 1931 and Deep Sea reissue, while the talk of one panel discussion was Hermès' Arceau Le Temps Suspendu which, a week after SalonQP, earned the Best Men's Watch Prize at the 11th Geneva Grand Prix de l'Horlogerie – my colleagues Elizabeth Doerr and Peter Roberts were most prescient in citing this fascinating timepiece as one of the year's most intriguing debuts.

Bulova asserted its rebirth as a brand to captivate enthusiasts, with proper mechanical offerings and Watches of Knightsbridge emerged as a new force on the London watch auction scene, not least because it presented the *pièce unique* Master Eight Days Quantième Perpétuel 'SalonQP', bearing QP editor and SalonQP founder James Gurney's signature on the caseback. I also re-acquainted myself with the ineffably cool watches from Ressence, which must be seen to be fully appreciated, and Heritage Watch Manufactory, which has baffled and delighted observers with a watch based on an historic Chinese timekeeping system.

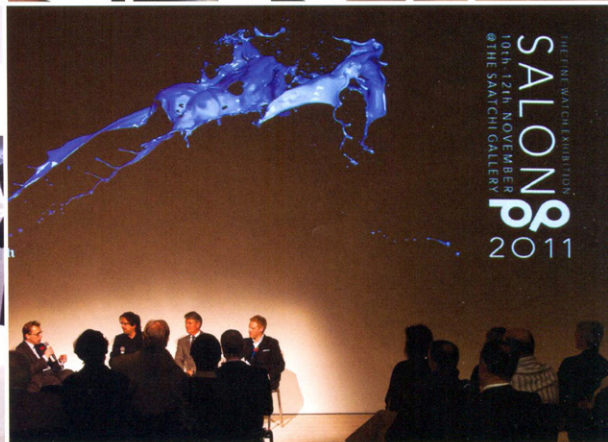
What makes SalonQP so special, though, is the presence of the watch masters, not just their creations. Panel discussions were well attended, with Max Büsser from MB&F, Bremont's Nick English, Eric Loth of Graham, Vacheron Constantin's Alex Ghotbi and other notable luminaries holding audiences spellbound.

But there was also an opportunity to do some first class 'people-watching' away from the panel discussions and presentations. My wife pointed out everyone's favourite TV newsreader and former Morecombe and Wise protégé Angela Rippon, while I was thrilled to meet former F1 racing driver Stefan Johansson, now producing his own range of sporting chronographs.

Without a doubt though, the biggest draw was the arrival of Rolling Stone Ronnie Wood, there to unveil his collaboration with Bremont, which will result in a limited series of the company's B1 Marine Chronometers with each dial featuring a unique painting by Wood. The legendary guitarist even signed my first-pressing copy of Jeff Beck's LP, *Truth*, on which he played bass, and which I purchased back in August 1968.



SalonQP 2011



Faces in the crowd

Perhaps the most notable achievement of SalonQP is the manner in which it attracted so many key figures from the industry – both from the UK and from Switzerland – attesting to its global importance. One of the first individuals I ran into was my good friend, Peter Speake-Marin, and I was overjoyed to see Alessandro Zanetta, heir apparent to one of my favourite houses, De Bethune.

Zanetta reminded me that the Italians have carved out a sector of their own, represented at SalonQP by Meccaniche Veloci, Glycine's Monica Porracin, Panerai (but of course), Mazzuoli and others, enabling me to practice my elementary, Yank-accented Italian. And I'd forgotten how massive those U-Boats are in the metal.

Another pleasure was seeing Bonham's Arno Haslinger, the knowledgeable Heuer collector. He's thinking of producing a second edition of his seminal work on Heuer chronographs a couple of years hence; since the last edition appeared, and following the amazing Heuer auction last year, he's discovered another 30 Heuer rarities. Speaking of books, WatchPrint had a stand – as part of the Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie's gallery – selling a superb

selection of the latest watch titles, including *The Mastery of Time* and other mouthwatering Flammarion editions, as well as the Mondani collectors' volumes, like the oversized *Submariner* epic.

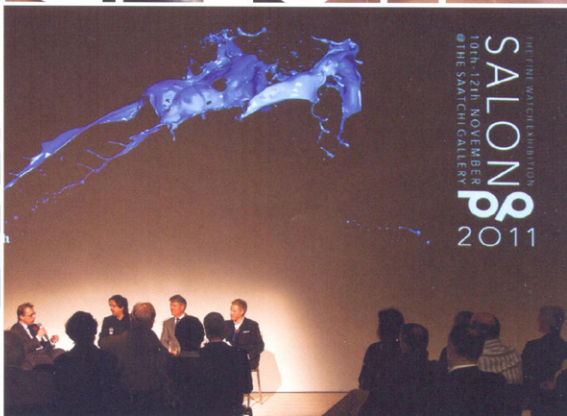
Present, too, were enough of the long-established greats to satisfy traditionalists, from TAG Heuer and Zenith to Girard-Perregaux and Vacheron Constantin, Cartier to Lange & Söhne and Montblanc, modernists Harry Winston and Corum. Piaget's elegant slimline models, complications from Bulgari and Maurice Lacroix and affordable pleasures from Frédérique Constant, Nomos and Baume & Mercier. At least one journalist was salivating over the complications from *Maîtres du Temps*, whose founder Steven Holtzman made it over from the US, while I was drooling over a few of the Bell & Ross Heritage models with butterscotch-coloured straps and numerals.

And that's the only problem. You enter with an imaginary 'wants' list. You leave with one twice as long.

Further information: www.salonqp.com



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