

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## These were the top automotive timepieces of this year's Watches & Wonders

### Lead

We've only had a couple of hours to run through the most important watch fair in the world and try to spot the most interesting, best and quirkiest watches that could please petrolheads. Here are our subjective choices from a quick lap around the show.



A nice car and a nice watch often go together. And as with anything nowadays, there aren't really any rules that match particular watches to certain cars (it's not that we deem ourselves experts on the matter of watches anyway). In the reality of 2025 one can easily wear anything while driving, and as long as the overall "vibe" matches there are no wrong choices. In terms of movement, complications and price anything goes. Of course we wouldn't necessarily pick a square sapphire case skeleton watch of massive size to drive an Austin Healey or Land Rover Defender, these fit more to a Ferrari SF90 or a Brabus G-wagen, but you get the picture.

Still there are watches out there that want to speak to those of us who leave no corner uncut and love racing towards the redline as much as they love to look at the design of a car created by a famous carrossier. So when our friends at IWC Switzerland called to invite us to the premiere of some of their new releases during this year's Watches & Wonders, we were quite happy to hop on a plane and fly to Geneva and see what's what.



### Obsessed with F1

We are not entirely sure who is to blame. Is it Netflix and their "Drive to Survive" series? Or is it that after last year's tumultuous season Formula 1 got interesting again? The fact is that at least three big, well known manufacturers tied themselves to the sport and created many timepieces inspired by it, well... directly and indirectly... but we'll get to that in a minute. As we were guests of IWC, let's start with the Schaffhausen-based brand, especially as there's lots to talk about.



Since 2013 IWC has been the sponsor of the Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS Formula One Team and therefore it is not very surprising that new watches for the team were presented. We especially liked the super cute Pilot's Watch Mark XX, worn by rookie Kimi Antonelli (with a 40-millimeter case made from lightweight and highly rigid grade 5 titanium and fantastic turquoise rubber strap), the Pilot's Watch Chronograph 41 worn by teammate George Russell, and most importantly the quite impressive 44.0 mm, Big Pilot's Watch Shock Absorber XPL Toto Wolff - which not only is limited to 100 pieces, but also features the revolutionary SPRIN-g PROTECT® shock absorber system that protects this particular timepiece up to 30,000 G's. Now, if you've just got one those Ulysse Nardin Diver Air watches that can withstand "only" 5000 G's you might start to feel like an idiot...



Speaking of which, the same tech was used in the Big Pilot Shock Absorber Tourbillon Skeleton XPL, which - seems an even more impressive proposition, especially as it's extremely lightweight thanks to the skeletonised construction and Ceratanium case and crown. Sometimes skeletonised watches can feel a bit gimmicky, but this all-black everything IWC is a great example of the opposite - as it is quite understated especially at first glance but packs crazy tech and complications.



More importantly than real F1 however, thanks to their relationship with Sir Lewis Hamilton, IWC are also involved with the Joseph Kosinski ("Top Gun Maverick") directed F1 movie. A film that stars Brad Pitt as aging F1 veteran Sonny Hayes and breakout star Damson Idris as Joshua Pearce, his young teammate and protege, both racing for the fake APX GP Team. This meant that IWC's booth this year was built around the cars from the film - actual F2 cars made to look like Formula 1 - one of which was crashed, and a Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG camera car. Quite a cool thing to see, especially with the large U-crane camera set up attached to the roof and the small Sony camera systems invented for the movie itself still on the hero cars. The watches from the film were also presented. The Pilot's Watch Chronographs worn by Idris and Bardem, but more importantly the green dial Ingenieur 40 (with gold indexes and watch hands) - which proves the point from the first paragraph of this story, that a petrolhead doesn't necessarily have to wear some sort of chronograph on his wrist. Brad Pitt's watch drew the attention of punters towards the other extensions to the Ingenieur range, like the perpetual calendar, the 42 mm black-ceramic iteration and the new, lady-friendly 35 mm models, but that's a different story altogether.



## Official Timekeepers

Now... like there's only "One Kate in London" (Kate Moss that is), there is only really one company that does "car watches" and can devote an entire Watch & Wonders stand to that activity. And that is Tag Heuer. The current Red Bull RB21 F1 Car and Ayrton Senna's McLaren MP 4/4 at the entrance of the stand, together with large LED screens announcing "We're Back!", made that quite clear. Tag had resumed the role as official timekeeper of the most prestigious form of motorsport the world has ever seen.



Some watches were therefore shown and rolled out to mark the occasion. For example, the white-ceramic Tag Heuer Monaco Split Second Chronograph I F1 that, while technically impressive, was slightly over the top (with its "It's lights out and away we go" slogan written on the subdials). We much prefer the classic version of this chronograph, immortalised by Steve McQueen in the 1971 film "Le Mans", even if we still think a round watch in a square case is something slightly weird. There is no denying however, that the stars of the show were the colourful 38 mm Formula 1 Solargraph watches, with their playful colour combinations, TH-polylight cases and bidirectional bezels that perfectly revive that vibrant 1980's F1 aesthetic. "Built for those who live in the fast lane" said the brochure, and we couldn't agree more.



Apart from the F1 Solargraphs, we lusted over the Carrera Chronograph "Glassbox" (a watch that we took to [Le Mans Classic two years ago](#) and completely fell in love with) and admired the 44 mm Titanium F1 Chronographs, as well as the ample F1 memorabilia. Talk about a petrolheads dream stand!



### A break from F1

To take a break from the high testosterone world of F1, we drop by the Chopard booth where the Mille Miglia watches are displayed. Although not exactly technically groundbreaking they fit the purpose perfectly as elegant companions for spirited drives, in classic cars up to 1957. But what's this... a grey chronometer draws our attention. It's fairly modern, utilitarian looks are quite contemporary and cool, it also boasts the Mille Miglia logo, but looks like something that's more fitting to a Ferrari F50 than a 166MM. That is the Mille Miglia GTS Grigio Speciale, a limited edition titanium watch with a 60 hour power reserve, a nice addition to the traditional designs of the Mille Miglia Chronographs.



### And back to F1 again

The star of the Tudor stand (a brand we find one of the most interesting of all mainstream-luxury Swiss watch brands on the market today) wasn't a watch. It was the Visa Cash App Racing Bulls F1 Team. Hanging high in the air above the visitors heads it displayed what the chassis of a modern Formula 1 car looks like from below - and what an amazing aerodynamic sculpture it actually is. Liam Lawson and Isaac Hadjar can consider themselves lucky, as their sponsor - Tudor - has showed two extremely beautiful watches (dare we say our favourites of all the watches we've seen this year) that are linked to the teams activity. The first one is the 41 mm Black Bay Ceramic Blue, an extremely classy, yet playful sports watch, the other: theBlack Bay Chrono, both in Panda and reverse-Panda colour combinations (but it's no secret that you can also spec it with a super vintage looking champagne dial, as well as more funky pink and turquoise ones). Needless to say whether its a Black Bay or an F1 Team Pelagos, we are big fans.



### The more left-field choices

While running around we couldn't help but notice the elegant but sporty and yet extremely funky entries from Nomos. The Glasshütte based manufacture introduced a series of limited to 175 pieces each, Club Sport Neomatik Worldtimer watches, which look like something James Hunt would totally wear, and so would we. Although they are inspired by nature, we see in them the colourful liveries of racing cars.



Then there is the classic - the Tazio Nuvolari by Eberhard & Co, which is one of the oldest, lesser known manufactures out there, one with an uninterrupted history, meaning it wasn't something that was recently revived. With lots of fantastic little details. The dynamically engraved dial, the machine turned bezel, the little gold Alfa Romeo Type C racing car on the rotor... all this, knowing Eberhard at quite the competitive price. Sidenote: we also love the slightly vintage looking Scintigraph Chrono.



And while over at Patek Philippe everyone was obsessing as per usual with the status symbols that are the Nautilus and Aquanaut, we were drawn to the exquisitely beautiful Grand Complications Manual Split Second Chronographs - especially the 1/10th second watch, that measure and displays up to... 1/10th of a second. In order to achieve that Patek filed 17 patents!

Lastly, we couldn't forget about the contemporary super and hypercar driver. What should he choose on his journey - should it be a Rolex Daytona? Or an Hublot maybe? Or none of the above? How about the most innovative watch brand of the last couple of years - Ressence - a brand that answers the illogical question of: "what would it be like to design a watch that looks digital, but is actually completely mechanical". The Red Dot design awards they have received are only testament that their endeavour was successful, and their fully submerged in oil watches, minimalist but funky are just perfect for anyone who doesn't want to follow current trends. We especially loved the lightweight, titanium Type 7 model, which fits almost any occasion and demonstrates that there are still a lot of design avenues to explore in the world of minimalist, mechanical watch making and that sometimes less is actually more and different... is even more than that.

#### Gallery























































































































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