

CLASSIC DRIVER

[This is why collectors are mad about patinated watches right now](#)

Lead

We've all been caught up in the hysteria that surrounds the discovery of a spectacular automotive 'barn find'. But do vintage watches with similarly beguiling originality and patination have the same allure? To find out, we asked Phillips' International Watch Specialist James Marks...

"When you find a so-called 'barn-find' watch, the commercial factor disappears almost entirely," comments [Phillips' James Marks](#), who's busy making final preparations ahead of the [Geneva Watch Auction: Nine](#) on 11-12 May. "Instead, there's a romance to the story that surrounds the particular piece. It's lived a life with its owner and proved to be a loyal partner through the highs and the lows of that individual's life. It adds a unique sense of collectability - and value - because you might be only the second person to own it."



The discussion surrounding these original and highly patinated watches arose when we spotted a particularly large number of them in the catalogue for the aforementioned Phillips sale. Take the [Jaeger-LeCoultre Memovox Deep Sea](#) (est. 45,000-65,000 CHF), [1959 Omega Speedmaster ref. 2915-2](#) (40,000-80,000 CHF) or the [Rolex Submariner ref. 6536](#) (30,000-50,000 CHF) dating to 1956, for example. The condition of the latter is nothing short of mesmerising, from the way its lume plots have accrued a deep ochre shade to the tiny teeth on the original crown that, miraculously, have avoided any knocks. It's even accompanied by the original guarantee and polishing cloth from the supplying Hong Kong dealer.

Of course, it's these pieces' originality that factors most when it comes to their value. But Marks is keen to point out that collectors' common and unrelenting pursuit of perfection shouldn't take such precedence. "People seem to accept that cars need to be maintained and thus parts may have been changed, but with watches, there's still a huge question surrounding originality," he continues. "It's entirely unreasonable to assume that a regularly serviced watch that's been worn over the course of several decades won't have had things changed."



The major problem here, as in the automotive world, is finding these watches in the first place, something that Marks partly attributes to the rise of the Internet and social media. "There's always kudos to an original, unpolished, fresh-to-market watch, but it's getting harder and harder to find them because of increased interest on social media. It's not a bad thing necessarily, it just means that everybody knows what everybody else has tucked away in their drawers." When a piece does slip through the net and escape the hysteria, you can bet your bottom dollar it'll pique the attention and prick the wallets of the most serious collectors.

You can find our favourite horological 'barn finds' from Phillips' Geneva Watch Auction: Nine listed below or, alternatively, [browse the entire catalogue in the Classic Driver Market](#).

Aged wonders from Phillips in Geneva

Gallery

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Phillips - The Geneva Watch Auction: NINE

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