



James Bond Time - Watchmaking history seen from the wrist of the secret agent

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We met James Bond, the most Swiss secret agent ever, at the Espace Horloger in Le Sentier. It is always a pleasure to leave the foothills of Vaud in the Jura to go and enjoy the quiet and serenity of the Vallée de Joux.



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Watchonista's Contributor

The foggy weather gave the surroundings an air of mystery. The tone was set and the atmosphere was buzzing with excitement. On the occasion of its 20th anniversary, the Espace Horloger offered an exceptional exhibition that traced contemporary watchmaking history through the models worn by James Bond throughout the twenty-four movie saga.

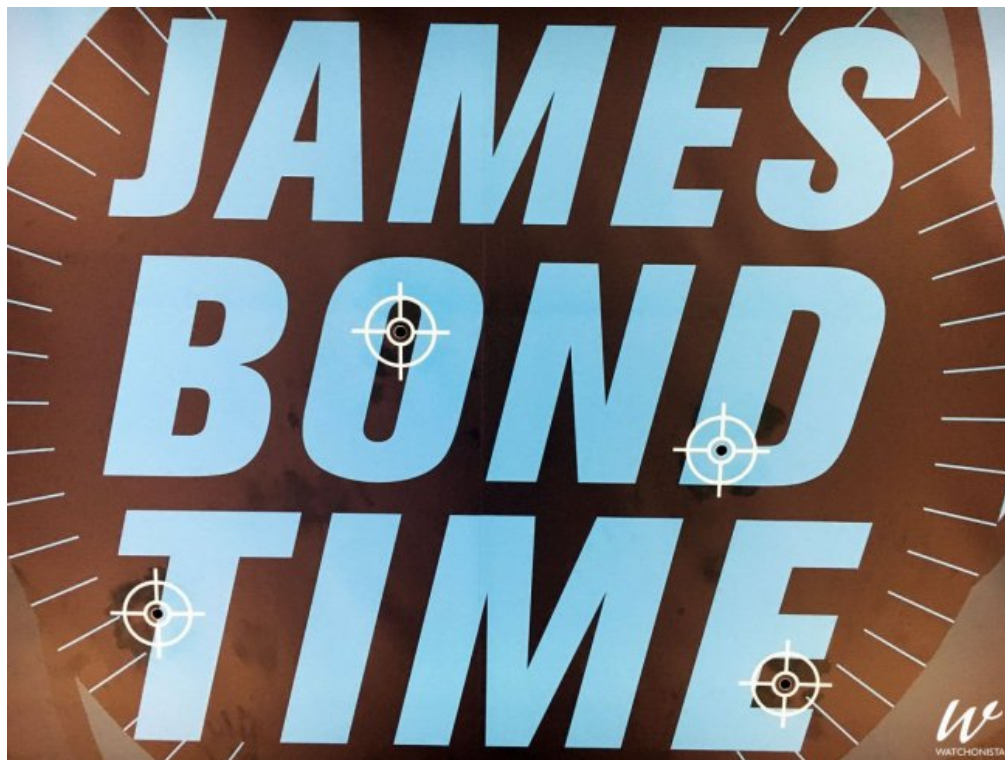


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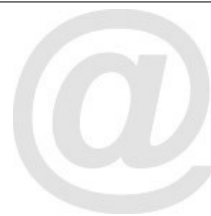
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The watch reveals its origins

To start with, the timepiece worn by the secret agent in 1962's "Dr. No" illustrates the evolution of our society. Ian Fleming, author of the first books of the series, chose for his hero to wear Rolex's Submariner Oyster Perpetual 6538 in his first movie – a watch that he himself wore. To this date, Rolex is the brand that has featured mostly on the wrist of James. The brand embodies watchmaking's essential values – tradition, innovation and a certain etiquette.



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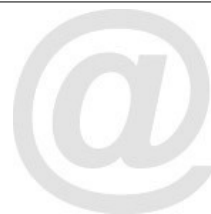
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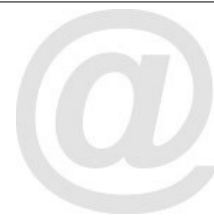


It exudes creativity, durability, reliability and it is naturally classy, a trait that Bond's character enhances even more. The partnership between the brand and the movies continued until 1974, when Bond wore a Rolex Submariner 5513 for "The Man with the Golden Gun". It must be noted that there was a little hiatus for in 1965 it was Breitling's Top Time and the timer Geiger that featured in "Thunderball". Yet, Bond always stuck to the luxury sports mechanical watch.



Technological evolution of the Quartz

James Bond moves with his time, and is sometimes even ahead of it. It was thus only fitting that he started using the new Quartz technology from 1977, as seen in "The Spy Who Loved Me". The Japanese master of accurate quartz watches at the time, Seiko, became the agent's partner in crime with its innovative LCD digital screens (Seiko 0674 LC, 1977 and Memory Bank Calendar, Moonraker 1979), its TV Watch (Octopussy, 1983), its Seiko H357 Duo Display (combining analogue hands and an LCD screen, For Your Eyes Only, 1981), until "A View To Kill" in 1985. By then, it was pretty obvious that Bond, and everyone else for that matter, was gradually losing interest in high-tech toys that were only practical. In the end, he quickly reverted to the social status that mechanical watchmaking embodies best.



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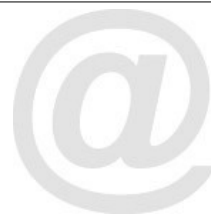
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The return of mechanical pieces

And so, from 1987, Swiss watchmaking returned to professional sports luxury, as seen in “The Living Daylights”. TAG Heuer only appeared in the saga once with the TAG Heuer Professional Night Dive. In 1989, Rolex came back to its favorite hero with the Oyster Perpetual 16610 in “Licence to Kill”. It was its last symbolic gesture. Omega's Seamaster then took its place on the most "secret" – and yet most visible – wrist that was so actively sought after by niche watchmaking brands. From the first Seamaster Diver 300M Quartz in “Goldeneye” (1995) to the Omega Seamaster Aqua Terra 150M in “Spectre” (2015), the brand stayed loyal to the secret agent for the next eight episodes of the saga. And it would seem that it is here to stay. Perhaps it will manage to take the place of Rolex in the collective unconscious related to James Bond. In any case, it appears that the cold war between the two brands is still ongoing.



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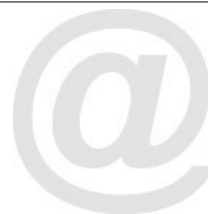
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A playful and informative exhibition

James Bond is quite obviously entrancing and leaves no one indifferent. He awakes one's inner child and all the memories related to these adventures colored by humor, class and seduction that made us laugh, shake with excitement and daydream. The exhibition has managed to play that card perfectly by offering several interactive presentations that will make the day of youngsters but also of adults who are children at heart.



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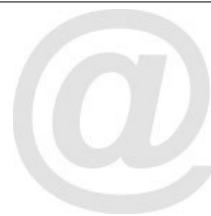
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One side of this exhibition shows a camera rolling around the Omega Seamaster Co Axial Chronometer 150M which appears on the display screen. On the other side, an animation makes the holographic representation of a Rolex Submariner Oyster Perpetual 200M disappear in a puff of smoke. A retractable Dietlin Raptor Alarm system prevents any attempt at touching the TAG Heuer Quartz on display. Visitors can envision themselves as James Bond and stop a hologram projection of a bullet before it destroys the Omega Seamaster 300M, though the latter is not easy to achieve. And since I met James in person, I would like to let you in on a little secret – in “Diamonds are Forever” (1971), he did not wear a watch!



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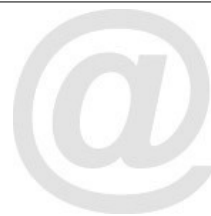
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I'm not sure that the gadgets exhibited shed light on the use of watchmaking complications, which in any case, is not the objective. The exhibition is about showing what watches represent and express – tradition, dreams, status, seduction and emotion. In this sense, the exhibition hits the mark, just like Bond does. It is a highly recommended visit, especially with family or friends.

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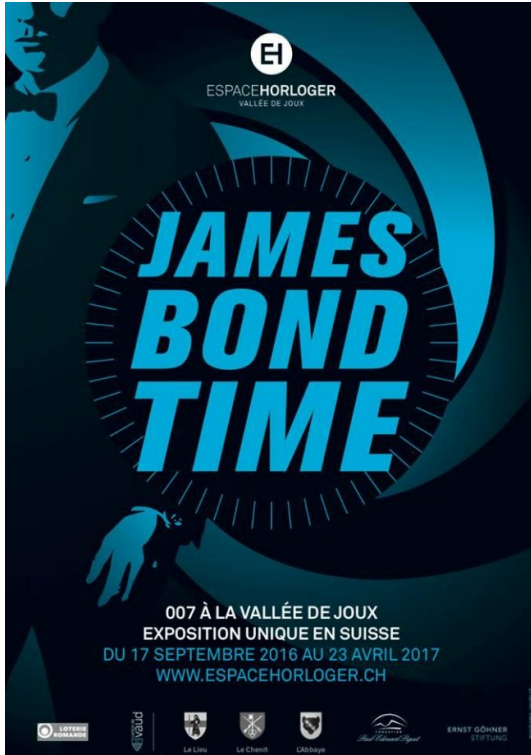


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Espace Horloger - Vallée de Joux - Grand-Rue 2 - CH-1347 Le Sentier

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