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# WatchPro

NEWS, TRENDS AND MARKET INTELLIGENCE FOR THE BRITISH WATCH INDUSTRY

INSIDE  
**YOUR FREE 14-PAGE  
CATALOGUE TO THE FIRST  
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**URWERK**  
**A MOVEMENT  
THAT ANYONE  
CAN CONTROL**  
P54

**THE LINK EFFECT**  
**TAKING CHAINS  
FROM RUNWAYS  
ONTO THE WRIST**  
P48

\*  
**SITTING  
PRETTY**  
JAEGER-LE COULTRE'S  
DEFINITIVE EXAMPLE OF  
WHY DIAMONDS SHOULD  
NEVER BE APPLIED IN  
HALF MEASURES  
p47

## DEPTH CHARGE

**Diving watches:** As more consumers take the plunge, we report on how brands are battling it out to go deeper.

**+**  
**COMMENT**  
ROBERT LOOMES ON THE  
BRITISH COMEBACK P14

**FACTS & FIGURES**  
UK WATCH SALES UP 9% LED  
BY FASHION BRANDS P12

# DIVE TIME

NAME A KEY WATCH BRAND AND CHANCES ARE IT HAS A HERO DIVING WATCH IN ITS PRODUCT LINE UP. **KATE DOHERTY** EXPLORES THE ONGOING EVOLUTION OF DIVING WATCHES, WHICH IS PARTING THE WAVES FOR NEW ICONS OF THE GENRE

**T**he world is getting smaller, travel more prolific and people's sense of adventure shows no sign of waning. Diving is increasingly popular and it's not just the professionals and extremists donning the scuba gear and discovering the wonders beneath the surfaces of the world's oceans. That said, divers' watches are not the timepiece of choice for diving enthusiasts only, their aesthetics and capabilities appeal to people with no desire to take the plunge. Recognising the demand for these watches that boast durability, cool style and functionality beyond timekeeping, brands are diversifying their diving watch offer, with some offering more serious diving credentials than others. However, for safety and honest trading's sake watch brands are being upfront about

the environment their watches are suitable for and arguably, rather than diluting the popular watch genre the ongoing developments are merely strengthening and broadening its appeal.

Statistics from global scuba diving organisation PADI revealed the number of certifications for entry level and continuing education diving awarded in 2012 was 945,107, which was 14,1666 up on the 930,941 certifications given in 2011. Meanwhile although there was a slight drop in the number of individual PADI members by 0.2%, comparing 2012 to 2011, individual membership has predominantly witnessed steady year-on-year growth and is up 66.9% to 135,710 on 1996, when membership was 91,321. Retail and resort PADI membership also remains strong, reaching 6,191, which is a 2.1% growth on 6,063 in 2011 and 53.4% overall growth compared to 1996.





While the popularity of diving seems to be rising, so too is the demand for robust diving watches, which are primarily essential safety tools leaving no room for compromise when it comes to accuracy, durability and reliability. Consequently, all water resistant wristwatches must conform to ISO 2281 standards, while to have the word 'divers' written on the dial or case back, a watch must also conform to ISO 6425. The latter comprises numerous requirements, which includes the watch being water resistant to a minimum of 100m, being readable at a distance of 25cm even in complete darkness, being shock resistant and having a strap that meets minimum robustness standards.

"As the popularity grows so will the two different strands of the market, the more design-led market and the more professional functional strand of the market," says Ralf Hilbich, product development manager at Oris. "All divers' watches have to meet a specific regulation to fall into the bracket of a diver's watch but, like with all products nowadays, brands will push and push to have the watch that can withstand the most depth or pressure as

hero pieces."

Oris is one of a number of key brands, well known to the consumer, with a lengthy history of divers' watches that started with the Meistertaucher and has culminated most recently in the Baselworld 2013 release of the Aquis Depth Gauge, a timepiece that is both stylish and practical.

"At Oris our design principle is very simple: 'form follows function' and we design all of our watches with this in mind," says Hilbich.

**STYLE AND SUBSTANCE**

Diving watches have been a key feature among divers' equipment for more than eight decades and among the icons that have emerged are the Rolex Submariner, Omega Seamaster and the Blancpain Fifty Fathoms, which was revived and celebrated at this year's BaselWorld with the creation of a new Blancpain Fifty Fathoms Bathyscaphe model to mark its 60th anniversary.

These heritage models and more

**Previous page**

*Deep Blue Watches recognises the need to diversify in the use of materials.*

**1**

*Deep Blue Watches is one of the brands striving to create watches that can go to new depths.*

**2**

*Panerai's long diving watch history includes equipping the Italian Navy Seals with watches*





3



4

recent manifestations have not gained popularity merely because of their diving functionality and the unidirectional bezel that indicates when to begin their ascent but, like most watches, because of the design elements too and the message implied - adventure and risk taking.

"Divers' watches have developed from purely practical instruments to something that can be worn in and out of the water," says Kirsten Crisford, UK marketing manager for Seiko. "The chunky looks that epitomised divers watches have become appealing to those that don't dive but like good watches. There is far more choice in the colours and materials too, now, with bright and varied colours available not just the

standard black."

Although Rolex is credited with creating the first "waterproof" watch in 1927, the Omega Marine watch created in 1932 was considered to be the first dive watch. The 1930s also saw Panerai present a number of divers' watches for the Italian Navy Seals before the 1953 Fifty Fathoms from Blancpain came onto the market and Rolex's Submariner in 1954. The '50s saw the genre truly gain momentum, beyond military use, with the discovery of the freedom offered by using cylinders in underwater diving. Brands including IWC and Omega were among those making significant advances, followed by Seiko in the mid 1960s. By the 1970s, some divers' watches were able to accompany their wearer to a depth of approximately 600m, with others certified to deeper than 1,000m.

"Water resistance became a battleground of competition as dives reached new depths," says Stan

**"Water resistance became a battleground of competition as dives reached new depths and today we are seeing new materials and components being used."**

Betesh at Deep Blue Watches. "Today we are seeing an increase in new materials and components being used on dive watches such as ceramic or sapphire bezels, adjustable wetsuit extensions on bracelets, not to mention the increase use of luminous properties."

Although to be a diver's watch a timepiece must have a water resistance to a minimum of 100m, these days diving watches tend to have a water resistance of between 200m and 300m, with some offering far greater resistance - depths that will never be experienced by most people.

"Equating a dive watch that has true water resistance over 200m ensures a quality timepiece that will perform," says Betesh. "Retailers want brands that will give their customers the best value as well as perfor-



5

mance and reliability."

Although evolution of the genre has enhanced the efficiency of diving watches, certain features have remained consistent throughout the years, including the unidirectional bezel for measuring elapsed time

and the resulting amount of oxygen used, telling the diver when they need to surface.

Meanwhile, cases are fashioned from seawater corrosion-resistant material such as titanium, stainless steel or ceramic and for the strap, which must withstand substantial force, materials used tend to be titanium, stainless steel or rubber.



6

3 Panerai's new diving watch was at SIHH 2013.

4 Product development is ongoing at Seiko.

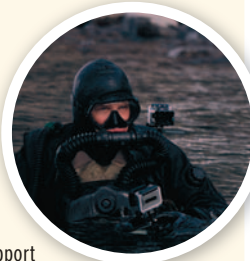
5 Luminosity is a key consideration for Ulysse Nardin.

6 Oris is known to customers for its diving watches.

## Q&A WITH DIVER SCOTT CASSELL

### UNDERWATER EXPLORER SCOTT CASSELL EXPLAINS WHY WEARING THE RIGHT WATCH IS ESSENTIAL FOR SAFETY AND PRECISION

Undersea explorer and expert counter-terrorism operative Scott Cassell works closely with Luminox, which supplies watches to the US Navy Seals. Luminox has backed Cassell with the launch of the 1525 Deep Dive Special Scott Cassell and the 3954 Colormark Special Scott Cassell timepieces, with a portion of the proceeds from sales going towards supporting Cassell's organisations, Sea Wolves and Underwater Voyager Project (UVP). For Cassell, who needs the right equipment to support his underwater expeditions, working with the right watch brand was non-negotiable.



**WatchPro:** Have watches always been an integral part of diving apparatus and why?

**Scott Cassell:** Diving is an art of time. To avoid running out of breathing gas at depth and to manage safe decompression and to make certain a high tide area is safe - time is life.

**WP:** What makes a decent diving watch?

**SC:** A dive watch used by professionals must be tough and clear. What I mean by that is it has to survive the stresses of a dive that is not recreational. Luminox is the only watch that that is always visible and when combined with its inherent toughness truly is essential gear to my work.

**WP:** Are there any modern developments that you are excited by?

**SC:** The 25-year glow with no external energy is my hands-down favourite but I must say seeing UVP and my Sea Wolves Unlimited logos on the watch faces is a close second – that's just me appreciating the courageous support of Luminox to the oceans and my work.

**WP:** Do you think amateur and pro divers look for different functions in their watches?

**SC:** Not really. I have noticed most recreational divers look to those that make their living in the sea for guidance and –often – correctly so. It seems to me that lately nearly everyone wants to look like a Combat Diver by wearing mostly black or camo dive gear. Why not? Imitation is the finest form of flattery.

**WP:** How important are looks for a diver's watch?

**SC:** To me, the reliability, toughness and ease of reading a bright clear face are what makes a watch great. Looks are not important to me. I am not fashionable in any sense - just ask my fiancé Kerry. Having said that, I'm blessed that the Luminox watches are so beautiful and it often sends a message that I may actually have some fashion sense. But to dispel any misconceptions, I don't.

Additionally divers' watches need to be readable in dark conditions so luminosity is essential.

Take, for example, Ulysse Nardin's newest Maxi Marine Diver, which carries on the family's use of large diving scale figures in gold on the dark rotating bezel. The contrast and visibility is emphasised further by a wave-patterned black dial, which supports applied luminous indexes to striking contrast. The watch also

has a screwed crown and is water resistant to 200m.

Innovation is taking other directions for some brands. At Linde Werdelin, innovation is at the heart of its diving watches. Rather than having the rotating bezel, its watches capture information via digital instrument The Reef, which fits over the watch, and uses a number of sensors, a low-power multi MPU platform, an advanced three axis

compass and alarm systems.

Other brands are developing products too, for instance, Citizen's professional dive watch has an electronic depth sensor – a world first, while, released in 2010, the Rolex Oyster Perpetual Sea-Dweller Deepsea was created to be water resistant to an extreme depth of 3,900m.

Although practicality is at the heart of divers' watches, aesthetics also play an important role.

At Seiko, product development addresses looks and functionality in equal measure. "We treat the practical requirements of a divers' watch with equal weight as the aesthetic requirements of any watch," explains Crisford. "We think about the watch being worn in and out of the sea and what that consumers would want." Grand Seiko recently launched the Spring Drive Diver's 200m with its one-way rotating bezel and screw crown, while Seiko introduced the Sportura Kinetic Divers Watch.

Citizen is also looking to diversify its dive watch offer and use new technologies. "When thinking about product design, it's all about the design combined with functionality," says Mark Robinson, MD at Citizen



**7**  
*Seiko gives equal weight to looks and personality.*

**8**  
*Oris recently released the Aquis Depth Gauge.*

UK. "Today, colour is very important both in terms of accents and bold elements. This is true for both gents' and ladies' dive watches."

Citizen's dive offer is evolving and this autumn the brand will launch the Promaster Depth Meter Chronograph, powered by Citizen's Eco-Dive technology whereby the watch is fuelled by light. A solar cell beneath the dial converts the light into energy to power the watch. Regular exposure to light means the watch will continually recharge itself. The lithium-ion rechargeable cell stores enough energy to power the watch up to seven years - depending on the mode - even in the dark.

At Deep Blue Watches, Betesh says that for them an exciting development has been the use of the gaseous self-contained tritium tubes that are said to glow for 25 years without an outside power source. He explains that in the UK

approval has now been granted to use higher capacity tritium on the dial. Ball watches also uses tritium gas in glass microtubes for its divers' watches.

While looks can be important to help the watch achieve commercial success and appeal to non-divers, most brands insist that functionality comes first. "In our opinion [priorities including] ease of reading the dial in different conditions and reliability should always be borne in mind," says Andrea Maggi brand manager at Squalo. "These features should never be neglected in the design of a diving watch, which must remain functional for diving when attempting to capture a broader range of clientele.

"Sometimes we are amazed by certain watches, which are supposed to be for diving and yet they have dials or functions that have nothing to do with the sector."



**REAL DEAL**

To ensure the watches remain suitable for use in a professional diving environment, brands maintain ongoing communications with divers. For instance, Squalo is in contact with professional scuba divers such as coral fishermen and underwater station workers, while also working with Michele Fucarino, a record holder for free diving distance.

At Oris too, knowledge sharing with professionals is a must. Hilbich says: "We have several diving ambassadors who provide us with a wealth of knowledge and experience from their daily lives. This gives us a wealth of information that we need to ensure we give them what they really need. The last thing we want to do is make a great looking diver's watch that doesn't do the job."

For retailers, these brand associations with experts can help with sales. "The history of the brand and the ambassadors give the buyer confidence when spending what can be many thousands of pounds," says Peter Jackson, managing director of Peter Jackson the Jeweller.

However, for Tom Milner, co-owner of retailer Tustains, diving watches do not have such a natural affiliation with ambassadors as other sports watches. "Interestingly, water sports don't generally provide the resource of household names



9

which golf or Formula One might, so despite being a key sales area, divers' watches don't have a natural affinity with ambassadorships," he says. "Specification and technical aspects tend to do the talking and ordinarily the diver's watch customer arrives well informed and the point of sale is about price."

Of course, not everyone who buys a diver's watch dives. Consumers' choice of watch makes a subtle statement and it's no difference when it comes to divers' watches. The watch's looks and functionality tend to imply a spirit of adventure.

"We only stock one brand of wristwatch who produce a specialised diving watch, which is Rolex with the Submariner, Submariner Date and Deep Sea," says Karl

Massey, managing director of Prestons of Bolton.

"All are extremely desirable and our problem tends to be having the available stock to meet the demand from customers.

"I would suggest that divers' watches are popular due to their styling rather than simply their functionality and with the Rolex Submariner being

**LESS PLUNGE, MORE SPLASH**

Just as strapping on the equipment and diving to extreme depths isn't for everyone, creating a model that can function at these depths isn't the remit of every watch brand. Those that don't produce technical dive watches recognise the appeal of water resistant pieces and are creating models with their own quirky take on the genre. At BaselWorld 2013, Nomos Glashütte introduced its Ahoi model that does exactly that. "Nomos' Ahoi can be taken as an interpretation of a diver's watch. It was not developed to fit this category," says Christiane von Trotha, head of public relations for Nomos Glashütte. "Our aim was to develop a watch for active people who might be involved in an array of water sports. In our development we took the technical specs of diving watches as our benchmark and Ahoi meets all of them, the only element we are missing is the rotating bezel. The watch is water resistant down to 20 bars, or 200m, features superluminova indices and has an innovative fabric strap, which is waterproof and will not come undone when you jump into the water."



the first true specialist diving watch it has the pedigree and credibility consumers look for."

Although some customers will buy for style over function, divers' watches will always have a role to play in a professional activity and trade. Watches that associate themselves with a sport that requires specialist training, dedication, skill and an element of risk taking must have a functionality and level of precision that makes them worthy of the genre, however, that's not to say they can't look good doing it. ↕

9  
*Citizen's dive offer continues to evolve.*

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*Luminox works with professional divers.*



10