

They're both mechanical status symbols—how else to explain the enduring partnership of watch and car? Ken Kessler investigates a co-branding conspiracy

RUNNING LIKE CLOCKWORK

If Sammy Cahn were alive today, writing the lyrics for a new version of Sinatra's *Love & Marriage*, one of the analogies he'd use would have to be "cars and watches". Not as elegant as "a horse and carriage", but the pairing does represent one of the most visible and successful examples of co-branding ever seen in the luxury sector. And the nuptials that represent the apotheosis? Bentley and Breitling.

While the two Bs changed the face of watch marketing forever, the link is not particularly new. There have been timepieces branded for automotive marques ever since the dawn of motoring. As long ago as the 1920s, Ettore Bugatti had Mido produce a run of watches shaped like his cars' famous stirrup radiator to serve as gifts to successful drivers and cherished clients, and fitted Breguet stopwatches to the steering wheel hub of the Royale.

Since then, promotions have included a Lancia watch shaped like a steering wheel, a Corum in the form of a miniature Rolls-Royce radiator, and radiator-shaped offerings from Chevy, Audi, Volvo and others.

Aside from these assorted one-offs, car and watch combinations were often decidedly downmarket, the sort of trinkets car dealers sold in their showrooms. A major exception was a series of very fine wristwatches that Girard-Perregaux produced in conjunction with Ferrari

during the 1990s and early 2000s, superb timekeepers inspired by individual Ferrari models. But it was the unforeseen liaison between Bentley and Breitling that changed the landscape forever. It also exposed a seam that runs through the watch-making industry:

unbridled copycat behaviour. In 2002, commemorating their Le Mans effort, Bentley teamed up with Breitling, a company with a long and celebrated tradition for producing rugged watches for aviators. Dubbed "Breitling for Bentley", the first results exceeded expectations.



Time travel



1920s » **Bugatti** made by **Mido**

1960s » **Rolex** makes a specific chronograph associated with Paul Newman, who wore it in the film *Winning*. It has been known as "the Paul Newman" ever since.

1960s » **TAG-Heuer** starts manufacturing sports chronographs, mainly named after race circuits. Now sponsor of **TAG-McLaren F1** team, enjoying the rise of Lewis Hamilton

1972 » **Porsche Design** launches its first range of watches, associated with Porsche automobiles

1988 » **Chopard**: Long-time sponsor of the Mille Miglia, designs a series of watches bearing the race's name.

1997 » **Franck Muller** makes a model called the **Chronograph Endurance** with 24-hour dial, known as the "Le Mans Watch"

2002 » **Bugatti** offers a unique design, made by **Parmigiani Fleurier**

2003 » **Bentley and Breitling** launch an entire family of watches.

2003 » **Oris**, sponsor of the **BMW-Williams F1** Team, produces chronographs bearing the team name

2007 » **Alfa-Romeo** combines with **Mazzuoli** for the Contagiri, with a dial resembling a 60s speedometer