



As Time Goes By

From Bogart to Bond; from the Tank to the Seamaster and beyond, the glamorous wristwatch has found its spiritual home in Hollywood. BRONWYN COSGRAVE follows its symbolic journey from rushes to red carpet

ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN MCCABE

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udolph Valentino has always been given credit for introducing the finely crafted wristwatch to Hollywood. Certainly, by persuading director George Fitzmaurice to allow him to wear his precious Cartier Tank in “every scene” of *The Son of the Sheik*, the silent-screen star gave this oblong beauty more publicity than its maker likely ever thought possible.

Louis Cartier had created the Tank at the height of the Great War, in 1917. He named it after the big-wheeled, armoured fighting vehicles then rolling through the Western Front. The industrial inspiration of his creation, however, belied its rarefied quality. When Valentino acquired a Tank of his very own, it was from a limited production; for instance in 1920 Cartier produced just 33 Tanks. Millions who flocked to see *The Son of the Sheik* upon its September 1926 release ogled it. But by then, Valentino was already interred at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery. His sudden passing amidst the romantic drama’s promotional tour boosted *The Son of the Sheik*’s box-office taking. It was rumoured that the wristwatch, however, lay under 6ft of Hollywood soil.

The movie professionals who actually sported wristwatches in old Hollywood were mostly those for whom the clock was always ticking—namely, directors who were at the mercy of studio bosses to deliver, on time and on budget, those blockbuster epics that defined American cinema’s Golden Age. The Tank was also the watch of choice of George Cukor, who compared movie production to horology, due to the painstaking craftsmanship inherent in both pursuits.

The watch came of age on screen and the red carpet at the height of the Second World War. Warner Brothers then set out to make *Casablanca*, and while a team of screenwriters worked against the clock to adapt the classic from Murray Burnett and Joan Alison’s unstaged play *Everybody Comes to Rick’s*, it was clear, before the cameras rolled, that Humphrey Bogart, portraying the jaded American expatriate nightclub proprietor Rick Blaine, required a watch in order to deliver lines such as “Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon, and for the rest of your life.”

Warner Brothers’ costume department, like every other one operated by Hollywood’s “Big Five” studios, was adhering to strict textile rations instigated during

the war. This utilitarian spirit had outlawed black tie and opulent jewellery at the Oscars, although it was a boon to the wristwatch. For Bogie, no expense was spared acquiring a pink-gold Longines Evidenza. The sense of stoic manliness the charismatic star was set to project on screen was firmly associated with this Swiss brand, known as it was for producing watches for an international array of military units. Bogart’s Longines never got a close-up in *Casablanca*, so the audience was likely unaware of the meaning behind the choice. But just as Alfred Hitchcock dispatched Grace Kelly to Hermès in Paris for gloves and handbags in spring 1954 so that she would genuinely feel as though she was Frances Stevens, the heiress she was set to portray in *To Catch a Thief*, it is likely that Bogart’s Longines fulfilled a similar purpose. Examining its “tonneau-shaped” (barrel-formed) case on set and in his dressing room likely fuelled his imagination with the images of fortitude and resilience that he was charged with evoking on screen.

After *Casablanca*, Bogie’s Longines rarely left his anatomy. The brand released an updated version in 2003, paying homage to the original, which is exhibited at the Longines Museum in St-Imier in Switzerland. When Bogart arrived at the 27th Academy Awards in 1955 with his Longines on one arm and Lauren Bacall on the other, his timepiece became the original red-carpet wristwatch.

Today, this sort of timepiece is also known as the “status watch”, and ever since Bogart took Bacall and his Longines to the Oscars, expensive Swiss-made arm candy has been flaunted with gay aplomb by Hollywood’s finest, including Clark Gable, Cary Grant and Warren Beatty, both on screen and at red-carpet events. For over a decade now, representatives of the world’s most important watch manufacturers have been securing watches for nominees, presenters and other notables attending winter’s marathon succession of film festivals and awards ceremonies, because, explains Wes Carroll, “it translates into sales”.

Carroll is the director of Circa Jewels in Beverly Hills, a leading diamond, fine-jewellery and watch-resale service. For decades, he saw some of the world’s greatest jewellers—including

HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU

Right: Joan Crawford and Clark Gable, sporting a Cartier Tank, in MGM's *Dancing Lady*, 1933.
Facing page: newlyweds Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, 1945



PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY (GABLE); COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION/REX SHUTTERSTOCK (BOGART/BACALL)

Bulgari, Cartier, Graff Diamonds and Harry Winston—vie to adorn Hollywood’s A List with fine jewellery and watches during awards season. “Today, a brand would rather put a watch on a celebrity than place a one-of-a-kind necklace on an actress,” he observes. “The price points for watches are high. But a good watch is more affordable than a million-dollar necklace. People can actually save to own a watch they see on the red carpet. At the Beverly Hills Omega boutique, people come in all the time and say: ‘Show me the James Bond watch. I want the James Bond watch.’ I know, because the manager is my friend.”

The “James Bond watch” is now the Omega Seamaster. Though 007 is equipped with a Rolex Explorer in Ian Fleming’s novels, Sean Connery debuted on screen as the fictional MI6 officer sporting a Rolex Submariner. The modest \$1million budget of *Dr. No*, the first Bond film, starring Connery, precluded the acquisition of an Explorer. So producer Albert R. “Cubby” Broccoli handed over his own Submariner to the “uncut diamond”, as he referred to Connery while the latter was being groomed to be Bond. The appreciation for precious ornaments that Broccoli acquired working as a messenger for a

introducing Brosnan’s and Craig’s Bonds. For *GoldenEye*, Hemming admits that she argued against Brosnan carrying the torch for Rolex. “It was the early 1990s and Rolex was perceived as a very expensive watch—a watch for a man who led a very different lifestyle to James Bond,” she recalls.

For Hemming, Omega’s heritage, as watchmaker to Britain’s Royal Flying Corps from 1917, made it credibly associated with James Bond, a Royal Navy Commander. “My dad was in the RAF, and when I was a child I met some of his friends,” Hemming continues. “I was taken by one who was in the Marines and he wore an Omega. The Seamaster is also an explorer’s watch, and I loved its blue face. James Bond wears a lot of blue.”

Hemming also convinced Omega to arm Daniel Craig’s Seamaster with a rubber strap so he could wear it in a pivotal scene that will forever be associated with his debut in *Casino Royale*, in which he emerges from the sea on Paradise Island. “That was that, really,” says Hemming, recalling the ensemble she carefully composed—namely a pair of skimpy La Perla swimming trunks and the water-resistant Omega

“I COULDN’T GIVE YOU SALES FIGURES, BUT THE PEAKS AROUND RELEASE DATES ARE UNBELIEVABLE”

Beverly Hills jeweller in 1930s has always guided the hand of the Bond costume designers. With the exception of Roger Moore wielding Seikos during 007’s gadget period, Bond has always graced the screen, and the promotional red carpet, in Swiss-made watches, while fine jewels by David Morris often beautified his “girls”.

As Omega became the “official timekeeper” for 007 films upon *GoldenEye*’s 1995 release, Pierce Brosnan’s runaway success as its brand ambassador unleashed the “arms race” that continues to this day, whereby watchmakers vie to lock down Hollywood’s finest as their official representatives.

Since 2005, John Travolta has lent his passion for aviation (he is a pilot certified to operate eight types of aircraft, including jumbo jets) to Breitling, the Swiss maker of sports and pilots’ watches. Clive Owen’s recent association with Jaeger-LeCoultre was prompted by his affinity for the brand: “I was a customer first,” he has said. Sharon Stone successfully launched Dior’s Christal watches in 2007. Two years later, Leonardo DiCaprio secured a deal which was “said to be worth several million dollars,” according to *Women’s Wear Daily*, to represent TAG Heuer. He replaced Brad Pitt (a watch connoisseur), whose everyday-wear model, a vintage platinum Patek Philippe chronometer, has been valued at £200,000. Charlie Sheen’s extensive watch collection is rumoured to be Hollywood’s finest, and calculated to be worth between £3.7 and £6.61 million.

Daniel Craig, who stars in *Spectre*, the 24th James Bond film, opening in November, is said to have made Omega’s Seamaster truly sought-after—so says Lindy Hemming. This Oscar-winning costume designer has masterminded epic wardrobes for five Bond films, twice at crucial periods as the series “rebooted”,

Seamaster. “That combination transformed the Seamaster into a best-seller.”

Stephen Urquhart, President of Omega, refrains from talking numbers when it comes to Bond. “I can’t give you sales figures, but if I could show you a graph, you could see the peaks during the release dates of the films—it’s unbelievable,” he says. A Seamaster on screen, Urquhart says, is more effective, from a marketing perspective, than a Seamaster on the red carpet. “The red carpet—it is nice to have a watch out there,” he adds. “It is on show. However it is nothing compared to a watch on the big screen.”

Georges Kern, chief executive officer of IWC Schaffhausen, feels that a presence on the red carpet is crucial to promote the brand’s initiatives in global cinema, including annually bestowing the IWC Filmmaker Award at the Tribeca Film Festival, the Beijing International Film Festival and the Dubai International Film Festival. “Our customers trust IWC Schaffhausen to be a leader in style and innovation, and as such, it is important for us to be on the wrists of people who are fashion leaders or innovators in their own ways. The three men who wore our pieces to this year’s Academy Awards—Bradley Cooper, Edward Norton and Chris Evans—are all actors we admire because of their pioneering spirit and their dedication to their craft—qualities that we share as a brand. We were fortunate enough for the attraction to be mutual.”

Orchestrating red-carpet photographs costs a luxury brand far less than masterminding an elaborate advertising campaign. Performers, such as actors and musicians, are said to “humanize” branded merchandise and make it desirable because, out there on the red carpet, they exude personality rather than just physical perfection—the principal attribute of a model.

TERRY O’NEILL/GETTY IMAGES (BROSNAN); ARCHIVES CARTIER © CARTIER (TANK); GEORGE HOVNINGER-HUENEY/CONDÉ NAST ARCHIVE (CARY GRANT); HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES (BEATTY & WOOD); BERT STERN/CONDÉ NAST ARCHIVE (HAMILTON); DANJAQ/EON/UA/THE KOBAL COLLECTION (CONNERY); ARCHIVE IMAGES (CRAIG); © CHRISTIE’S IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN IMAGES (SEAMASTER)



TIME WE HAD A TALK
Left: Sharon Stone and Robert De Niro in Casino, 1995. Facing page, from top: the Mademoiselle Privé by Chanel; a Chopard diamond Haute Joaillerie watch; Marion Cotillard, in Dior and Chopard, at the 19th Screen Actors' Guild Awards, 2013

in the film, so did Stone's Bulgari watch pay homage to the outstanding designs which the esteemed Roman jeweller had furnished for Martin Scorsese's Vegas epic. The watch also lent authority and contemporary spirit to the black-and-white Vera Wang column Stone modelled that night. "However glamorous, however jewel-encrusted, a watch will always signify a certain strength in a woman," observes the author and jewellery expert Vivienne Becker. "That strength is especially important today, at a time of strong, warrior-like femininity—beauty and brains."

"Women are discovering that a watch is no longer really just a watch, or an instrument that merely tells the time," explains the artistic director of Chopard, Caroline Scheufele. "A watch is a piece of fine jewellery. And nobody really needs a watch to tell the time any more, because time is displayed everywhere today. So a watch is something to cherish. And, today, with so many objects that tell the time displayed all

Giorgio Armani first proved this back in 1988. Broadening his horizons beyond menswear, Mr. Armani enlisted Wanda McDaniel, a connected communications executive, to offer a line-up of Oscar-bound females whom he admired, including Glenn Close, Jodie Foster and Michelle Pfeiffer, ensembles from his new evening collection, Borgonuovo. This proved a blockbuster move. Thirty years on, while every major luxury brand has followed Mr. Armani's lead, his original celebrity ambassadors remain loyal to his brand.

In 1996, when Sharon Stone became the first actress to brandish a watch on an awards podium, she also demonstrated how to do so with flair. Accepting Best Actress at the 53rd Golden Globes for her portrayal as Ginger McKenna in *Casino*, Stone flaunted an 18ct-gold Bulgari Quadrato Tubogas, with its modish square case. Just as Audrey Hepburn accepted the Best Actress prize at the 26th Academy Awards for *Roman Holiday* wearing the diamond and pearl earrings in which she appeared

around us, our current era of information overload, an exquisite watch is something truly precious. It is a symbol reminding us to enjoy the moment."

No other red-carpet jewel—be it earrings, a bracelet, necklace or hair ornament—can signify that an actress is a dynamo. And yet, 19 years on from Stone's appearance at the Golden Globes, spotting a female nominee or presenter flaunting a wristwatch on the red carpet is about as common as a foreign-language film competing for the Best Picture Oscar. That is, every other year or so, one *might* turn up.

In February 2013, an 18ct-white-gold Chopard Haute Joaillerie watch, with an intricate dial snow-set with diamonds of varying diameter, accentuated the midnight-blue satin strapless Christian Dior gown in which Marion Cotillard appeared at the 19th Screen Actors Guild Awards. Cotillard shot to the top of the best-dressed lists that now appear weekly on the web. Jessica Chastain followed on at this year's 72nd Golden Globe Awards.

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Hollywood's ARMS RACE

Who's been flashing what on the red carpet? Here's our roll call of glamorous wrists—give them a big hand



“HOWEVER GLAMOROUS, HOWEVER JEWELLED, A WATCH WILL ALWAYS SIGNIFY A CERTAIN STRENGTH IN A WOMAN”

Chastain was competing for the Best Supporting Actress prize for *A Most Violent Year*. The Globes also marked her red-carpet debut as Piaget’s brand ambassador. Of the appointment, Chabi Nouri, Piaget’s director of “jewellery marketing, communications and brand equity” explains: “Piaget is known for its audacious designs, and Jessica is audacious in the career choices she has made. Charisma, allure, and chic describe Piaget and also Jessica. She knows her style.”

So Chastain and her stylist, Elizabeth Stewart, were granted complete freedom in Piaget’s *haute joaillerie* atelier and *haute horlogerie* workshop to select adornments for the Globes. The extraordinary Piaget Limelight Cuff, their ultimate choice, involved “thousands of hours” of craftsmanship in both hallowed domains and is composed of pear-, baguette-, brilliant-, emerald- and marquise-cut white diamonds in an arabesque-patterned bracelet-band that conceals a delicate “secret” timepiece (the staggering price is £401,000). Such “jewels which tell the time”, adds Becker, compose an elite category of creative watchmaking that is now burgeoning. Buccellati, for instance, recently introduced the elegant Cleopatra. This curvaceous object is a reconfiguration of the iconic cuff bracelet for which the firm’s founder, Mario Buccellati, became known as “the prince of goldsmiths” in 1919, conceiving a *trompe l’oeil* engraving technique evoking lace-like patterns on the precious metals from which he shaped his landmark designs.

Chanel’s Mademoiselle Privé line features one-of-a-kind timepieces showcasing its house flower, the camellia, and, ingeniously, merging horology and haute couture. The watches are produced collaboratively, by Chanel’s Swiss watch factory and Maison Lesage, the venerable Paris embroidery house that has beautified Chanel couture since 1924. Chanel acquired a 70 per cent stake in Lesage in 1997, and a few years ago Nicolas

Beau, the international director of Chanel Horlogerie, got to work merging the “embroidery know-how” of Lesage with Chanel’s horology expertise. “Gabrielle Chanel’s favourite flower [is] produced using coloured silk threads to form a tiny painting in needlework on black or beige background fabric,” he explains of the Mademoiselle Privé’s design process. “Each embroidery showcases meticulous and exacting technique that can be seen in these dials. Once the embroidery is finished, the silk dials are shipped to the Chanel watch factory. Here, they are transformed into the Mademoiselle Privé watches by the in-house experts.”

A lingering effect of the 2008 economic downturn was a toning-down of the majestic jewellery customarily flashed by actress nominees, yet that often detracted from their beauty and style. Ilaria Urbinati—who “has a monopoly on dressing what seems like most of Hollywood’s A-List actors” according to the *New York Times*—explains how she “pulls” luxury watches by IWC Schaffhausen for a number of the leading men she preps for the red carpet, such as Bradley Cooper, Chris Evans and James Marsden. “Armie Hammer is more of a Breitling guy,” she admits of *The Lone Ranger*’s star. “Some of my guys love Rolex. I put Ty Burrell in a Montblanc watch last year,” she adds, referring to the rose-gold Meisterstück Heritage Perpetual Calendar in which the *Modern Family* star was honoured as Best Supporting Actor at the 66th Primetime Emmy Awards. As for her top actress clients, including Lizzy Caplan, Laura Dern, Emma Stone and Shailene Woodley, Urbinati admits: “I tend to prefer minimal accessories. I like a cleaner, simpler, fuss-free look. I prefer to show a woman’s skin—her neck and her arms—rather than a bunch of jewellery.”



Tom Cross, 2015

Chris Evans, 2015

James Marsden, 2014

Jessica Chastain, 2015

Neil Patrick Harris, 2015

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Yet there is light on the horizon for the red-carpet wristwatch, and new territories to explore for makers of luxury timepieces. Apple's summer smart-watch launch might have hovered like a dark cloud over awards season 2015, but it seems to have stimulated the imagination of scouts operating for venerable brands. This year, a number ventured to a place where most brands never go—namely, “below the line”.

In Hollywood parlance, this term describes the technical crew who work behind the scenes in movie production. Since 2001, the Hamilton Watch Company has honoured professionals from this realm, bestowing them with statuettes and watches at its Behind the Camera Awards. Staged biannually at the start of awards season, the ceremony also highlights Hamilton's endeavours producing timepieces for over 400 films, from Stanley Kubrick's 1968 sci-fi masterpiece *2001: A Space Odyssey* to Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*. And thanks to Jaeger-LeCoultre, film editor Tom Cross claimed the BAFTA, the Independent Spirit Award and an Oscar for *Whiplash* brandishing one of its finest watches—a Grande Reverso Ultra Thin Tribute to 1931. Ariel Adams, the Los Angeles-based founding editor of *A Blog To Watch*, introduced Jaeger-LeCoultre to Cross and claims their association was fortuitous. “Tom Cross is the sort of film professional who would actually buy the watch,” he says.

As everyone by now knows, “watches are gifted to the publicist,

short, just above his wrists. This meant that the folded margin of his left sleeve was subtly tucked in behind his Clé. The arrangement allowed its face to peep from his wrist.

Having selected powder blue as the tone for Leto's Givenchy suit, Erlanger also transformed her client to be a Cartier poster boy. The pastel shade highlighted the signature feature of the Clé, which is also a hallmark of all Cartier watches—namely, the deep blue sapphire cabochon embellishing its winding mechanism. *Women's Wear Daily* slammed Leto's attire, noting: “He looks like Jesus Christ going to a Seventies prom.” However, the meticulous level of attention the star and his stylist devoted to showcasing his Cartier ceremonial jewel has not been seen since 1970. This was when Elizabeth Taylor enlisted famed costume designer Edith Head to conceive an Oscar dress specifically to highlight a heaving necklace adorned with the “Taylor-Burton” diamond. Incidentally, Richard Burton purchased the 68ct precious stone from Cartier in 1969.

If Neil Patrick Harris's efforts hosting this year's Oscars garnered him “tepid” reviews, at least according to *Variety* magazine, like Leto he certainly made an impact for horology on the red carpet by flaunting not one but a trio of different timepieces over the course of the 3h 43min telecast. Before curtain call, Harris ventured on to the red carpet brandishing a Jaeger-LeCoultre Reverso. Then, after he brought the house

THIS YEAR, A NUMBER VENTURED WHERE WATCH BRANDS NEVER GO: NAMELY, “BELOW THE LINE”

the stylist and the star. It is just the way business is done,” says Wes Carroll. “Pretty much everything is gifted, unless it is high jewellery. Gifts are often made [alongside] in a dollar amount, comparable to the price of a jewel a celebrity may wear, to a charity of their choice.”

But there is work to do out there. At this year's Academy Awards, Jared Leto, for example, likely had a lot on his hands when he agreed to brandish a new Clé de Cartier watch on his arm. Because of his Best Supporting Actor Oscar victory last year for his role as Rayon, the HIV-positive trans woman in *Dallas Buyers Club*, Leto was charged with bestowing the Best Supporting Actress Oscar this year. Smartly, Cartier had locked him down to launch the Clé collection two months prior to its April retail debut. Because the terminology associated with the Clé—such as its cycloidal round face with its “gently rounded” bezel set into the tonneau case—would probably be lost on viewers of those marathon pre-shows that effectively function as luxury-brand commercials, Leto and his stylist, Micaela Erlanger, accomplished their duty with some smart sartorial flourishes.

As though it were a sweep of chiffon unfurling over a pair of sleek Manolos so as to reveal just a little seductive toe cleavage, the sleeves of Leto's sharp Givenchy dinner jacket were so expertly tailored that the cuffs stopped

down with his opening act, in which he brandished an 18ct-white-gold alligator-strapped 38mm Piaget Altiplano, he said goodnight with Audemars Piguet's Royal Oak self-winding watch.

Sartorial changeover has always proved significant at the Oscars ever since Diana Ross heralded the practice midway through the ceremony in 1973. Ross was a front-runner for the 45th Best Actress Oscar for her performance as Billie Holiday in *Lady Sings the Blues*. Ultimately, Liza Minnelli's Sally Bowles trumped her with *Cabaret*. Nevertheless, Ross went down in fashion history by slipping out of her arrival suit—a satin tuxedo—and into what she thought would be her “winning” look—a long black evening gown. “Nobody changed back then at the Oscars, but Diana wanted to,” reflected Bob Mackie, who made the outfits. “Anything she wanted, she could have—and she wanted to change.”

Following Ross's lead, women in Hollywood began to take charge of their awards-show attire, shopping for their own finery or appointing stylists to do so, rather than leaving their needs to studio bosses who appointed costume designers to create it. As for the impact Harris's move may have on the red-carpet wristwatch, well... Only time will tell. □

