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OMEGA SEAMASTER 300M DIVER MAGAZINE
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OMEGA SEAMASTER 300M DIVER MAGAZINE

25 YEARS OF AN ICON – IN 25 ARTICLES

OUR WEBSITE www.fratellowatches.com is – perhaps – most famous for the Speedy Tuesday feature, covering everything about and around the legendary "Moonwatch" from Omega. But there's this other classic from the Bienne *manufacture*, a classic that has "only" been around since 1993. Of course, I am talking about the Seamaster 300M Diver. This professional divers' watch (also with the designation "Professional" on the dial) has won the hearts of many watch enthusiasts over the years, also those who aren't fond of swimming or diving. The Seamaster 300M Diver is the perfect all-round watch, whether you have one of the first references from the 1990s or the upgraded 2018 version on your wrist, packed with all the recent Omega innovations.

I vividly remember buying my first Seamaster 300M Diver watch, the reference 2531.80. It was also known as the James Bond watch at the time, as it was featured in *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997), *The World is Not Enough* (1999) and *Die Another Day* (2002). In *GoldenEye* (1995), James Bond wore the quartz version (reference 2541.80). It was not because of James Bond that I bought this watch, but because I fancied its design and style, including the beautiful blue wave-dial pattern. It was powered by the Omega Caliber 1120 at that time, a reliable power source for this divers' watch. Being a student back then, I spent all summer of the year 2000 working at a large publishing house in The Hague, to be able to fund this blue-dial Seamaster 300M Diver. When I finally got it from a local authorized Omega dealer, I couldn't be any happier and for a long time it was my daily companion.

Over the years, I added other Seamaster 300M Diver models to my modest collection, my latest acquisition being the Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph that was also introduced in 1993 and made of titanium, tantalum and rose gold (reference 2296.80). A crazy watch, as Omega used different exotic materials for the case and bracelet. The pushers on this chronograph watch can be used under water as well, without having to unscrew them first. A watch I always admired, but never got myself to buy one, until last year.

On our online magazine, our editor Balázs Ferenczi called the Seamaster 300M Diver 2531.80 a "sleeper watch," meaning that it will probably become highly collectible in the future. Now, with the introduction of the new Seamaster 300M Diver in 2018, we will probably soon find out what it will mean for the demand for its predecessors. This year, 25 years after the introduction of the first Seamaster 300M Diver, the watch has been upgraded with a slightly larger case, an in-house developed Master Chronometer movement and new waves on the dial. It is available on a rubber strap or on a stainless-steel bracelet with the same design elements as the 1993 model. The watch matured in the last 25 years, became a divers' watch with its own unique features, unmistakably recognizable as the 300M – and simply an icon.

In order to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Seamaster 300M Diver, you will find the same number of articles about it in this magazine. Enjoy!

Robert-Jan Broer

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INTRODUCTION OF THE SEAMASTER 300M DIVER

THE BIRTH OF AN ICON

1993

TEXT: ROBERT-JAN BROER

First launched in 1993, the Seamaster 300M Diver today is a classic. Not only because of its looks, its role in James Bond movies or the fact that is worn by famous people such as Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, but also because it has been a prominent watch in Omega's collection for 25 years. Before we focus on this new classic, we should first go back a bit further in time, to understand how the Seamaster 300M Diver came to life.

2018

THE SEAMASTER was the first watch from Omega that became a collection. Later on, Constellation, Speedmaster and De Ville followed. The very first Seamaster was introduced as early as 1948 and became famous as a watch resistant to moisture and dust. The first models were inspired by the watches that Omega delivered to the British Ministry of Defense at the end of World War II: a waterproof watch, but at that time by no means a divers' watch. That changed a few years later, and in 1955 the Seamaster's first diving record was achieved in Australia, when diver Gordon McLean reached a depth of 62.5 meters.

Omega was not exactly new to waterproof watches, as they showed with the Marine watch in 1932. In 1936, this watch was taken to a depth of 16 meters by diver Yves Le Prieur and American explorer Charles William Beebe. However, in 1957, Omega intro-

duced three new "professional" watches: the Speedmaster, Railmaster and Seamaster 300. The Seamaster 300 was the professional toolwatch for divers, with a water resistance of 200 meters.

In the following years, Omega kept developing their divers' watches and most notable are perhaps the famous Seamaster PloProf 600M that was introduced in 1970 and the 1972 Seamaster Professional 1000M. Besides these professional models, Omega also designed numerous other Seamaster watches in the 1970s, like the Cosmic 2000 collection, the Seamaster chronographs, the Seamaster 120M models and various others with quartz and Megaquartz movements. Omega was covering all sorts of styles with the Seamaster line, but from the 1970s onwards always with a nod to sports.

In the 1980s, the chunky sports models were replaced by refined collections such as the Seamaster Titane Polaris and the 120M (Calypso II and III) models. Then, in 1988, Omega introduced the Seamaster 200M in both quartz and automatic versions. Although all of these models in the 1980s were probably up to the task of being divers' watches, the innovations that Omega made in the 1960s and 1970s weren't surpassed.

A new era

In 1993, Omega introduced a new divers' watch to the Seamaster family: the Seamaster 300M Diver, in both quartz and automatic versions (for automatic version, see article opener). All were water resistant up to 300 meters (1,000 ft) and had an extra crown at 10 o'clock. This is the manual helium valve, necessary after completing saturation dives to ensure the helium gas can escape without blowing off the sapphire crystal.

Furthermore, the Omega Seamaster 300M Diver was equipped with a new bracelet, showing nine links in a row and equipped with an extendable clasp. This would enable the wearer to use it over his or her neoprene diving suit. Omega introduced a number of variations of the Seamaster 300M Diver, in stainless steel, in gold and steel and in full gold. A rubber strap was also optional for this watch. The uni-directional bezel made of aluminium was available in a variety of colors, and a golden bezel was also an option. Omega also added a chronograph to the Seamaster 300M Diver collection, using the Caliber 1164. The chronograph was slightly (0.5mm) larger than the regular three-hands model with its 41mm diameter. Besides the chronograph, Omega added a Seamaster 300M Diver GMT and, later on, a regatta timer. There were smaller sized versions than the 41mm watches as well: a mid-size model measured 36mm and was available both in quartz and automatic, and a lady-sized Seamaster measuring 28mm was only available with a quartz movement.

Over the years, the Seamaster 300M Diver became a well-known and recognized divers' watch – not only capable of operating as a professional piece of equipment below the surface of the ocean, but also as a daily wearer for many. Whether you were a watch enthusiast, a diver or someone who just wanted a good watch, the Seamaster 300M Diver from 1993 was all of that.

As time went by, the watch faced some small modifications and updates. The self-winding Caliber 1120 has been replaced by the Caliber 2500, which features the Co-Axial escapement that was introduced in 1999. The aluminium inlay of the diving bezel has been replaced by ceramics and the waves made way for a beautiful lacquered dial. The Seamaster 300M Diver was ahead of its time in 1993 and grew to be an icon in its own genre. The fact that it became the watch of choice for James Bond in 1995 (*GoldenEye*) surely helped to boost its success.

Besides Bond, you will also find the Seamaster 300M Diver on the wrists of those who just want to have a good watch, a watch that makes perfect sense when it comes to aesthetics, specifications and price. Omega reached out to a large audience with this watch, and still does today.

The next generation

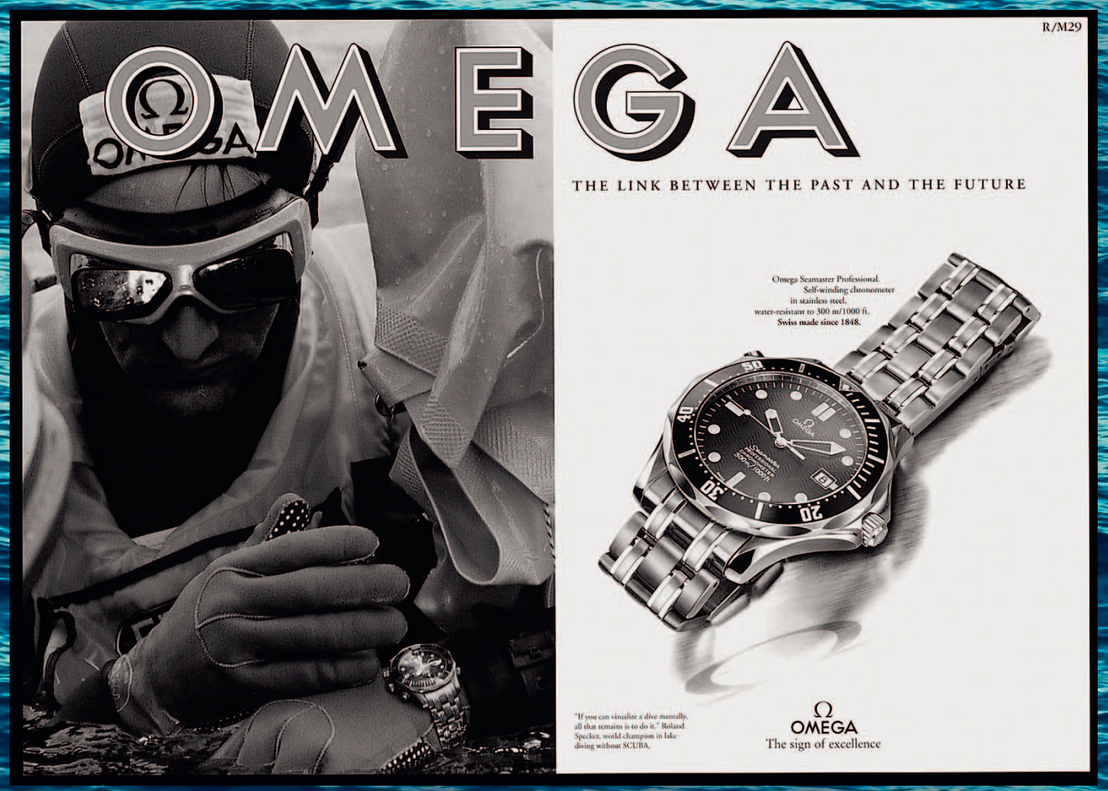
Now, 25 years later, Omega introduced a real successor to the Seamaster 300M Diver (see preceding page). Where previous updates where definitely important steps, in 2018 we see a total upgrade. Omega did not modify the existing Seamaster 300M Diver by adding a new dial or movement, but they designed the watch all over again – of course based on the design of the model that was produced and sold since 1993. Omega brought back the wave pattern dial, now established by using laser techniques. The diameter of the watch increased from 41 to 42mm and the Caliber 2500 was replaced by the in-house developed and manufactured Caliber 8800. This movement has received the Master Chronometer certification, which means that it performs according to much stricter requirements than a chronometer-certified watch.

The new Seamaster 300M Diver is available in 14 different versions, ranging from the classic blue dial and bezel model on stainless steel to a special variation using titanium, tantalum and Sedna gold in a limited series. The often praised nine-row bracelet also has been made more up-to-date, with a flatter appearance. The new Seamaster 300M Diver is also available on a very comfortable and newly designed rubber strap. Like that, the icon is ready for the future.

A part of Omega's dive-watch history: Marine from 1932 (top left), first Seamaster watches from 1948 (top right), Seamaster 300 from 1957 (center), Seamaster PloProf 600M from 1970 (center, right), Seamaster Professional 1000M (left) and Seamaster 120M Chrono (right), both from 1972.

WHAT IS A DIVERS' WATCH?

TEXT: PAUL DEZENTJÉ



The first divers' watch was launched in the 1930s. Since then, dive watches were developed further and further, aiming to go deeper. But how do we define such a watch? And what did Omega add to its evolution?

A real divers' watch: ad for the Seamaster 300M Diver from 1993

Photo: stock.adobe.com/underworld

THE FIRST THING that comes to mind when you think about a divers' watch is "waterproof." Manufacturers no longer use this term and prefer "water resistant" instead. According to the Swiss Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie the word "waterproof" describes a watch which, in theory, will not let water in at a depth of up to 3 atmospheres or 30 meters. Their description of "water resistant" is exactly the same. Note, not each waterproof watch is a dive watch.

The evolution of the hermetically closed watch

Like Rome, the waterproof watch wasn't built in a day. It is the product of a gradual process that started in the late 1800s. The first watch made and tested to dive with, occurred in the wristwatch era. But long before that, in the pocket watch epoch, manufacturers wanted to produce a watch case that would keep out dust (to keep the oil fluid and the watch running on time) and moisture (to avoid rust).

Based upon patent-history, many solutions were contributed. Some better than others, but they all added to what we now know as the dive watch. Although the demand was tiny (watches were for the very rich only), some professional requests, the industrial revolution and World War I accelerated the development. When the railways expanded in the 19th century, the watch became more common. Thus, the market grew and quickened the speed of innovation and production.

According to some, there was already a waterproof watch in 1851: a pocket watch by W. Pettit & Co was exhibited at "The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations" in London. This watch was placed in a glass fish bowl filled with water and fish. No patents were claimed for this watch or its parts and it remains unclear how it was made waterproof.

1870s/'80s: Screwed case components

To make a watch waterproof, it has to be hermetically closed at several points: at the back, around the watch crystal and around the case opening where the crown hem comes out from the inside. The latter is a notorious part in sealing a watch hermetically and was inspiration for many inventors to find the best solution. Actually, the first attempts to make a watch case waterproof, fo-

cused at the crown area. The screw-down crown for example. Some literature points at a certain Aaron Dennison as inventor of this crown. He is mentioned in several publications as the inventor of the screw-down crown (one in *Practical Watch Repairing* and one on the official website of The National Association of Watch & Clock Collectors), but there is no patent on Dennison's name for something like such a crown.

In 1872, however, Dennison patented a watch with an air and water tight case with a screwed back and bezel. The winding axis and push piece for setting the hands had packings to keep air and water out.

1881: Screw-down crown

The first evidence – patent – of a crown that could be screwed down dates from 1881: a patent at the name of Ezra Fitch. Possibly, Fitch invented the true screw-down crown in an era when others also made a variation on that idea, but never patented it. Before Fitch, a screwed cap covering the crown was already in use (1870s) on so-called explorer watches. Explorers and travellers went to countries with extreme humid or damp climates. The demand for hermetically sealed watches grew. These explorer watches had their backs and bezels screwed onto the middle part of the case, sealed by leather gaskets in the case grooves. The watch has also a cap or hood covering the crown completely.

Fitch's 1881 U.S. patent on the development of the removable cap, had the watch crown itself as the cap. It had a left-hand thread, so that the crown could be screwed down once fully wound. To fully wind the watch, the crown was wound to the right, until it couldn't be turned any further. Fitch's idea of the left-hand thread and the ratchet made it possible to be screwed down onto the pendant. That was a great step ahead, even though the hands couldn't be set when the watch was fully wound and the crown screwed down.

It was a long way from the first **water and dust proof** watches to a real divers' watch.

Still in 1881 Almon Twing solved this setting problem, patenting a screw-down crown with a clutch into the crown and winding stem assembly. This enabled the crown to be unscrewed with a fully wound mainspring. Around 1885 the American Watch Company of Waltham produced the first commercially available waterproof watches with Fitch's screw-down crowns. Not a great success (the public did not yet see the necessity of a waterproof watch), but a significant step forward in the development of the waterproof watch.

1883: Droz and Stauffer

About the same time, Alcide Droz & Fils registered their company as "makers of watches specializing in waterproof watches." Their impermeable watch from 1883 – called L'imperéable 1 – had a screw bezel, a no-opening case back and a (Fitch) screw-down crown. Droz' design added improvements too: there was a thread inside the pendant for much better protection against dirt and dust. And the crown could be pushed and then screwed down after the watch was wound and the hands were set, creating a watertight seal between the edge of the crown and the pendant.

Stauffer made the next improvement in the same period, focusing on sealing the part where the winding stem passes. His solution was a slight turn of the crown to seal the opening.

1891: Borgel watch case

The next step was a patented watch with a higher degree of sealing than ever before, based upon a 1891 patent by François Borgel from Geneva. He made a one-piece case, waterproof to the time's standard (it wouldn't let in water during everyday use; note that no one went swimming with his watch on). Borgel's case perfectly kept out dirt, dust and damp; it was resistant to the conditions in the wet trenches of the Great War in France and Flanders. Thus, and according to old advertisements for Military wristwatches, Borgel case watches were aimed at Army officers.

1917: Military standards

Military equipment often requires the highest standards, due to the extreme conditions soldiers and their materials have to cope with, on land and under water. This was also the case around 1917, when two submarine chiefs wanted a special watch for their work: a watertight, non-magnetic watch (submarines were driven by electricity) with a compensation balance. It had to be made of materials that had a minimum of expansion and contraction with variations in temperature and the

Clockwise, from top: Omega Marine re-edition from 2007 and its predecessor from 1932, two versions of the Seamaster 300 from 1957, the Seamaster 120M from 1978 with two different straps and a prototype of the PloProf from 1970

watch face had to be legible at any time. Their idea was actually produced. The "Submarine Commander's Watch" had a water tight case with a screw back and screw bezel fitted with gaskets and with a waterproof gland seal in the pendant. The tube on the side of the case (where the stem that connects the shaft to the crown enters the case) was still the most difficult to seal. In the Submarine Commanders Watch this seal was a kind of waterproof compressed seal in the stem tube that prevented water from entering the case through the winding stem opening.

1918: The "hermetic" double case

Another idea is to just place a watch completely inside a larger case with a screw-down bezel. There were two identical patents for this concept: an U.S. patent by Frederick Gruen for a wristwatch, priority date of May 29, 1918, and a later Swiss patent by Jean Finger, Switzerland. These double case watches are often referred to as "hermetic" watches. The Gruen watch is hooked to the outer case and easily removable, while the Finger watch is more permanent connected to the outer case with a hinge.

The problem with this concept was that you had to get the watch out every day, to wind it. Nevertheless, some manufacturers used this case design for their watches.

1925/1926: Paul Perregaux and George Perret

In 1926, Rolex founder Hans Wilsdorf bought a 1925 Swiss patent, originally applied for by Paul Perregaux and Georges Perret (a winding system with a crown that could be screwed down onto the case, creating a waterproof seal) for making his Oyster watches waterproof.

1932: The Omega Marine

It is actually unclear who really made the first waterproof watch, but it is a historical fact that the Omega Marine was the first dive watch ever because it was the first watch purposely tested and qualified for diving. This waterproof wristwatch was based upon a patented double case concept by Louis Alix, which smartly avoided the issue with the hard to seal stem-area. The concept worked even under groundbreaking testing conditions: In 1936 an Omega Marine was sunk to a depth of 73 meters in Lake Geneva for 30 minutes, to test the water tightness of the innovative new model.

The Seamaster in real life: in 1993, Roland Specker reached a depth of 80 meters in Lake Neuchâtel with a Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph on his wrist.

There are numerous functional and aesthetic **criteria defining a divers' watch**. Most of them have been defined to enhance security.

The Omega Marine was immediately taken seriously by underwater professionals such as Commander Yves Le Prieur, who had invented the aqua lung (underwater breathing apparatus) and Dr. William Beebe, an American naturalist, zoologist and underwater explorer. Beebe, conducting underwater exploration since the late 1920s, used an Omega Marine in the Pacific Ocean at a depth of 14 meters in 1936: "The pressure is twice the normal pressure. My watch successfully withstood this pressure. Its dust and water resistance, robustness and corrosion resistance represent a real advancement in watch technology."

The French navy officer Yves Le Prieur is the father of modern diving. In the famous 1957 book *The Silent World* by Jacques-Yves Cousteau and Frédéric Dumas, is a 1940s picture of Le Prieur diving with his aqua lung and wearing an Omega Marine.

The watch movement, dial, and hands of the Marine were contained in a rectangular case, with a crown at 12 o'clock. This case slid into a rectangular section case, the outer case. The end of the outer case was connected to the gasket in the shoulder of the interior case, which formed a water tight seal. A large spring clip gripping over a ridge on the back of the outer case held the two parts of the case together. This was Omega's version of Louis Alix' waterproof double case. When the Marine was submerged, air pressure inside the case would remain constant while water pressure outside the watch increased, pressing the two parts of the case even more firmly together and making the seal more water tight.

The Marine had a manual winding calibre (Omega introduced its first automatic movements in 1943). In 2007, Omega launched a reproduction of this watch, the Marine 1932 as part of their Museum Collection which brought back remakes of vintage timepieces in limited numbers. The double case was made in contrasting 18-carat red and white gold, and the series was limited to 135 pieces to commemorate the 1937 official certification of water resistance to a depth of 135 meters.

Dive-watch development after the Marine

Around 1930, the essential components of the modern waterproof watch were there: screw cases, gaskets, screw-down crowns and stem seals, some of them redone several times. During later years, parts were further improved, new patents came about with the ever-evolving technologies and materials. Dive watches became better and stronger, resulting in a resistance down to greater depths. The ongoing development was often related to military specifications. The looks of the divers' watch changed into a quite archetypical steel watch model with a round face, a black dial with highly visible markers and hands and surrounded by a rotating bezel with numerals and often worn on a steel bracelet but also on a rubber or tropical strap. Later, dive chronographs were also added as well as dive watches with a regatta timer, for example.

After the Marine, Omega's dive watches became part of the Seamaster line. The Seamaster was launched in 1948 to coincide with the brand's 100th anniversary. It is the oldest line in the current collection. The Seamaster was intended as a robust yet elegant watch for active people who wanted a watch for "town, sea and country." If you check early Seamaster watches, you won't find typical diving watches. The first diving record of a Seamaster was achieved in 1955, when diver Gordon McLean went 62.5 meters deep in Australian water. The Seamaster diving watch was born in 1957 and celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2017. (See photos of the Seamaster watches mentioned here in the previous article.)

The key to the Seamaster watches was the O-ring gasket. At this time, water-resistant watches generally used lead or shellac gaskets, which were susceptible to temperature changes. The Seamaster had a rubber gasket that was successfully used in submarines during World War II. The Seamaster was independently tested by the Swiss Laboratory for Watch Research. They subjected 50 cases to tests at a simulated depth of 60 meters. After temperature changes of –40 to +50° C in quick succession, the cases showed no sign of water infiltration. The engineers at Omega were so sure of the Seamaster that one flew the Polar Route over the North Atlantic attached to the outside of a Douglas DC6 aircraft in 1956. The "Professional" range of Seamaster watches was born one year later with the launch of the Seamaster 300.

Forms explosion of the 1970's

Since the seventies, Omega made great efforts to remedy imperfections in the area of leaks and to provide fur-

ther improvements on cases (seals, clamping), a screw-down crown, housing and the typical monocoque case that is present in for example the Seamaster 1000 (see previous article). But there was also a lot of experimentation with dials, hands, straps and colours. Each new series was subjected to practical tests during a periodic regime of short-term alternating pressure and over-pressure periods.

Seamaster 300

The Seamaster 300 has been the choice of many of the world's most famous explorers and divers over the years. Jacques-Yves Cousteau's team used the Seamaster 300 during its "Precontinent II" experiments in the Red Sea in the summer of 1963 to prove that divers could live in a submerged saturated gas environment for long periods without adverse effects. The Seamaster 300 would also go on to be the watch of choice of military divers around the world, including the British Special Boat Service and others.

Seamaster 600

One of the most famous Omega divers' watches is the Seamaster 600, later nicknamed PloProf after the French "plongeur professionnel" (professional diver). The ever-increasing depths at which divers were working led to the creation of this huge watch, which was built up to the water pressure at 600 meters. The PloProf was launched to the public in 1970 after four years of research and testing. With its big square case and remarkable red pusher, it looks more like an instrument than just a watch. Today, the watch is a sought-after vintage Omega, and re-issue was released in 2009. The well-known French underwater research and exploration company Comex used the Seamaster 600 extensively in the late 1960s; in September 1970 the watch accompanied the three divers of project Janus II. During this dive the divers spent four hours per day over eight days in the water and set a world record for underwater exploration at a depth of 253 meters in the Ajaccio Gulf in Corsica. Later Cousteau's divers would use the watches off the coast of Marseille during a set of experiments to test the effects on divers working at depths up to 500 meters. The Seamaster 600 endured a test series proving that the watch functioned up to a simulated depth of 1,370 meters. At that point, the 4mm-thick crystal touched the seconds hand, stopping the watch.

Seamaster 1000M

The "big brother" of the 600, the Seamaster 1000M, was launched in 1972 (see photo in previous article). This watch didn't look like the 600, with its more rounded egg-shaped case. It was created and tested alongside the 600 and was also tested and used by the same divers. The 1000M was used on IUC's (International Underwater Contractors) submarine "Beaver Mark IV" where it was attached to the submarine's robotic arm to test the effects on the crystal at a depth of 1,000 meters. All lessons learned from testing these watches added to the development of the entire Seamaster "Professional" range and went a long way toward reinforcing the Seamaster's position as the divers' watch of choice.

Thus, Omega was also associated with the Faré mission by the French Institute for Oceanic Research in 1988, where the submersible Nautile descended to 4,400 meters to install the first link in a system for monitoring seismic activity. In 1981, free diver Jacques Mayol set a new world free-dive record, wearing a Seamaster 120M at a depth of 101 meters off the coast of the Isle of Elba, Italy. Another French diver set a new lake-diving record in Lake Neuchâtel with the support of Omega: Roland Specker reached a depth of 80 meters in 1993 without breathing apparatus.

Besides writing diving history, the Seamaster line was used for much of the brand's research on alternative case materials and treatments, including titanium in the late 1960s, tungsten and PVD in the early 1970s, ceramic in the late 1970s and forged carbon in the 1980s; many designs in these exotic materials actually made it into production and many of these materials returned in the following decades.

So, what is a dive watch?

Today a dive watch must feature at least a water resistance greater than 1.0 MPa (10 atm – equivalent of 100m or 330ft.). A true contemporary dive watch is in accordance with the ISO 6425 standard, which defines test standards and features for watches suitable for diving with underwater breathing apparatus in depths of 100 m (330 ft) or more. Watches conforming to ISO 6425 are marked with the word "Diver's" to distinguish them from watches that might not be suitable for actual scuba diving. The International Organization for Standardization defines such a timepiece as "a watch designed to withstand diving in water at depths of at least 100 meters and processing a system to control the time." In the frame you can read how a watch can conform to the ISO 6425 standardization. This ISO standard has been updated several times, due to forces of time. Innovation and improvement are never-ending processes for many watch brands. Omega is – and always has been – one of those brands.

CRITERIA OF A DIVE WATCH ACCORDING TO ISO 6425

1. The watch shall be equipped with a time-preselecting device, for example a rotating bezel or a digital display. Such a device shall be protected against inadvertent rotation or wrong manipulation. If it is a rotating bezel, it shall have a minute scale going up to 60 min. The markings indicating every 5 min shall be clearly indicated. The markings on the dial, if existing, shall be coordinated with those of the preselecting device and shall be clearly visible. If the preselecting device is a digital display, it shall be clearly visible.

2. An indication that the watch is running must be included, and this indication must be visible in total darkness (usually accomplished with a second hand that has a luminous tip).

3. The following elements of the watch must be legible at a distance of 25 cm (9.8 in) in the dark:
- The time (with a minute hand that is clearly distinguishable from the hour hand).
- The set time of the time preselecting device.
- An indication that the watch is running (such as a second hand with a luminous tip).
- In the case of battery powered watches, a battery-life indicator.

100% TESTING

Every complete watch must pass the following water resistance tests:

1. Water overpressure test: The watch is submerged in water in a pressure chamber. Then an overpressure of 125% of the rated pressure is applied within one minute and maintained for two hours. Next, the overpressure is reduced to 0.3 bar within one minute and maintained for one hour. The watch is then removed from the water and dried. The test is conducted in static (still) water. This means that a watch with a 300 meter depth rating (30 atm) will be water resistant if it is stationary under 375 meters of static water (37.5 atm of pressure).

2. Condensation test: The watch is placed on a heated plate at a temperature between 40 and 45° C until the watch temperature is the same as the temperature of the heated plate. A drop of water with the temperature of 18 to 25° C is then placed on the glass of the watch. After one minute, the glass is inspected for signs of condensation, which would indicate moisture (water intrusion) inside the watch. This test is conducted before and after the overpressure test.

TYPE TESTING

A portion of watches from every production batch must pass these additional tests:

1. Resistance to a magnetic field: The watch is exposed to a direct current magnetic field of 4,800 A/m. The watch must not stop during the test, while mechanical watches must keep accuracy of ± 30 seconds/day as measured before the test.

2. Resistance to shock: The watch is subjected to two shocks simulating a fall from one meter onto a wooden floor. The shock is usually delivered by a pendulum impact. The watch must maintain its accuracy of ± 60 seconds/day (mechanical) or ±2 seconds/day (quartz) as measured before the test.

3. Resistance to salt water: The watch is submerged in a 30 g/l sodium chloride solution (salinity comparable to normal seawater) and kept there for 24 hours at 18 to 25 °C. After this test, the case and accessories are examined for changes. Moving parts, particularly the rotating bezel, are checked for proper functioning.

4. Resistance to thermal shock: The watch is submerged in 30 cm of water for 10 minutes each : at 40, 5 and again at 40°C. The transition time may not exceed one minute. (The condensation test as described above is performed before and after this test).

5. Reliability under water: The watch is submerged in water to a depth of 30 cm for 50 hours at 18 to 25° C. During immersion, all mechanisms must continue to function properly. (The condensation test is performed before and after this test).

6. Resistance to external force (attachments): The strap or bracelet of the watch being tested is closed and a force of 200 N (45 pounds-force) is applied to each spring bar (or attachment point) in opposite directions. The watch is then inspected to ensure no damage has occurred to the watch or attachment points.

7. Resistance to external force (crowns and other setting devices): The watch is submerged in water in a pressure chamber. An overpressure of 125% of the rated pressure is then applied for 10 minutes plus an external force of 5 N (1.1 pounds-force) is applied to the crown and pushers or setting devices present. (The condensation test is performed before and after this test).

MIXED-GAS / SATURATION TESTING

ISO 6425 requires additional testing for watches intended for mixed-gas or saturation diving (which involves long-term exposure to helium/oxygen gas mixtures).

Besides the three-hand Seamaster 300M Diver, Omega also introduced a chronograph version in 1993. Powered by the rugged Omega Caliber 1154/1164, this watch was introduced in four variations at the time.

Top: the stainless-steel version of the first Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph from 1993 had a blue dial and bezel.

Above: this 2013 limited-edition model of the Seamaster 300M Diver Regatta Chronograph was made for Emirates Team New Zealand.

MORE THAN TIME

TEXT: ROBERT-JAN BROER

IN 1993, the Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph was available in stainless steel, titanium, titanium and yellow gold and a version in three different metals: titanium, tantalum and rose gold. The chronograph had the same dive-watch specifications as the three-hand version, including the helium-valve at 10 o'clock. This meant however, that this watch had two crowns and two pushers that dominated the design of the case.

Interestingly, Omega developed the chronograph pushers and case in such way that the chronograph could be used under water. Although it appears that the chronograph pushers are screwed down, like with many chronograph diver watches, they in fact are not. You can just use them without unscrewing anything, even under water. The knurled rings around the pushers can be used to unscrew the push-buttons and renew the seals without having to take the case apart. Clever engineering.

Sized at 41.5mm, the chronograph was just slightly larger (0.5mm) than the regular 300M model. Inside, you find the Omega Calibers 1154 or 1164, respectively. Caliber 1164 was introduced in 1995, when the Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph was already on the market. There is little difference between these two movements, it is mainly about some aesthetic changes. Both movements are based on the Valjoux 7750 caliber from ETA, with a high-grade finish for Omega. It showed rhodinized surfaces, Geneva stripes, 25 jewels and was ticking at 28,800vph. It was in the period before Omega started to develop and manufacture their in-house Caliber 9300, so they relied on solid movements like those from ETA. Additionally, the Omega Calibers 1154 and 1164 were chronometer certified, to give proof of their high precision. The typical layout on the dial also reveals the use of these calibers, where the sub dials are positioned at 12, 6 and 9 o'clock. The date can be found at 3 o'clock.

In 1994, one year after its introduction, the Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph collection was expanded with a model in full yellow gold. Two actually, one with a bezel made of gold (and a white dial) and one with a blue aluminum bezel (and blue dial). The stainless-steel version already weighs a ton, even the all titanium version has quite a weight to it, but the full gold Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph certainly isn't for the fainthearted.

Watch for collectors and divers

The Seamaster 300M Diver became one of the best-selling sports watches – in some countries it simply is the best seller. The chronograph collection is highly appreciated among collectors and (professional) divers. One of the best-known chronograph collectors, the late and legendary Chuck Maddox from the United States, refers to the Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph as one of the best modern all-round watches. The full titanium version (reference 2298.80) could often be found on his wrist.

Without any changes (except for the updated Caliber 1164), the collection was not expanded with any new variations until 2002. And even after, the initial Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph references were still available for a long time. Then, in 2002, Omega introduced

an addition to the Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph collection. It was the America's Cup edition available in stainless steel, titanium and the – nowadays – famous titanium, tantalum and rose-gold combination. The stainless steel and titanium models were available with bracelet but also with rubber strap. The bracelet was not the nine-row link version that was used before, but a bracelet that looks a bit like the one used on the Speedmaster Professional "Moonwatch." It has been used for the Seamaster 300M Diver as well (2254.50 for example), but then also on the chronograph version.

The watch again had a 41.5-mm case, but this time with a different movement inside. The layout of the dial easily gives this away, as it now has the subdials located on 3, 6 and 9 o'clock. The date aperture is also located at 6 o'clock. Also, the dial on the America's Cup chronograph did not have a wave pattern and the hands had a different shape and were not skeletonized. Inside the Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph America's Cup was Omega's Caliber 3303, not an in-house movement, but a modified movement by Frédéric Piguet. It had 55 hours of power reserve and 33 jewels and used a column-wheel mechanism for a precise and soft operation of the chronograph. The stainless-steel version of this became also available without "America's Cup" on the dial.

Regatta chronograph

In 2003, Omega introduced the Seamaster 300M Diver America's Cup Regatta Chronograph (2569.50) with Omega Caliber 3602. In 2004, this watch also became available as non-America's Cup version. The movement is an ETA 2892 added with a module by Dubois Dépraz for its additional functions. It is quite a complex mechanical piece with a very interesting and attractive visual complication on the dial (five circles in red/blue indicating the countdown). The dial shows similarities with the 2002 America's Cup chronograph models, but the case is 44mm in diameter and there is no helium valve at 10 o'clock. The water resistance is guaranteed to 300 meters nevertheless.

In 2006, Omega introduced an update of the original 1993 Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph in stainless steel with blue dial and bezel. It had the same size and Caliber 1164, but with a new caseback showing a bigger Seahorse logo as well as applied hour markers, an applied Omega logo and the Seamaster wording in red. The dial layout stayed, except for a minor change in the lume plots: Where the old reference had lume plots on all hour markers, the new version had only 8 (none at 12, 3, 6 and 9 o'clock). This model also became available with a black dial later on.

As part of the Olympic Collection, Omega also introduced a Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph in 2008. Based on the 2002 model in black and with Caliber 3303, this Olympic edition (2896.51.91) had Arabic numerals and a vintage-style Omega logo and typography on the black lacquered dial.

In 2013, the Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph collection was being revised. The chronographs became available in the classic 41.5mm size, but also in a larger case at 44mm. The movements for both sizes were the same: Omega Caliber 3330. This chronometer certified movement has a column-wheel chronograph with Co-Axial escapement. The free sprung-balance wheel is equipped with a silicon balance spring. Finally, the Co-Axial technology as well as the use of silicon could now also be found in the chronograph models. The Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph came only in stainless steel, and with a ceramic bezel and lacquered dials, available in blue and black.

Omega also introduced a Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph Regatta with a black dial and yellow accents as well as two limited edition ETNZ models for the Emirates Team New Zealand sailing team. One in black and red (see article opener), the other one made of titanium with a black ceramic diving-scale bezel.

Latest line extension

The last addition to the family of Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph watches is a 44mm model in stainless steel with a GMT – extra timezone – complication (see article on the GMT watches on pp. 72–75). This watch was introduced in 2014 and is available with a blue or black dial (references 212.30.44.52.03.001 and 212.30.44.52.01.001, respectively). The blue dial has yellow numerals for the GMT indication and a yellow GMT hand, whereas the black dial version has red numerals and GMT hand. Omega uses their Caliber 3306 for these watches, with a column-wheel chronograph and Co-Axial escapement.

With the exception of the titanium Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph ETNZ, which comes on a rubber strap, all the other current chronograph models come with the famous Seamaster 300M Diver bracelet. It is interesting to note that over the past 25 years, the current 41.5mm version of the chronograph is considered to be the small version, while the initial models in 1993 were only available in this size and considered to be huge watches by many. How times change.

The Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph is, although equipped with a Co-Axial escapement, one of the last chronograph collections that does not have Omega's in-house Master Chronometer movement inside, like the Caliber 9300 family. With the 2018 upgrade of the regular Seamaster 300M Diver, including a Master Chronometer in-house developed Caliber 8800, it is a matter of time when Omega will also treat the chronograph version with a make-over.

After the introduction of the **Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph** in 1993, there was no major change in the collection until 2002.

Above left: the Seamaster 300M Diver
America's Cup from 2002 was the first addition to the Chronograph collection since 1994.

Above middle: the Seamaster 300M Diver
America's Cup Regatta Chronograph was launched in 2003.

Above right: 2006 brought a re-edition
of the original chronograph from 1993.

THE HELIUM VALVE

SCUBA DIVERS DON'T GO DEEP ENOUGH

Opened helium valve: when the crown at 10 o'clock is unscrewed and shows a red stem, the gas mix used in deep-sea chambers can leave the watch without damaging it.

In order to explain what a helium release valve is, and why it is only relevant for professional frogmen, here's a story about diving, including some physiology and chemistry.

TEXT: PAUL DEZENTJÉ

IN 1993, Omega introduced their first watch with a helium valve: the Seamaster 300M Diver. This dive watch had been tested by apnea diver Roland Specker and it preceded an important new era for Omega as a dive-watch brand. But what was that crown at 10? And what does helium have to do with my dive watch?

Helium ("He" in the periodic table of elements) is a monatomic gas, rare on earth and relatively expensive to produce. Professional divers use helium for breathing, as part of a gas mix, during dives over 200 meters deep. Examples of gas mixes are Trimix, a mix of oxygen, nitrogen and helium, and Heliox, a mix of helium and oxygen. The mutual ratio within the mix depends on the depth of the dive. But one thing's for sure: the deeper in the sea, the more helium.

Partial pressure

Each gas in the gas mix has partial pressure. This can be explained as a measurement of the concentration of a particular gas in a diver's breathing-gas mixture. If the concentration of a particular gas increases, this may have severe effects on the diver. Two elements define the partial pressure of a gas in diving: the percentage (or fraction) of the gas in the breathing mixture and the depth at which a diver breathes the gas. A change in partial pressure changes the molecules of the gas and with that, the chemical characteristics and their "behavior." Altered molecules can cause serious physiological and psychological damage. They can become large bubbles in the blood or elsewhere in the body or unwanted participators in physiological reactions.

To allow a professional diver to work at extreme depths over 200 meters, the breathing gas must be modi-

fied, especially the amounts of oxygen and nitrogen. Due to its partial pressure, oxygen can't be used safely at deeper dives. Therefore, a professional diver's gas mixture has a reduced amount of oxygen, while the nitrogen is replaced with helium.

Helium is an ideal diving gas. Helium bubbles are very small, it diffuses faster in and out of tissue and blood, it is less narcotic, and divers feel better when they leave the water after diving on helium. Also, it works better (faster) during saturation and decompression. Most helium divers say that they just feel better, less exhausted, and healthier than when using nitrogen mixes. And last not least, helium decompression is efficient and fast.

Now that we know the helium-diving connection, we can also imagine the situation in which helium gets locked-up inside the watch and where the helium valve comes to rescue. Picture a bunch of heavy-duty professional divers, working for two weeks at extreme depths over 200 meters. They are down there for mining exploration and engineering jobs under terrible conditions and very poor visibility.

After their labor at 200 meters (20 atmospheres), breathing a gas mix for some time, they return to a so-called saturation chamber. This is an expanded tank or diving bell, or a submersible vessel, situated nearby their working spot, under a ship or oil rig. It provides a temporary base and retrieval system in the depths. Inside this chamber, the pressure and gas-mix ratio are exactly the same as at the diving work spot. This prevents inert gasses from expanding and causing damage like decompression sickness, paralysis or even death. In other words: in there, the partial pressure of (inert) gasses remains the same as at the diving spot. As the divers have to stay in saturation between dives, they live in the tank until the job is done.

Decompression

Helium-gas is surrounding the divers inside the chamber or tank. Because of the small size of the monatomic helium, it penetrates the divers' watches. As long as surrounding gasses and pressure are the same as inside the watch, there is a status quo. As long as the divers stay in that depth, all is fine and safe.

However, after their tour of duty, a decompression period is necessary to get rid of all inert gasses before returning to the normal conditions above the surface. The decompression phase inside the tank will be longer than decompression after one dive. But, divers have to decompress only once, at the end of their tour, instead of after each dive. During this decompression, the surrounding pressure and gas mix inside the saturation tank decrease slowly and the divers' body tissues release their inert gasses safely and controlled.

However, the tiny monatomic helium molecules that creeped inside the dive watches earlier, now start to expand due to the decompression. While the pressure outside the watch diminishes, the pressure inside will rise. The gas "grows," but the watch case is massive, crowns and the back are screwed ... With this internal pressure, something has got to give. According to many divers' stories, the watch crystals gave up, and even the most expensive watches exploded. The crystals popped off hard and with a loud bang during decompression inside the saturation chamber, to release the gas from the watch.

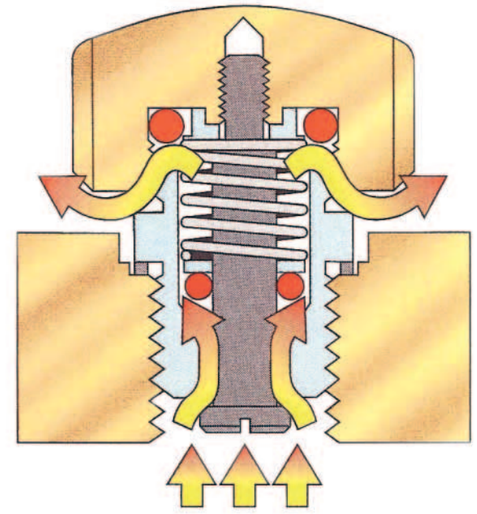
This phenomenon can be compared to uncorking a champagne bottle. The pressure inside the bottle is bigger than the outside pressure. Nothing happens, until the cork comes off. At that point, the pressure difference between inside and outside the bottle makes the cork pop to release the inner pressure.

Helium valve

In the early 1960s, the helium valve was developed to avoid exploding watches. The simple mechanism (a small, spring-loaded one-way valve integrated in the watch case) helps expanding helium gas to leave the watch during decompression. Omega's helium valve has a screwed crown at 10 o'clock, to be opened during decompression. Before the helium valve existed, some watches were built to be impenetrable using a monocoque case. Omega's iconic Seamaster 600 ("PloProf") is an example of that. No helium-escape, because no helium could get in.

Fans of recreational diving may think that they have to open the helium valve crown while ascending to the surface. That is not the case. There is no helium in scuba diving. Scuba divers don't go deep enough to breathe helium mixes and they won't stay in saturation chambers filled with a helium mix. Most recreational scuba divers do not go deeper than 20 meters. If you go deeper, it becomes darker very fast. Also, the most interesting things can be enjoyed above the 20-meter line (except shipwrecks or junkyards). So there will be no gas in scuba divers' watches that has to be released.

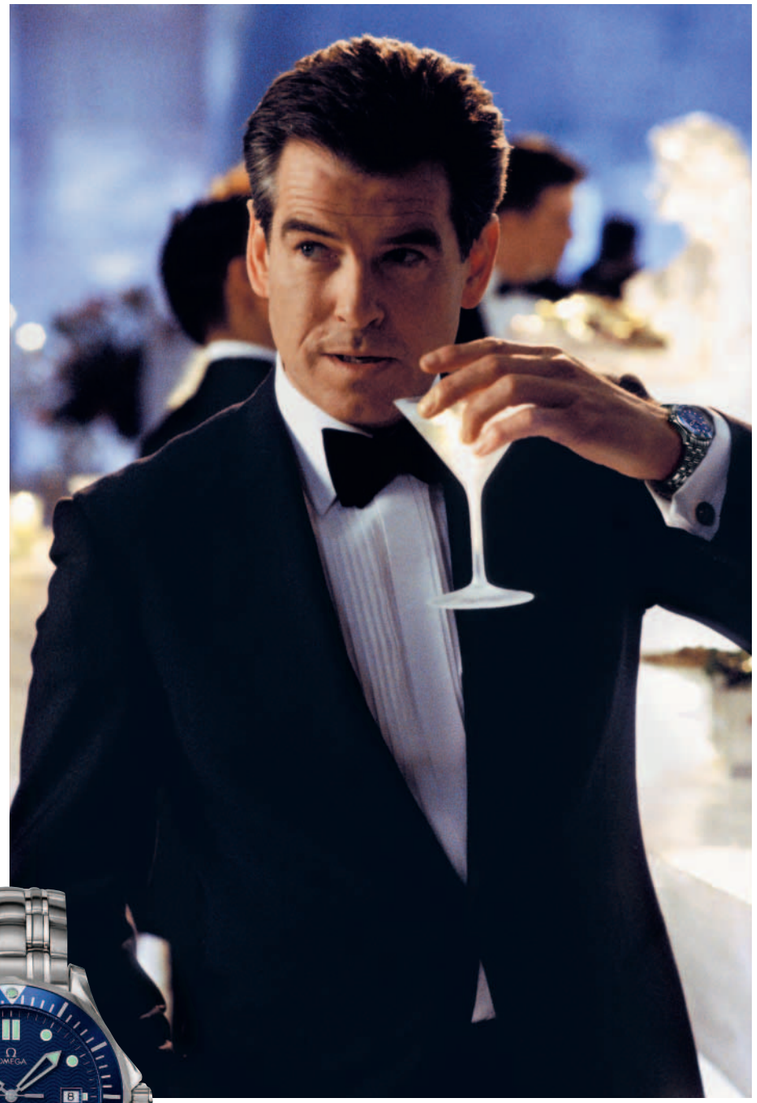
But, don't let the helium valve stop you from enjoying the Seamaster 300M Diver if you don't find use for this crown at 10 o'clock. Many of the watch enthusiasts never even come close to diving, but wear their professional dive watches every day: in the office, in the car, on the couch, while shopping, reading or sleeping or while having tequilas in their favorite bar.



Right: when the pressure in the watch is higher than the pressure in the environment, the helium valve lets the gas mix escape from the watch.

Below: only professional divers working in great depths need watches with helium valves. For scuba divers it doesn't make any sense.

Photo: shutterstock.com/Erik Hehnfeld



Pierce Brosnan: as James Bond, he wore the Seamaster 300M Diver in 1995, 1997, 1999 and 2002 – first a quartz model, then the automatic version shown.

JAMES BOND AND THE SEAMASTER 300M DIVER

THE AGENT'S WATCH

For more than two decades, the Omega Seamaster has been a trusty companion to the most famous spy in the world: James Bond.

TEXT: BALÁZS FERENCZI

IT WAS 1995 when Her Majesty's secret agent strapped an Omega on his wrist for the first time. Throughout the years, just like the timepieces, the taste of Mr. Bond evolved and broadened. He went from quartz to mechanical, from a single watch to wearing multiple models in a single movie. And the character of James Bond himself went through a major redesign as well.

***GoldenEye* (1995)**

The beginning of the partnership between the James Bond franchise and Omega was *GoldenEye* (1995). The story was built using some of the most common formulas of old Bond movies: space technology, Russians as bad guys and a Roger Moore-type suave character introducing the young Pierce Brosnan. Throughout the movie he was seen wearing a Seamaster 300M Diver with quartz movement (2541.80.00). With this movie, the business venture of two huge companies started into a tremendously successful era.

***Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997)**

The success of *GoldenEye* was immense. Just two years after the first of the Pierce Brosnan-era movies, the studio United Artists was ready to release the next picture. *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997) was all about the power of media and how it could influence governments for better or for worse. As Brosnan's Bond character progressed, his Seamaster also received an upgrade: this time it was the Seamaster 300M Diver with an automatic movement (2531.80.00).

***The World Is Not Enough* (1999) & *Die Another Day* (2002)**

The watch was so popular that the production team kept it in the upcoming two films as well. So in the third (*The World Is Not Enough*, 1999)

and fourth (*Die Another Day*, 2002) movies there were no upgrades or new models. James Bond was still wearing his trusty Seamaster 300M Diver. *Die Another Day* was the last picture Pierce Brosnan appeared in as James Bond. For the next four years no new movie was released and when the series returned in 2006 it was again time for an upgrade.

Casino Royale (2006)

Casino Royale gave the story of Her Majesty's secret agent yet another twist. We went back in time without really doing so to see how a rugged but smart field agent gained the double-0 status. Daniel Craig was chosen to play the new James Bond and brought a completely different attitude to the screen. Craig is more of a Connery-type muscle guy versus the sharply dressed, intellectual businessman Brosnan was. This new beginning also meant a new watch for James Bond and a new opportunity for Omega. For the first time not one but two Seamaster models were added to the accessories of Bond. Screen time was split between the Seamaster 300M Diver (2220.80.00) similar to the previous models but now with the Co-Axial escapement, and the Seamaster Planet Ocean (2900.50.91) on a rubber strap.

Quantum of Solace (2008)

This movie could also have been called *Casino Royale Part 2*. The villain is different but the story continues. *Casino Royale* ended leaving a bunch of open questions. Luckily, we all received the answers in Craig's second movie. This time we see no 300M anymore and even the Planet Ocean he wore most on the screen in the previous movie got smaller: In *Quantum of Solace,* Bond is wearing the 42mm Seamaster Planet Ocean Co-Axial 600M (2201.50.00) on a bracelet; slimmer but still a sharp watch.

Skyfall (2012)

While it was only the third Craig-era movie, the story line arrived at yet another turning point. M (played by Dame Judy Dench) passed away at the end of the film. Dench had "served" as M from 1995 to 2012 in a total of seven James Bond films. While Bond kept his 42mm Planet Ocean like before (even though it was the updated Caliber 8500), he also introduced to us another member of the Seamaster family: the dressier Seamaster Aqua Terra 150M Co-Axial (231.10.39.21.03.001.). *Skyfall* is part action and part drama. The watches Bond wears are the perfectly suited pair to match the duality of the script.

Spectre (2015)

To date, the latest James Bond movie is *Spectre*. This is the first time James Bond wears three different Omega models: He is sporting a very similar Seamaster Aqua Terra he wore in Skyfall. This, however, is newer and slightly changed, the Seamaster Aqua Terra 150M Master Co-Axial (231.10.42.21.03.003). His tool watch is something unusual: for the first time James Bond is wearing a watch in the movie that is actually a 007 limited edition. Omega usually makes a limited run of James Bond-inspired models around the time a film comes out. However, they never appear in the movie. Until now. The Seamaster 300 Spectre Limited Edition (233.32.41.21.01.001) is the first limited-edition watch that actually makes it to the wrist of Daniel Craig. He wears it on a black and grey striped NATO strap – another thing we have not seen from James Bond since the time of Sean Connery. The third and last Omega is a vintage chronograph from the mid-60's which appears, if only for a moment, towards the end of the movie.

Will the Seamaster 300M Diver return?

As far as we know, a new James Bond movie, the 25th in line, is in production. The release date is towards the end of 2019. One can only hope that the Seamaster 300M Diver will make its return to the silver screen. No modern day James Bond timepiece deserves it more. Arguably the watch became the most significant gadget of the modern era 007 since its introduction to the audience in 1995. The Seamaster 300M Diver is over 25 years old yet it still looks contemporary and classic at the same time. This, paired up with a healthy dose of nostalgia, could be the reason for the producers and Daniel Craig to wear the new 2018 Seamaster 300M Diver.

Daniel Craig: the new James Bond wore the Seamaster 300M Diver only once, in *Casino Royale*.

THE NINE-ROW BRACELET

STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

With the Seamaster 300M Diver from 1993, Omega managed to create a completely new design. It was a watch designed from scratch. Besides the shape of the case, with the scalloped bezel and helium valve at 10 o'clock, the bracelet with its nine-row links was a new design as well.

TEXT: ROBERT-JAN BROER
PHOTOS: OMEGA (1), BERT BUIJSROGGE (2)

I FIND MYSELF often critical towards bracelets, of any kind. The bracelet of a watch often is considered to be subordinate to the watch itself, which is just not right. A bracelet is an important part of the watch, as a good bracelet makes me enjoy a watch even more, whereas a badly designed or uncomfortable bracelet makes me dislike the entire watch (and makes me stop wearing it).

In all the watch reviews I have performed in the last 14 years, the bracelet always plays an important role. It covers most of your wrist; it should be comfortable and pleasing to the eye. A bracelet that has sharp edges, a clasp that does not function properly or does not aesthetically fit the watch can be a deal-breaker for me.

A 2016 article on the Top 10 watch bracelets on our online magazine Fratellowatches.com performed exceptionally well, and this Seamaster 300M Diver bracelet took a position in there as well. One could say that the use of this design has been quite a stretch from 1993 onwards, but that has been solved with the new Seamaster 300M Diver watch that was introduced in March 2018. The original design of the Seamaster 300M Diver bracelet, with nine rows of links, has been respected but it is much flatter now. The center and outer rows have this satin-brushed finish, while the (brushed) links between them have polished rims. On the new bracelet the center link is a bit wider than on the older generations.

Besides the mechanism of the clasp, the appearance also changed a bit. The clasp has become a bit longer than the previous version. In the first generation of the bracelet, there was "Seamaster Professional" engraved, but later on this was missing, until today.

Three different bracelets: first generation with "Seamaster Professional" engraving right, newer model with shorter clasp left and current generation in the middle

Additional feature: the newest models have a quick-set extension in the clasp.

The nine rows are optical, of course, the links are actually one piece and are relatively easy to take out (or add) if the bracelet needs to be resized. It is always advisable to have someone do this from the Omega boutique or service center, to prevent the bracelet or links from being damaged.

Functional clasp

The folding clasp has also been updated, with a new clever system to extend the bracelet. It was added to the already existing diver extension for use of the watch over a neoprene diving suit. Since 1993, the bracelet has been available in steel, titanium, bi-color, gold and the combination of titanium, tantalum and rose gold. In the new collection, it is (for now) available in stainless steel and bi-color, either with yellow gold or with Sedna (rose) gold, and for the limited edition of 2,500 pieces, there's the combination of titanium, tantalum and Sedna gold.

The bracelet of the Seamaster 300M Diver has been a topic of (heated) discussion many times. You either hate it or love it. Besides the nine-row bracelet, there also have been a number of models in the past that used a variation of the Speedmaster bracelet. And, of course, the Seamaster 300M Diver was – and still is – available on a rubber strap. One can't deny though, that the nine-row bracelet of the Seamaster 300M Diver makes it stand out from the crowd even more.

CHRONOMETER AND MASTER CHRONOMETER

THE NECESSITY TO BECOME MASTER CHRONOMETER CERTIFIED

TEXT: ROBERT-JAN BROER

Even today, with so much information up for grabs on the internet and in specialized magazines, we see (too) often that people are still confused by the meaning of chronometer. A watch being a chronometer tells us something about its accuracy. It has nothing to do with recording elapsed time (that's a chronograph), but a chronograph watch can also be a chronometer. And sure, some Seamaster 300M Diver watches are both.

Official institution: METAS (Federal Institute of Metrology) is located at Omega's facilities, but still completely independent.

CHRONOMETER CRITERIA

SYMBOL	CRITERION	VALUE
Avg R	Average daily rate	−4 to +6
Avg V	Mean variation in rate	2
Max V	Greatest variation in rates	5
D	Difference between rates in horizontal and vertical positions	−6 to +8
P	Largest variation in rates	10
C	Thermal variation	+/−0.6
R	Rate resumption	+/−5

Avg R: the arithmetic mean of the daily rates of the first 10 days of testing.
Avg V: the arithmetic mean of the five absolute values of the rate variations obtained for the five positions of the watch during the first 10 days of testing.
Max V: the absolute value of the largest of the five rate variations relative to the five positions of the watch during the first 10 days of testing.
D: the difference between the vertical and horizontal rates of the watch, obtained by subtracting the average rate of the 9th and 10th days of testing from the average rate of the first two days of testing.
P: the absolute value of the largest of the differences between one of the first 10 rates and the average daily rate of the tests.
C: the variation of the rate as a function of temperature, obtained by subtracting the rate at 8° C from that at 38° C, the whole divided by the temperature interval between these two rates.
R: the variation between the last rate of the tests and the average of the first two rates of the tests.

A WATCH CAN ONLY BE called chronometer, or have the word "chronometer" on the dial, if the movement has been certified by the Contrôle Officiel Suisse des Chronomètres, the Official Swiss Chronometer Testing Institute. This Swiss non-profit organization defined a set of standards to which an uncased movement is being tested. Uncased means it is just the movement, a generic dial with hands and a plastic winding crown. In the case of an automatic movement, the weight mass is being disconnected from the winding mechanism. These movements are tested and certified before the actual casing of the movement takes place. For 15 days, in five different positions and at three different temperatures (8°, 23° and 38° C), the movements are being tested at the Official Swiss Chronometer Testing Institute.

The measuring takes place using cameras that monitor the position of the running seconds hand. This way, the deviation is being measured and registered. If the movements keep their average daily rate between −4 and +6 seconds a day, the movement is certified as chronometer. In total, there are seven criteria with which a movement has to comply (see sidebar above).

Not all watch brands have their watches tested and certified as chronometers, for various reasons. Interesting to note is that the Official Swiss Chronometer Testing Institute certifies 1.8 million movements per year, including quartz movements. For quartz, the testing institute uses different (even more strict) standards. Only approximately 6% of all exported Swiss watches are certified chronometers. However, the Swiss *mechanical* watches make 21%. Omega is one of the brands with the highest number of chronometer certified movements.

Even though the Omega Seamaster 300M Diver was also available with a quartz movement for a long time, these movements were not certified as chronometers. All automatic versions of the watch are chronometer certified though, since 1993. The Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph was also certified, as the certification always applies to the timekeeping part of the movement, not to the precision of the chronograph function. Did you know that the first automatic chronograph chronometer watch was an Omega? It was the Speedmaster 125 that was introduced in 1973.

What is a Master Chronometer?

With the new Seamaster 300M Diver watch, with in-house manufactured Caliber 8800 (and 8806, without date), the watch carries the "Master Chronometer" designation on the dial. This standard has been introduced at the end of 2014, and in 2015 the first Omega watches were certified as Master Chronometers, starting with the Constellation Globemaster. From then on, Omega started to roll out this very strict standard to other collections as well. But what exactly is a Master Chronometer and why is it necessary to have a more strict standard than the chronometer certification?

One of the main reasons is that being a chronometer was not enough anymore for Omega. Times have changed, the consumer changed and the world around us changed. Every day we, and your watch, are exposed to different things than let's say 30 years ago. Today, we work and live in high-tech environments. We are surrounded by computers, screens, tablets, smartphones, electronic kitchen appliances and electronics in general. This means that we are exposed to magnetic fields all day, every day. Even the magnetic clip of a handbag is said to produce 1,000 gauss already. So not only we, but also our watches, are exposed to these magnetic fields. What has this to do with accuracy, you might ask. Well, the magnetic fields have a negative effect on the small parts in the movement of your watch. When these parts are magnetized, you will find your watch will perform less accurately, or in the worst case, it stops working at all while being exposed to magnetism. Most important is the balance spring in this case. This part of the movement ensures a controlled and stable oscillation of the balance wheel, at a known resonant frequency.

Where most watch manufacturers concentrate on a "Faraday cage" solution for their watches, meaning to protect the movement by covering it with non-ferrous

THE EIGHT METAS-APPROVED TESTS

1. AVERAGE DAILY PRECISION OF THE WATCH
This test runs over 4 days and checks the daily precision of the watch in real life wearing conditions. The watch is initially placed in six different positions and two alternating temperatures, then exposed to magnetism of 15,000 gauss, then demagnetized, then finally checked again in the same differing positions and temperatures. For each step, a photograph is taken of the watch and checked 24 hours later for accuracy against UTC time.

2. FUNCTION OF THE COSC-APPROVED MOVEMENT DURING EXPOSURE TO A 15,000 GAUSS MAGNETIC FIELD
This test examines the movement of the watch only, placing it in two different positions, and subjecting it to a magnetic force of 15,000 gauss. During a time of 30 seconds in each position, the functioning of the movement is audibly checked using a microphone.

3. FUNCTION OF THE WATCH DURING EXPOSURE TO A 15,000 GAUSS MAGNETIC FIELD
This test is similar to the second. On this occasion, instead of just the movement being tested, the entire watch is subjected to magnetic fields of 15,000 gauss, with the functioning being checked by way of audio.

4. DEVIATION OF THE DAILY PRECISION AFTER EXPOSURE TO A 15,000 GAUSS MAGNETIC FIELD
This test works out the average deviation of the watch between day 2 and 3 of the first test. The result shows the daily precision of the watch before and after exposure to a magnetic field of 15,000 gauss.

5. WATER RESISTANCE
This test submerges the watch underwater, gradually applying more pressure up the point of the stated water resistance. For divers' watches, it goes beyond. This ensures that each watch is properly tested for underwater conditions.

6. POWER RESERVE
This test checks the power reserve of the watch by taking pictures at the beginning and end of the expected limit. Checking any deviation again, this proves that each watch functions accurately for its stated time. For wearers, it's valuable to know that, even after a weekend on the bedside table, your watch will still be performing well.

7. DEVIATION OF RATE BETWEEN 100% AND 33% OF POWER RESERVE
This test puts the watch in six different positions, similar to each side of a dice. With the watch at full power, the watch spends 30 seconds in each position, with average precision recorded by way of audio. The power reserve is then reduced by two thirds and checked again, to ensure that precision is kept even when the watch is not at full power.

8. DEVIATION OF RATE IN SIX POSITIONS
This test is similar to the previous test, and checks for any deviation in the running time when the watch is placed in six different positions, similar again to each side of a dice. With 30 seconds in each position, the results are recorded through audio. By placing a watch in different positions, we can ensure its performance no matter what the wearer is doing, whether he is only sitting at a desk or actively playing sport.

The certification as Master Chronometer has brought Omega's in-house movements to a **completely new quality level**. The tests go far beyond the traditional chronometer criteria and focus on the whole watch instead of the movement only.

materials, for example, Omega decided to focus on developing a movement that is able to withstand magnetism. This is one of the reasons that Omega started in 2008 to use Si14 silicon for the balance spring, for example. Steel springs are very vulnerable to magnetism while the silicon spring is unaffected by it. Not only that, it also has the property of being more resistant to shocks. Based on that new Si14 silicon balance spring, Omega started to develop further improvements to their in-house movements by using non-ferrous materials such as titanium and nickel-phosphorus for other parts as well. In 2013, Omega's developments resulted in a movement that could resist magnetic fields in excess of 15,000 gauss.

Official standard

In order to demonstrate that the Omega watches with these new types of movements are really up to the task, it has been decided to officially certify them according to a new set of standards. Just like the chronometer certification, the certification of the new anti-magnetic Omega calibers is also done by an external organization, in this case, the Federal Institute of Metrology (METAS). The specifications claimed by Omega are being tested by METAS, an independent organization that developed the framework for these new standards, so they can also be used by other brands who want to have their watches certified.

Master Chronometer means that the chronometer certification comes first. When the movements return from the Official Swiss Chronometer Testing Institute, they will undergo another set of tests by METAS. Unlike the chronometer test activities, METAS will also test the movements when these are cased. All watches are exposed twice to a permanent magnet that generates a magnetic field of 15,000 gauss, each time in a different position. During these tests, the timekeeping is measured by using microphones that will register any variation. After this test has ended, the watch will be demagnetized and tested again according to the same procedure. This, to check that the watch (and thus the movement) was not affected by the magnetic fields from the permanent magnet. In total, there are eight tests that are being performed on the movement and the watch. Only when all tests are passed, the watch will be certified as a Master Chronometer, ensuring an average daily rate of 0 to +5 seconds.

Until 2018, all mechanical Seamaster 300M Diver watches were certified as chronometers. With the Master Chronometer certification for the new collection, they are also capable of withstanding the pressure of modern everyday life, surrounded by magnetic fields.

TITANIUM & TANTALUM

LIGHT- AND HEAVY-WEIGHT CHAMPIONS

TEXT: PAUL DEZENTJÉ

Titanium and tantalum are both used in watches. The properties of these metal alloys are attractive, but their most striking effect is visual: they are matte finished, greyish blue and attractive in contrast with yellow and Sedna (rose) gold. Tantalum is even darker and a bit more blueish than titanium, but it is also heavier and more expensive.

THE FIRST OMEGA on the market made of titanium was the Seamaster Polaris, in 1982. The metal was discovered in the late 18th century, but it took half a century to mine it industrially. Hard as steel but 40% lighter in weight, titanium is extremely resistant to corrosion. Scratches disappear, thanks to the presence of a tough oxide film, that could be considered self-healing.

The possibilities of titanium are countless. Initially for military purposes and aeronautics, and thanks to the high bio-compatibility, the alloy is also perfect for medical and surgical applications. The anti-allergic properties and scratch resistance make it perfect for watches, even though the material is very hard to tool. In that respect, the Seamaster Polaris was a piece of true craftsmanship. Its appearance was aesthetically inspired by designer Gérald Genta. The combination of the design and the material's properties made this an interesting and appealing product. For customers, the almost extra-terrestrial color and matte gleam made it stand out. The weight also added to the fresh experience: it really felt much lighter than instinctively expected. The looks of the material even inspired advertisement creatives to show hands with a titanium skin color for an Olympics-related advertising campaign in 1984.

Already in 1969, Omega had experimented with titanium for their Speedmaster Alaska Project watch. Then, a 1972 Seamaster 1000 prototype with titanium case shows that Omega was considering titanium long before the 1982 Polaris, yet they did not produce a titanium watch in the decade in between.

Since the Polaris, titanium has always been present in Omega's collections, especially in the Seamaster line. The 1993 Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph was delivered in titanium, but also in titanium with a tantalum bezel with rose gold inlay and a titanium-tantalum-rose gold bracelet. In 1998, the first Seamaster 300M Diver was introduced in titanium, with a blue dial. Since then, different models became available in titanium, including the current Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph ETNZ that was introduced in 2015 (see regatta article a little further on). In 2018, the limited edition (2,500 pieces) Seamaster 300M Diver was launched, in the combination of titanium, tantalum and Sedna gold, similar to the 1993 chronograph version mentioned above.

Tantalum

Tantalum is the slightly darker brother of titanium. The first Omega watch featuring tantalum came to market about 10 years after the Seamaster Polaris, when the brand released its Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph in titanium, tantalum and rose gold. The fresh colour tone has a blueish hue, distinctively present in bezel and links. It looks nice with titanium and forms an exciting contrast with shiny metals such as gold. Omega has also tried to develop a tantalum watch, but that turned out to have too much weight. Tantalum is used in watches for visible parts, as a contribution to the design.

Like titanium, the chemical element tantalum (symbol Ta, atomic number 73) has interesting properties. It is non-magnetic, dense, ductile, very hard, easily fabricated, and highly conductive of heat and electricity. It belongs to the group of refractory metals: metals extraordinarily resistant to heat and wear and highly corrosion-resistant. And its chemical inertness (it hardly reacts with other chemicals) is a must for laboratory as well as medical and surgical equipment: Tantalum is resistant to body fluids and is non-irritating. Because it is highly bio-inert, it is very appropriate as an orthopaedic implant material and used in making surgical instruments and implants.

It is also used in electronic equipment like mobile phones, DVD players, video game systems and computers, and in an alloy with other metals it is used in carbide tools for metalworking equipment and as a super alloy for jet engine components, chemical process equipment, nuclear reactors, and missile parts. The metal is also famous for its resistance to corrosion by acids. Its high melting point of 3,017° C (boiling point 5,458° C) meets up to elements such as tungsten, rhenium, osmium and carbon. Tantalum is not solderable and hard to grind.

Tantalum is mainly mined in Australia, while China, Ethiopia, and Mozambique mine ores with a higher percentage of tantalum and produce a significant percentage of the world's output. Tantalum is also produced in Thailand and Malaysia as a byproduct of the tin mining there. It is estimated that there are less than 50 years left of tantalum resources.

Top: the first Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph was delivered in titanium and in a combination of titanium, rose gold and tantalum.

Center: the first three-hand model made of titanium was launched in 1998.

Bottom: this limited edition from 2018 is made of titanium, tantalum and Omega's own rose-gold alloy, Sedna gold.

Omega has been experimenting with titanium as early as 1969. The first Seamaster 300M Diver in titanium was the chronograph version launched in 1993.

Photo: stock.adobe.com/Thaut Images

Photo: pixabay.com

UNI-DIRECTIONAL BEZEL

THE DIVING BEZEL – A LIFE SAVER

Almost all Seamaster 300M Diver watches have a uni-directional bezel with a 60-minute scale. It is one of the most important characteristics of a divers' watch.

TEXT: ROBERT-JAN BROER

ACCORDING TO THE ISO 6425 standards for divers' watches, the bezel needs to be protected against wrong manipulation. Making it just rotatable in one direction, it can only accidentally show a longer diving time than actually has already passed – and so makes you come up earlier, never later than necessary.

Having a device, like a bezel or digital display, on which you can read the diving time is mandatory for a diver's watch. So, whether it is an externally placed bezel like on the Seamaster 300M Diver or an internal bezel that needs to be set with a crown, both are fine. The use of a 60-minute scale is required, with a clearly visible 5-minute marking. This all sounds very logical, but remember that very early divers' watches had a 60-minute scale bezel that could be rotated in both directions. Fortunately, for reasons of safety, those days are long gone.

Some watches are also equipped with a no-decompression limits scale on the bezel. This indicates the amount of time a diver can spend at a specific depth without the need of a decompression stop when surfacing.

The new Seamaster 300M Diver's bezel

The Seamaster 300M Diver in stainless steel has a uni-directional bezel in polished blue or black ceramic, filled with a white diving scale. The bi-color models have the diving scale in Ceragold, either in yellow or Sedna gold (see photo). Then, the limited-edition model has a bezel made of tantalum with a Sedna gold insert. All versions have the dot at 12 o'clock with Super-Luminova.

Using a diving bezel is actually quite simple: The dot needs to be aligned with the minute hand. Most divers operate the diving bezel with one hand, all geared up and ready to descend. This means they are often wearing gloves, so it is important that a bezel is slip-proof. With the diving bezel, the diver can now keep track of his time under water.

REGATTA TIMER

SAILING COUNTDOWN

Over the years, a number of Seamaster watches were equipped with a regatta timer for sailing competitions. They have a unique appearance: five round dots that change their color in five minutes, clearly visible on the dial. Very popular in the 1960s and 1970s, it is mainly a nod to the past today.

TEXT: PAUL DEZENTJÉ

THE REGATTA TIMER is a countdown timer for elapsed time, measuring in units of one minute, mostly for a total of five minutes. The purpose is to time the positioning of one's yacht prior to the start signal of the regatta. It was invented by Frédéric Robert, but the Swiss watch brand JeanRichard filed patent for it in 1961. Around the mid-1960s, Frédéric Robert developed the Aquastar Regate, based on this patent. This watch was the first regatta yacht timer wristwatch on the market. Later, Robert designed some of the most important Seamasters for Omega.

Imagine you're on a huge, state-of-the-art sailing yacht with a large and tense crew, right about to start a race like the America's Cup. Water, wind, seagulls and adrenaline; huge yachts with their sails up near the starting line – sometimes already approaching at speed even though the starting gun didn't go

Above left: the Seamaster 300M Racing from 2002 was Omega's first regatta watch produced in series.

Above: the Seamaster Professional 300M Apnea followed one year later, in 2003.

off yet. Tough and uncontrollable forces of nature like waves and wind are affecting the course. Then the horns blow the countdown signal – five minutes left until the start shot sounds. The skipper must make sure to not cross the starting line before the starting shot. This can be compared to lining up a car into grid on the tarmac or athletes before a 100-meter sprint.

Now a countdown timer is useful to indicate the time left to pilot the ship into the ideal position for the start. The skipper starts his yacht timer at the audible signal. With some measurement he can sail accordingly to the start – hopefully reaching the starting line at speed, and at the exact right time: the sound of the starting gun.

The regatta timer helps skipper, pilot or tactician to time the five minutes of the countdown with colored dots. Omega mainly uses blue and red. The dots are blue when the timer is not used; the sweep-seconds hand stands at zero. By activating the pusher at the sound of the horns, the timer starts counting down. The sweep hand runs forward, counting seconds. During one minute the first dot changes from blue to red, during the next minute the second dot becomes red and after five minutes all dots are red when the regatta start signal sounds.

The main surplus value of this timer is its legibility: the discs are bold indicators, even at a glance. A similar countdown in the traditional subdial would take seconds to check – time the skipper does not have. Although there are other highly legible designs, the regatta timer with discs is probably the most distinguished one – and today the one with a high vintage level.

Over the decades there have been numerous regatta timers and specialized chronographs produced by many brands. Let's take a look at three most significant watches with regatta timers that Omega has produced.

2002: Seamaster 300M Racing

The Seamaster 300M Racing chronograph was introduced in 2002 as a diver chronograph with a regatta timer for 10 minutes (2 x 5). It has the distinctive five discs between 10 and 2. Each window is blue at the start and then turns red in one minute. From blue to red and from red to blue takes five minutes, so you can time 10 minutes.

Then Swatch Group CEO Nicolas Hayek gave the first watch of this type to Dean Barker, Sir Peter Blake's successor as captain of Emirates Team New Zealand during the Basel fair, in spring of 2002 (see article about Blake on pp. 82–85). Before this, Omega never had made regatta timers. Moreover, no other Omega watch had actually been designed for sailing. All divers' watches were developed for diving, while chronographs weren't connected to the water in any way. However, research points out that the museum archives bear some interesting prototypes, showing trials with cases and dials, probably from the 1990s, when the brand got involved with professional sailing. The collaboration with Sir Peter Blake may have blown this new wind into their sails.

The Seamaster Racing 300M was available in titanium on a titanium bracelet (2269.52.00), steel on steel (2569.52.00), titanium on rubber (2969.52.91) and steel on rubber (2869.52.91). The titanium version had a titanium bezel, the steel models had a regular black bezel. The watch was produced until 2009.

2003: Seamaster Professional 300M Apnea

This dive watch had a regatta-inspired timer for a 14-minute dive (2 x 7 minutes) instead of the 5- or 10-minute sailing countdown. To make the seven discs as big as possible for utmost legibility, the chronograph counters for 30 minutes and 12 hours were skipped. The watch was developed with the legendary French freediver Jacques Mayol, who had been involved with Omega since the 1980s (see article about Mayol at the end of this issue). His personal regatta watch that inspired Omega is now in Omega's reference collection. It has the regular 5-minute regatta timer, while the back is inscribed "Jacques Mayol."

The same goes for the back of the Seamaster Professional 300M Apnea, which also bears Mayol's dolphin-man logo as a tribute. It is the only of its kind, with the seven windows. The watch completed Omega's Seamaster offering, while no other brand had a similar specialized product in their range, targeted at freedivers. It was made between 2003 and 2009 and available with white or black dial and with stainless-steel bracelet or rubber strap. The rubber-strap version was discontinued in 2008.

2015: Seamaster 300M Diver ETNZ

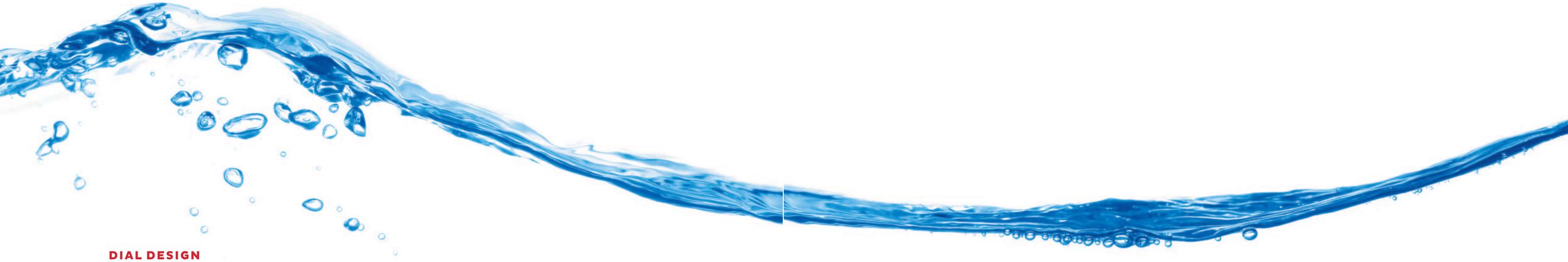
The Seamaster 300M Diver is an important link within Omega's dive-watch legacy and is therefore still present in today's collection. The ETNZ version of this Co-Axial chronograph (212.92.44.50.99.001) is dedicated to Emirates Team New Zealand, celebrating the team's campaign to claim sailing's greatest trophy, the America's Cup. This titanium-cased chronograph has a sand-blasted grade-5 titanium dial with applied white Super-LuminoVa indexes that emit a blue light. The dial shows three sub-dials: a small seconds at 9, a 12-hour counter at 6 and a 30-minute counter at 3. The last is also the regatta timer in this watch, which features an interesting variation on the regatta timer: It has a special red double hand indicator in which the two hands form a triangle from the center, ending in a curved part connecting the two hands. This curved end has the word "regatta" on it.

Starting this counter moves the whole triangle minute after minute. The interesting thing is that after the first minute, the red curve covers the 5 of the countdown index, leaving the remaining 4, 3, 2, 1 visible. After two minutes, the 4 is covered too – only 3, 2, 1 remain visible. In this manner, the watch shows only the relevant information: how much time is left?

With these watches, innovative in material as well as in a technical way, Omega boosts its bond with the ocean and sailing – with a special nod towards the illustrious regatta timer.

A regatta timer helps the skipper, pilot or tactician find the ideal **starting position** before the start signal sounds.

The other regatta watch: in 2015, Omega launched the Seamaster 300M Diver ETNZ with an eye-catching regatta counter at 3 o'clock.



DIAL DESIGN

THE RETURN OF THE WAVE PATTERN

For the last seven years, the Seamaster 300M Diver was without its classic wave dial. In 2018, Omega reintroduced the wave pattern to the dial of the new generation with in-house movements. Slightly updated in design, but undisputedly the waves fit this “Master of the Sea” perfectly.

TEXT: ROBERT-JAN BROER PHOTO: BERT BUIJSROGGE

Three generations of dials: the original model (right) had the wave pattern, its successor from 2011 (left) lost it, and the new models from 2018 bring it back.

WHEN OMEGA introduced the Seamaster 300M Diver, the subtle waves on the dial constantly reminded the wearer of the inspiration and purpose of this watch: water. Even the dressier version, the Seamaster 120M, received a wavy center on the dial. For the first series of the Seamaster 300M Diver, the wave-pattern dials were available in blue, black, electric blue, white and even in bright red. The only exception was the skeletonized limited edition for the 50th anniversary of the Seamaster (1998).

On the caseback, you would also find the wave pattern engraved in stainless steel, titanium or gold in the center, a bas relief of the Seahorse medallion. Even with the update of the original series of the Seamaster 300M Diver in 2006, the wave pattern remained unchanged. Only the printing and the applied logo and hour markers were changed. Through the years, Omega used different colors and combinations for the dials, but always with the unmistakable wave-pattern dial.

Unexpected design change

Then, all of a sudden, with the introduction of the updated 2011 models, the wave pattern disappeared from the dial of the Seamaster 300M Diver. A shock for many enthusiasts, but this divers’ watch remained one of Omega’s most wanted in many countries. Instead of the wave pattern Omega used lacquered dials, adding a bit of chic to the sports watch. Besides a lacquered dial, the watch also received a new bezel, made of ceramic. This would prevent it from getting scratched and from discoloration (although some purists don’t mind a bit of color fade on their watches). The lacquered dials were available in black and in a beautiful dark blue tone. The wave pattern could still be found on the casebacks of all of these watches. The 2017 Commander’s Watch limited edition of the Seamaster 300M Diver came with a polished white ceramic dial (see article on pp. 62/63).

For the 25th anniversary of the Seamaster 300M Diver, Omega made some radical changes. One of them is the return of the wave-pattern dial – this time available in black, blue and PVD chrome color, and made of polished ceramic [ZrO_2]. The wave pattern is a bit different from the earlier finer pattern from the years before 2011. For the new Seamaster 300M Diver model, the waves are laser engraved. We also find the date aperture located at 6 instead of 3 o’clock. The limited edition made of titanium, tantalum and Sedna gold that was also introduced in 2018 has a wave-pattern dial, too, but made of grade 5 titanium. This, to match the case and the bracelet of the watch.

WEARERS OF THE SEAMSTER 300M DIVER

WORN BY THE FAMOUS

TEXT: BALÁZS FERENCZI

The Seamaster 300M Diver has been around for 25 years. During this time, it has proven to be a trusted companion for people from all sorts of backgrounds and professions. Its main element is the sea, as you would expect from a true divers' watch. But it serves people just as well in the urban jungle, on the movie screen or onboard Air Force One. Here is a small selection of people living in the lime light with Omega.

Photo: shutterstock.com/Isaack

PRINCE WILLIAM

The most obvious person to start this illustrious list is none other than the future king of the United Kingdom, Duke of Cambridge and the oldest son of Prince Charles and the late Princess Diana: Prince William. It is widely known that both he and his younger brother Prince Harry wear watches that they have emotional connections with. These royal brothers can be seen sporting their favored timepieces in public. In the case of Prince William, the watch is a Seamaster 300M Diver (2561.80.00), a mid-size 36.2mm model on a bracelet. Rumor has it that the Seamaster was a gift he received from his mother, Princess Diana, hence the deep emotional connection. It is a timepiece Prince William wears during almost all important moments in his life. He wore the watch during his wedding to Kate Middleton back in 2011. It was also on his wrist when they introduced their newborn baby, Prince Louis, to the people of Great Britain in April 2018.

Photo: gettyimages.de/Andrew D. Bernstein

JON HAMM

The simplicity and versatility of the Seamaster 300M Diver is not only liked by royals and world leaders, Hollywood stars also seem to appreciate them. Both on and off the silver screen the watch has made its mark in the film industry, landing on the wrists of A-listers like Jon Hamm. Onscreen Don Draper, his character in *Mad Men*, wears a beautiful vintage Omega Seamaster De Ville Automatic with black dial and date on a leather strap. The watch fits the personal style of Draper, an impeccably dressed creative director of the fictional New York City-based advertising company, Sterling Cooper. In real life Hamm is often seen out and about with a Seamaster 300M Diver GMT Co-Axial in 41mm, a rarer version of the 300M collection. The added GMT function fits the lifestyle of Hamm, a busy actor who is always on the go, often jetting through various time zones.

LIEV SCHREIBER

Jon Hamm isn't the only Hollywood charmer with a great taste in watches. Actor, director, screenwriter and producer Liev Schreiber also belongs to this illustrious group. Schreiber played everything on screen from a mutant soldier in *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009), to a washed-out ice hockey player turned coach in *Goon* (2011) and a news editor in *Spotlight* (2015). His watch collection is just as versatile as his acting credits, but the one watch he does come back to seems to be an Seamaster 300M Diver. Unlike the aforementioned gentlemen, Schreiber did not go for the more classical blue-dial version. He also wears his Omega on a bracelet but the timepiece he chose is the version with black bezel and dial (2254.50.00). He not only wears the Seamaster in real life but also in his hit TV show, *Ray Donovan*, where viewers can often spot him with the Seamaster on his wrist. To some, black is more adaptable to various styles, being less colorful. Whether Schreiber selected the watch for this reason or not, it fits him perfectly.

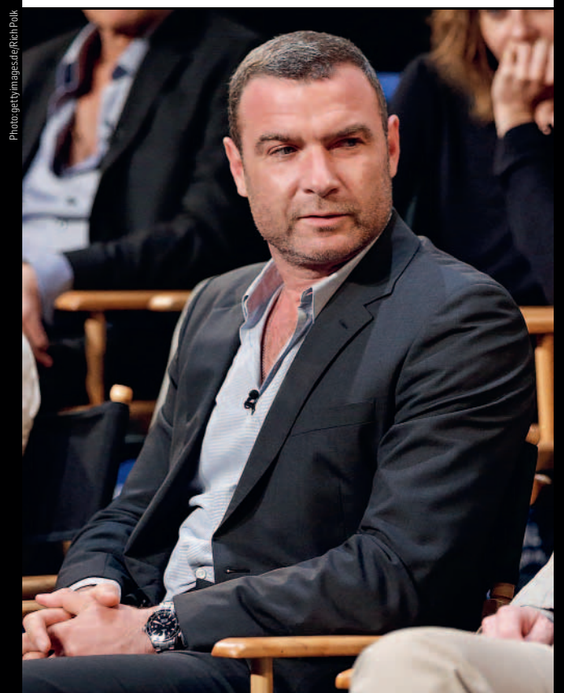


Photo: gettyimages.de/Rich Polk

Photo: gettyimages.de/Johnny Louis

JOE BIDEN

Joseph Robinette Biden, Jr., or as we know him, Joe Biden is a former attorney and senator from Delaware. Most of us however remember him as the 47th Vice President of the United States under the administration of President Barack Obama between 2009 and 2017. Among many things, Vice President Biden is also an Omega wearer. Throughout his career as the second in command he was often photographed with a number of Omega timepieces. His two most-worn watches are the Speedmaster Professional and the Seamaster 300M Diver. He wears both on a bracelet. Mr. Biden sports the watches with a suit and also when he is being casual in a polo shirt and jacket but always on the metal bracelet. One could argue that for a suit a dressier strap – or perhaps watch – should be the way to go. Others say that it shows how versatile the Seamaster 300M Diver is. You can dress it up or down, the look will always work.

AMERICA'S CUP

THE TIP OF EXCELLENCE

TEXT: PAUL DEZENTJÉ

The America's Cup is the oldest international sporting trophy in the world, awarded for the first time in 1851. It is a match race, one against one. The contest is notorious for its special rules: the winner decides the venue for the next edition, three years later, plus most of the rules of engagement, so he has a clear advantage at the start. Omega has been involved with the America's Cup since 1995.

Powerful cooperation: Omega is partner of Emirates Team New Zealand

THE ONE-AGAINST-ONE race consists of four sailing events called the America's Cup World Series (ACWS), during which the regatta includes a double "round robin" where all teams race against each other once per round. The top four challengers go to the playoffs, and in the end there is a two-boat final. The winner of this final wins the America's Cup and is the so-called defender for the next season. Contesting for this Cup is a challenge on every level and for everything and everybody involved.

Yacht sizes have changed over the years, from 65–90 ft (20–27 m) in the very beginning to the J-Class regattas of the 1930s. After World War II, the cup saw smaller, less expensive 12-m yachts. This class was used from 1958 to 1987. From 1990 to 2007, the Cup had its own class: the International America's Cup Class. Three years later, the regatta was raced in 90 ft (27 m load waterline length) multihull yachts. The 2013 America's Cup was sailed in AC72 foiling, wing-sail catamarans and the 35th America's Cup match was sailed in 50 ft foiling catamarans. The next race takes place in 2021.

"It's like the moon"

Sailing, especially at high speed, requires determination, perfect timing, superb team-playing and the ability to adapt quickly. Omega admires such qualities. The brand backs entire crews, such as Emirates Team New Zealand, times intrepid events such as the Volvo Ocean Race, or supports the efforts of just one sailor, such as Dame Ellen MacArthur when she broke the solo round-the-world record in 2005. Raynald Aeschlimann, President and CEO of Omega once said, "The America's Cup is like the Olympic Games or great golf tournaments: it doesn't come around every week or every day. It is *the* event. There is a lot to do about it, people talk about it, media report on it. There is nothing like it. To me, it is like the moon."

Sailing represents the "water side" of Omega, like swimming. The brand has always had a clear link to water, from the first dive watch ever, 1930's Marine, to the innovative proliferation in divers' watches since the 1950s in the Seamaster series, researching new materials, constructions and techniques, pushing boundaries even further.

The brand ambassadors over the years were unlimited in their own ways, in or on the water, such as the late Sir Peter Blake who won all sailing contests and successfully defended the America's Cup himself, but also freediver Jacques Maynol, surfing legend Gerry Lopez and solo-sailor Dame Ellen McArthur.

Besides Omega's support for events like the America's Cup, the brand conducts the timekeeping. This has been a major pillar of the brand throughout history. Not only at the 100m sprint finish line during the Olympic Games, but Omega improved the recording for many other sports, during events with a global attraction.

This touches the heart of the brand: creating state-of-the-art instruments to measure time. For the America's Cup, Omega developed spot-on timepieces up to the job on board during one of the toughest battles in the world of sports.

VARIETY

THE 300M – A BEST SELLER

TEXT: ROBERT-JAN BROER

If you are like me, and like to do some watch-spotting in your free time, chances are pretty good that you will come across the Seamaster 300M Diver quite often. Whenever I am on a business trip or find myself beside the hotel pool during a holiday in Spain, there's always at least one Seamaster 300M Diver to spot on someone's wrist. **The watch is a best seller around the world**, for good reason.

ONE MIGHT ARGUE that the Seamaster 300M Diver is not a very exclusive watch, as it can often be spotted on people's wrists. But if the last 25 years of its existence have proven one thing, it's that the Seamaster 300M Diver is simply a very versatile watch that has a lot to offer. From the start it was a watch that ensured water resistance up to 300 meters (30 bar), was delivered on a very comfortable bracelet with clasp extension and had either a mechanical movement with chronometer certification or a very accurate quartz movement. The Seamaster 300M Diver was always offered for a very competitive price, compared to the dive watches of other, similar brands – if they were able to offer a watch with the same specifications at all.

The latter especially became true earlier in 2018, when Omega introduced the new collection of Seamaster 300M Diver watches – a 42mm stainless-steel watch with 60-minute scale diving bezel of ceramic, helium escape valve, 300 meters of water resistance and with the in-house manufactured Master Chronometer Caliber 8800 inside.

Not without coincidence of course, but a lot of diving watches on the market have a number of similarities, also in terms of aesthetics. This is mainly influenced by the standards for dive watches, such as the (uni-directional) diving bezel and legibility of course. However, when Omega introduced the Seamaster 300M Diver in 1993 it was unlike any Omega watch before, or unlike any dive watch in the market actually. The design stood out, both of the watch and the bracelet, and was praised by many watch journalists, collectors and enthusiasts.

Unchanged for a long time

The first references 2531.80 for the mechanical 41mm version with blue dial and 2541.80 for the quartz powered 41mm model have been in production from 1993 till 2005. They stayed almost unchanged, as only the mechanical movement received an upgrade in 1994 (from Caliber 1109 to 1120). Besides a number of variations in colors and sizes, a noteworthy variation is the reference 2254.50, a black-dialed Seamaster 300M Diver with a Speedmaster-style bracelet and different hand-set and hour markers. That is a much-loved variation by Seamaster fans today as it is a more understated watch than the other Seamaster 300M Diver versions. This particular reference was in production from 2000 till 2008.

The blue "James Bond" Seamaster 300M Diver received a significant update in 2006. Hands became longer, the "Seamaster" wording moved to a position under the ap-

plied Omega logo and was printed in red. Below, the word "Co-Axial" was added as this watch was updated with the Caliber 2500. Also, the hour markers changed from printed luminous dots to an applied hour marker filled with Super-Luminova. You could almost say that this watch received a more luxurious appeal, and significant movement upgrade. This reference 2220.80 was produced until 2010.

Great change in design

18 years after the introduction of the Seamaster 300M Diver, something radically changed: the dial. The wave pattern disappeared from the 300M and made way for a blue or black lacquered dial. The date disc had been done in a matching color, to create more unity on the dial. This reference 212.30.41.20.03.001 also was the first Seamaster 300M Diver to appear with a uni-directional bezel made of ceramic. The blue bezels on the previous models had been made of aluminium and had the tendency to fade to a lighter shade of blue after time, which is actually much appreciated by many fans. However, it was also due to receive some scratches, especially when it was someone's daily wearer.

The ceramic bezel on the models introduced in 2011 were virtually scratch proof and did not show any discoloration. The glossy finish of the bezel also matched the shiny lacquered dial of this watch. Omega also decided to change the lume of this watch a bit. The hands and markers gave a blue glow under low-light conditions, the minute hand and lume dot on the bezel had a green glow. For this model, the bracelet was also updated to more modern standards. The nine-row link design was kept, but the bracelet became slightly thicker and the links now used screws instead of pins.

The same 2011 model also became available in a smaller size, 36.5mm. So it was a watch that can be worn both by men and women. However, for ladies that prefer a smaller size, a 28mm version of the wave-dialed model was still available (with quartz movement).

Interesting to note is that Omega made various special editions of the Seamaster 300M Diver in the past 25 years. Besides the tri-metal chronographs, there was a full yellow gold model in 1994 with a white dial and yellow gold engraved bezel as well as a blue dial version with matching blue bezel. In 1998 a full titanium version was added for the three-hand 300M Diver version, and as a limited edition with a white gold bezel. Another noteworthy version was the Seamaster 300M Diver Skeleton available in yellow gold and in white gold in 1999. The movement of this watch is the Omega Caliber 2400, based on the 1973 in-house Calibre 1012.

Completely different: a model from 2000 with special bracelet and dial

New "James Bond" watch: in 2006, the blue dial changed a bit.

Without wave pattern: production of this variation started in 2011.

Latest evolution: a model from 2018 with stainless-steel case and gold bezel

Special edition from 1999: the Seamaster 300M Diver Skeleton in yellow gold

The latest generation

In 2018, with the return of the wave pattern dial the previous 41mm models have been discontinued. As stated earlier, the new Seamaster 300M Diver has a 42mm stainless steel case with a ceramic bezel. If you are as flashy as me, you might especially like the version with the Ceragold bezel, either in yellow gold or Sedna (rose) gold. The nine-row bracelet also has been updated, with a bit flatter design. It is also available in bi-color, either yellow gold or Sedna gold. The dial is made of polished ceramic and laser engraving techniques have been used to establish the wave pattern. In total, Omega introduced this new 300M model in 14 different variations, including several dial colors like the traditional black and blue, but also one in PVD chrome. And, also included in those 14 variations are those on a comfortable rubber strap with tang buckle. Besides the return of the wave-pattern dial, another nod to 1993 is the limited edition of 2,500 pieces in titanium, tantalum and rose gold. It was these materials that Omega used for the Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph reference 2296.80.

Twenty-five years later, we can also say that the Seamaster 300M Diver withstood time very well, as even the first references are still perfectly suitable for daily wear. The bracelet is perhaps the part that was in need of a design upgrade the most, as this design did not change in the first 24 years. For the new 300M watches, the bracelet has been updated to modern design standards, but is still clearly the typical nine-row bracelet that belongs to this watch.

The fact that it was used by James Bond in *GoldenEye, Tomorrow Never Dies, The World Is Not Enough* and *Die Another Day* probably did the sales numbers of this watch a lot of good. Later on, when Daniel Craig took over the role from Pierce Brosnan as secret agent 007, the Seamaster 300M could be seen one more time in *Casino Royale*, mainly on the wrist of Bond during his time in the casino. Although from that moment on, Bond also started wearing the Seamaster Planet Ocean and later on (*Skyfall*, 2012) the Aqua Terra, for many people, the Seamaster 300M Diver remains the watch they associate with James Bond. Therefore, it would be interesting to learn whether James Bond will return to the 300M in future movies.

Best seller around the world

In some countries, the Seamaster 300M Diver is the best-sold Omega watch up till today. It shows that this watch achieved its own cult status among buyers. You might even call this watch an icon on its own. Omega does not disclose any sold numbers, of course, but they do let us know that the Seamaster 300M Diver has, since 1993, been a very important product for them. Based on the positive reception of the new Seamaster 300M Diver models during Baselworld 2018, expectations are very high.

As with many other things, if so many people are wearing this watch, then there's probably a good reason for it. The combination of its design, divers' specifications, size and reliable movements might all have to do with its popularity, as well as the attractive price point.

THE HANDS OF TIME

TEXT: ROBERT-JAN BROER

One could easily forget how important the design of a watch's hands is. Having Louis XVI hands for a sports watch would look weird, while a pair of arrow hands would be inappropriate on a dress watch. For the Seamaster 300M Diver, Omega uses bold-looking sword hands with luminous tips and a skeleton body – the perfect match for a divers' watch.

FOR SYMMETRY reasons, you will find the hands of a watch being advertised set around 10:10. Besides symmetry, the setting of the hands in this v-shape also ensures there's no blocking of a date window or subdials (if applicable), and you will be fine reading the brand's logo either at 12 or 3 o'clock. Besides digital watches and watches that display the time in a rather unusual way (using rotating discs, or even a tube with fluids, for example), most watches use hands, or even just one hand.

For the Seamaster collection, many different styles of hands have been used. Where the two very first Seamaster watches from 1948 used dauphine and leaf-shaped hands, the sportier Seamaster 300 in 1957 used broad arrow hands. The bold divers such as the Seamaster 600M (PloProf) and 1000M used large and legible (orange) hands, typically referred to as the plongeur-style hands, but the large orange minute hand could also be seen as a sword hand.

Before the Seamaster 300M Diver was introduced, its predecessor, the 200M (often referred to as "Pre-Bond" by collectors), used a variety of hands. Not only did it have sword hands, there were also 200M references that used Mercedes hands, where the hour hand had a shape that recalled the car manufacturer's logo.

History of the sword hands

The sword hands go a long way back into the history of Omega's dive watches. Already in the early 1960s we came across Seamaster 300 models with this style of hands.

When the Seamaster 300M Diver was introduced in 1993, one of the style elements that characterized this watch so much, besides the helium valve and wave dial, were the skeletonized sword hands. All versions, including the chronograph, mid-size and small-size models, came with these skeletonized sword hands.

In the past 25 years, these hands played a big role in the design of the 300M Diver watches, with just a couple of exceptions: the Seamaster 300M Diver GMT, and almost all variations whose dials had trapezoid-shaped hour markers used hands that weren't skeletonized. However, in today's collection of Seamaster 300M Diver watches, all have skeletonized sword hands (again). It is unmistakably part of the 300M design.

COMMANDER'S WATCH

THE NAVY'S CHOICE

James Bond is a British Royal Navy commander, a senior officer rank. Omega celebrates this rank as well as the regalia of James Bond and the navy with the Seamaster 300M Diver "Commander's Watch." However, James Bond is not the only reason the brand honors the Royal Navy.

TEXT: BALÁZS FERENCZI
PHOTOS: BERT BUIJSROGGE

OMEGA HAS DEEPER, older ties to the Royal Navy than to James Bond: It is widely known that back in the 1960s the British Ministry of Defense ordered Seamaster 300 watches from Omega to equip the navy. Some 30 years later the most famous naval officer from the United Kingdom strapped an Seamaster 300M Diver on his wrist for the first time – on the silver screen.

The colors and the decoration of the Seamaster 300M Diver "Commander's Watch" (212.32.41.20.04.001), issued in 2017, are designed to pay homage to the Royal Navy. The main colors of this timepiece are red, blue and white – just like the Union Jack – which are also the ensign colors of the navy. The Commander's Watch has a 41mm stainless-steel case with a blue ceramic bezel. It features a diving scale with a red rubber cover that marks the first 15 minutes. The white ceramic dial is polished and has 12 raised blue indexes. The text is also blue except for the word "Seamaster" that is highlighted in red, just like the number 7 on the date wheel. While the rest of the numerals are blue, the red 7 is a nod to honor 007. Another James Bond reference is the famous 007 gun logo counterweight on the red second hand – a familiar touch often seen on James Bond limited editions.

Meaningful back side

The Commander's Watch has a wave-edge caseback that is simple and meaningful at the same time. Except to the name of the timepiece and the limited edition number (xxxx/7007), the back is plain. Take a look through the display window and you'll see the Commander's naval regalia decorating the rotor. One can find the same insignia on the sleeves of a Commander's uniform. The James Bond elements like the 007 gun logo, as seen on the dial, and the 9mm bullet-design rotor center are inevitable components of an James Bond limited edition.

While the Seamaster 300M Diver "Commander's Watch" comes on a 5-stripe NATO strap in naval colors, the set also contains the Seamaster metal bracelet. With this combination the owner can easily switch between sporty or more formal looks. To help changing between strap and bracelet, Omega included a spring-bar tool in the set. The Commander's Watch comes in a presentation box that looks like a medal case. It also holds a naval pin that mirrors the look of the strap.

Yellow and white gold versions

Besides the pictured stainless-steel watch, there is also a 7-piece yellow-gold version and a unique piece in white gold. The latter looks just like the steel version to the naked eye. Christie's auctioned the watch (together with a yellow-gold and a steel model) in October 2017 with all proceeds going to UNICEF as well as other charitable foundations.

The Seamaster 300M Diver "Commander's Watch" is an interesting reinterpretation of Omega's classic divers' watch. While the unmistakable Seamaster 300M Diver DNA is present, the designers went the extra mile with this timepiece. What they created is a watch that surely will stand the test of time thanks to its looks and connection not only to James Bond but also to the British Royal Navy.

Top: the Commander's Watch refers to James Bond with a 007 counterweight for the seconds hand and the date with a red 7.

Above: the rotor of the Co-Axial Caliber 2507 shows three golden stripes and the 007 gun logo.

Photo: stock.adobe.com/ymakt

State-of-the-art movement: Omega's current Caliber 8800 is anti-magnetic, highly precise and individually finished.

THE ROAD TO IN-HOUSE

Omega was named after the first movement that Louis Brandt & Fils (the company name at the time) developed in 1894. This caliber was very accurate and, additionally, very easy to repair. It was then decided to change the name of the company to Omega.

TEXT: ROBERT-JAN BROER

A BRAND that is named after a movement has something to show on the market when it comes to developing and producing mechanical movements. Omega created some beautiful movements, such as the highly praised Caliber 30T2 or the copper colored Caliber family 5xx that Omega used for their Seamaster, Genève and Constellation watches in the 1950s and '60s. Even their later Caliber family 10xx was very reliable and is still praised by collectors.

When the quartz crisis hit the Swiss watch industry in the 1970s, the demand for mechanical watch movements was ever decreasing. Omega kept a lot of mechanical watches in their collection, but a lot of them were based on ETA movements. ETA, already then part of the same group to which Omega belonged, became one of the core suppliers of movements for their watches.

In 1999, Omega introduced the Co-Axial escapement for their watches. It was an invention by English master watchmaker George Daniels, who had been developing this escapement for many years. Omega recognized its potential and found a way to industrialize the use of this escapement in their movements. Then in 2007, Omega introduced its own in-house developed caliber range 8500, which of course had the Co-Axial escapement, too. The escapement in these in-house movements adopted the concept of the Co-Axial system, with improvements over the version that was used before.

Movements for the Seamaster 300M Diver

But let's take a step back again, and look at the movement history of the Seamaster 300M Diver, that starts in 1993. At that time, Omega used top-grade versions of ETA's 2892-A2 movement and dubbed it Caliber 1109. In those first Omega Seamaster 300M Diver models with mechanical movement, the Caliber 1109 was used. Then, only a year later, Omega introduced the Caliber 1120 for the Seamaster 300M Diver. It was also based on the ETA 2892-A2, but has been modified heavily by Omega for a better winding efficiency. This movement received an Omega-exclusive rotor and a proprietary smaller ball-bearing. As a result, the Caliber 1120 required less rotations of the weight mass to fully wind the main spring. It was also significantly more quiet because of these modifications.

The power reserve of the Caliber 1120 was 44 hours, and it was ticking at 28,800vph. All these movements were also chronometer certified to guarantee an average daily rate between –4 and +6 seconds. Of course, the date change was quick-set and done in the first position of the crown. The Caliber 1120 has been used in many different models, including De Ville and Constellation watches. It has proven to be a very reliable and much praised movement over the years.

Then, already in 1999, Omega introduced the Co-Axial escapement to their movements that could first be found in the De Ville Co-Axial models. In 2006, it was time for Omega to update the Seamaster 300M Diver, resulting in reference 2220.80. Besides some aesthetical changes, the Caliber 1120 was replaced by Caliber 2500. That was also based on the ETA 2892-A2, but with the new Co-Axial escapement embedded. The power reserve increased to 48 hours. Caliber 2500 was used for both the 41mm and 36.25mm versions of the watch. The movement has been used in the Seamaster 300M Diver models up till 2018.

Left, from top: the history of the Seamaster 300M Diver started with Caliber 1109 and went on with its successor Caliber 1120.

Photo: stock.adobe.com/vmakt

Above: Caliber 2500 was a milestone as it was fitted with the very precise Co-Axial escapement.

Right: the current Caliber 8806 is a variation of Caliber 8800, without a date indication.

Master Chronometer

It was only a matter of time before Omega would start using one of their in-house movements for the 300M collection. Since 2018, their Master Chronometer Calibers 8800 and 8806 (no date) are being used in the new 42mm watches. These movements were packed with all the innovations that Omega introduced after the 1999's Co-Axial escapement: Si14 silicon balance spring, anti-magnetic up to 15,000 gauss and a power reserve of 55 hours. This movement also has the Co-Axial escapement, of course, but an improved iteration over the one that was found in the Caliber 2500.

The finish is beautiful, with Geneva waves in Arabesque and blackened screws, barrel and balance wheel. In the new Seamaster 300M Diver watches, the Calibers 8800 and 8806 are visible due to the sapphire caseback.

CERAMIC

ANCIENT CLAY, LUXURY TODAY

The origins of ceramic go back to 26,000 B.C., when man discovered that clay can be molded and dried in the sun, forming a brittle but heat-resistant material. Twenty thousand years later, the Greeks used ovens for heating; they made pottery. Today, ceramic is omnipresent in our daily lives. In the 1970s, ceramics were used for the first time in watches. Omega has experimented with the material since the 1960s, resulting today in full-ceramic watch cases.

TEXT: PAUL DEZENTJÉ

CERAMICS are materials composed of inorganic substances, typically combinations of metallic and nonmetallic elements. There are two classes: traditional and advanced ceramics. Traditional ceramics include clay products, silicate glass and cement. Advanced ceramics consist of carbides (SiC), pure oxides (Al_2O_3), nitrides (Si_3N_4), non-silicate glasses and others. Ceramics are interesting because of the many advantages they offer compared to other materials. They are harder and stiffer than steel, more resistant to heat and corrosion than metals or polymers, less dense than most metals, and their alloys and their raw materials are both plentiful and inexpensive.

Because of the many properties of ceramic materials, they're used in countless different product areas. Most ceramic materials are good thermal and electrical insulators. They have a high melting temperature, hardness, elasticity and chemical resistance, as well as a poor conductivity and low ductility (with known exceptions to each of these rules). It is not easy to define ceramics, but it is clear that as a material group, the variety and with that the application possibilities are almost endless.

Ceramics are serving us every day and night. A great deal of our civilized luxury life depends on it, but we hardly realize it. Don't think about nice pottery or objects of art in your home. Turn on the light: the glass bulb is ceramic. All electricity we use is generated, stored, and transmitted through an array of ceramic products such as transducers, resistors, and all kinds of insulators. Many people have tiled floors in their bathroom: ceramic. Toilet, sink – and an electric heater in the shower? It probably contains ceramic heating elements. The phone contains a ceramic microphone that can transmit your voice through fiber optic lines. And over 70 pounds (30 kg) of ceramic sensors and parts are used in our dearest friend, the car. Too far to drive? Take a plane or a Space Shuttle? Ceramics all over, from the nose cone to the heat shielding tiles.

Omega and ceramics

At first, ceramics were applied in watches as decoration. An important breakthrough came in 1962, when Rado was the first to use scratch-resistant materials in their DiaStar (a titanium-tungsten-carbide alloy). This wasn't ceramic, but the technological step ahead initiated use of new materials in the watch industry, including high-tech ceramics in the 1980s. There is an 1968 Dynamic prototype with a black ceramic case in Omega's reference collection and in 1973 the watch brand produced a Constellation automatic chronometer with an 18-karat gold case, covered in burgundy-colored ceramic.

In 1982, Omega marketed the Seamaster Cermet, aka Black Tulip. The Omega Art Collection from 1986 was a concept where contemporary artists such as legendary Max Bill were invited to make their own designs, based upon a black watch made of a scratch-free ceramic alloy with a white contrasting dial. The artists redesigned the dial and back of this ceramic watch.

Later, ceramics were used in bezels, such as the 2011 Seamaster 300M Diver in steel. The current Seamaster Planet Ocean Deep Black collection offers four watches representing the next step in the evolution of ceramic watchmaking. This project began with the Speedmaster "Dark Side of the Moon" in 2013, where Omega reinvented ceramics and created a new kind of watch case from a single piece of ceramic. With ground-breaking technologies, the ceramic cases and ceramic bezels deliver a completely new experience – sturdy, bold and luxurious.

The 2018 Seamaster 300M Diver comes with a ceramic bezel and a polished ceramic dial. This concept confirms Omega's innovative DNA once again. Given the ongoing technological progression and the endless possibilities of the ceramics material group, future application possibilities are never-ending. Not only in the fields of military, medicine, communications, home goods and space exploration, but also in watchmaking.

MAINTENANCE OF A DIVERS' WATCH

Left: in Omega service centers, service is done for all kinds of watches.

Above: in a pressure tank, the water resistance of every watch is checked.

KEEP YOUR DIVER RUNNING

TEXT: ROBERT-JAN BROER

All mechanical watches need periodical servicing. New oil is necessary every once in a while, and some parts need to be checked for wear and tear.

THE GOOD THING about a watch service is that it isn't required every year, like your car. The downside is that it takes longer to have your watch serviced than it does for your car. When your mechanical watch was dropped, has visual damage or does run noticeably faster or slower than before, it might be time to bring it in for a service.

As a general rule, service of a mechanical watch should be carried out every four to five years. It also depends on the level of usage of the watch, of course. Especially when you use your watch in the water, it is of high importance that you can rely on its water resistance. One of the most important parts are the seals. They will become brittle after a while and can be an unreliable factor for your divers' watch.

Service should only be carried out by a certified watchmaker, and in case of your Seamaster 300M Diver, an Omega service center is recommended. These official service centers guarantee that your watch will receive genuine Omega replacement parts and that the correct tools and machines will be used to perform the service. Besides the reassurance that your watch is treated with the utmost care and proper watchmaking tools, you will also receive a two-year warranty on the service.

What happens?

What happens during such a service? And why does it take longer than having your car serviced? Well, unlike your car, a watch will be completely disassembled to start with. Not only the case, crown, pushers (if applicable) and dial, but also the entire movement will be taken apart. Each component of the movement will be thoroughly cleaned and worn components will be replaced by new ones. Then, everything will be reassembled again, including the lubrication of the parts that work together to ensure problem-free functioning of the movement – painstaking work, performed by certified watchmakers.

When the movement is assembled and runs, it needs to be regulated to make sure that the watch performs within the set standards. If necessary, the case and bracelet will also receive a touch-up, so the watch will leave the service center as if it were new. Some collectors or purists do not want this, so always make your wishes clear to the service center in advance.

When everything is cleaned and checked, the watch will be assembled again. This is also the moment that the seals will be replaced, to ensure the water resistance of your watch. The final stage of a complete service is a thorough check if the watch runs within Omega's standards, that all functions work flawlessly. There is also a pressure test to check the watch's water resistance.

You can imagine that this entire procedure can differ from watch to watch, depending on the type of movement or complication(s). A three-hands quartz watch requires less work than a mechanical watch with a chronograph complication, for example. Omega is transparent regarding their pricing of service, which can be found on their official website for the different types of watches.

Dive watches come more often

One important note to make is that when you use your Seamaster 300M Diver actively in the water, it is recommended to have the seals and screw-down threads (of the crown) checked every two years.

But you can also do a few things yourself to keep your divers' watch healthy. After every time you take it with you into the sea, make sure to rinse the watch with tap water, as salt water will definitely shorten the life of the seals. Just like soap or shampoo, make sure you rinse it off.

I have often read and heard stories from people who indicate that they've worn a (mechanical) watch for many years, sometimes even decades, without having it serviced even once. Oh, and that it keeps perfect time, of course. That can certainly be the case, even that it runs well within specifications. However, I also get to hear the stories from the other side of the watchmaker's bench. Those stories are less euphoric, as the watch will stop functioning in the end, and when that time has come, a lot of parts need to be replaced.

Just like cars, maintenance is important and will prevent the owner from catastrophic issues that can result in a huge repair invoice. Take good care of your watch, and it will surely extend the joy of owning and wearing it for many years to come.

The very first GMT model: the Seamaster 300M GMT was introduced in 1998 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Seamaster collection.

SEAMASTER 300M DIVER GMT

AROUND THE WORLD

One of the most useful complications on a watch is an extra time zone, or GMT. GMT stands for "Greenwich Mean Time" and for a watch, it means that there is an additional time zone displayed, mostly on a 24-hour scale. This additional function makes Omega's divers' watch a companion for travellers.

TEXT: ROBERT-JAN BROER

GREENWICH is a suburb of London. So what has that to do with a GMT watch? Well, there are a lot of publications on GMT, including on the importance of having the same standards for time zones for accident-free train rides in the 19th century, but let's keep it to the fact that the Greenwich meridian is where the longitude is zero. This was agreed upon by a number of wise men during the International Meridian Congress in October 1884 and finally adopted on November 1 of that year. Greenwich Mean Time is where the sun crosses the Greenwich prime meridian at noon and reaches its highest point in the sky there. It is not always exactly at noon (12:00) that this happens, as the Earth has an elliptical orbit and an axial tilt, resulting in an uneven speed. However, 12:00 GMT is the annual average (explaining the word "mean") moment of the sun crossing the Greenwich meridian. Most of the other time zones we know have an offset of a number of hours. Most GMT watches have a 24-hour scale, so most time zones are covered.

A watch with a GMT function allows you to set your watch to a different time zone and read home time as well as local time. Using a 24-hour scale, you will also see whether it is AM or PM in your home time. Why is this useful? Well, if you are a frequent traveller, for example, especially to countries in a different time zone, it is often useful to see what time is at home, so you won't wake up relatives in the middle of the night by calling them. Also, a GMT watch can be very useful if you don't travel, but do a lot of business with countries in other time zones, for example. This way, you can see if your foreign partners are in their "business hours."

A 300M with GMT function

The first Seamaster 300M Diver GMT (reference 2534.50.00) was introduced at the end of 1998, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Seamaster family. This model was powered by Omega's Caliber 1128, a variation on Caliber 1120. Based on the same 41mm stainless-steel case and wavy patterned dial, it did show some differences from the regular Seamaster 300M Diver watch. Some design changes were made, like the hour markers and shape of the hands, but also the bezel was different. It was not the uni-directional diving bezel with 60-minute scale, but a bezel with a 24-hour scale. The bezel had two colors to make the distinction between night and day. The extra hour hand indicated the second time zone by pointing at this 24-hour bezel.

Since the Seamaster 300M Diver GMT was not really a dive watch due to the absence of the diving bezel, it also did not feature the helium escape valve at 10 o'clock. It was available with the nine-row bracelet but also with a comfortable black ridged rubber strap. Later

The highly functional **Seamaster 300M GMT** was introduced in 1998 and made travellers' lives easier.

on, Omega decided to add a white-dial version of this watch (reference 2538.20.00). This watch had a bezel in only one color, so the day and night distinction could only be made by the 24-hour scale and not based on difference in colors. Also interesting is that this watch came on the Speedmaster-style bracelet, instead of the typical 300M bracelet. Collectors often referred to the white dial Seamaster 300M GMT as "The Great White," due to the dial color. Over the years, this specific model has become quite sought-after.

For those who could afford it, there was also the Seamaster 300M Diver GMT in 18-karat yellow gold with yellow-gold bracelet (reference 2134.80.00) and a yellow-gold version on a flush-fit leather strap (reference 2634.80.93). These watches were introduced in 1999 and came with the same technical specifications as the steel versions, but featured a dark blue dial.

A very special version of the 300M GMT was released in 2000. This watch is also known as the "Gerry Lopez" GMT, as it carries the Polynesian flower motifs on the case back, the logo of the famous U.S. surfer Lopez. This watch was produced in a limited run of 999 pieces, with this special case back.

Decisive changes

In 2004, the Seamaster 300M Diver GMT underwent some changes. First of all, the movement changed from Caliber 1128 to 2628. If you know a thing or two about Omega's history of the past 20 years, you probably already guessed that the main difference between these movements was the Co-Axial escapement. Not only was the movement changed, the design was also updated. This new watch, reference 2535.80.00, was closer to the original design of the 300M Diver with its helium escape valve, blue wave patterned dial and diving-scale bezel. The 24-hour scale was now printed on the dial and a (short) GMT hand indicated the home time. Respecting the 300-meter water resistance, this reference came with a display back, allowing the owner to admire the self-winding movement.

Currently, the only Seamaster 300M Diver watch that has a GMT complication is the chronograph that was introduced in 2014. It uses the column-wheel chronograph movement with Co-Axial escapement, Omega Caliber 3306.

Left: after the original model from 1998, this version with white dial and Speedmaster-style bracelet was launched.

Below: in 1999, Omega launched a luxurious full-gold version

Above: the Seamaster 300M GMT from 2004 looked quite similar to the original 300M from 1993.

Top: currently, the Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph GMT is the only model with a GMT function.

Stunning new model: the Seamaster 300M Diver with PVD chrome dial and blue rubber strap

Photos: stock.adobe.com/glass_frog

2018 SEAMASTER 300M DIVER

STEPPING UP THE GAME

TEXT: ROBERT-JAN BROER

Twenty-five years after the introduction of the Seamaster 300M Diver, Omega launched the 4th generation of the watch, bigger and better than ever and making sure it can play in the premier league of divers' watches. Where the first two iterations of the 300M were already impressive, the new 2018 collection takes this already legendary diving watch to new heights.

WHEN OMEGA INTRODUCED the Master Chronometer certification for their in-house movements in 2015, it was communicated that it would become the future standard for almost all of their watches. It should not be interpreted as a coincidence or come as a surprise that in the year of the 25th anniversary of the Seamaster 300M Diver it receives a total make-over, including a Master Chronometer certified movement.

There are 14 new models, six of which are in stainless steel and eight are in a combination of steel and gold – the latter available in either yellow gold or Sedna (rose) gold combined with stainless steel. For now, there are three different dial colors available: blue, black and PVD chrome. All variations are available on a rubber strap or a matching metal (bi-color or stainless steel) bracelet.

But wait a minute, there's a 15th model as well: a limited edition (2,500 pieces) in the tri-metal combination of titanium, tantalum and Sedna gold. This watch is a nod to the Seamaster 300M Diver Chronograph in titanium, tantalum and rose gold that was introduced 25 years ago.

If you aren't familiar with the previous Seamaster 300M Diver watches, whether that be the first two versions with wave dial or the previous model with lacquered dial, the new generation may look to you like a very modern divers' watch, a watch of today. Only when you're in the know, will you immediately see that the new 300M is a continuation of that iconic diver that was introduced in 1993.

Without wanting to do damage to any of the previous models, as I still believe these are all great watches and of which I have fond memories myself, the new references are simply on a different level. Omega brought all of its recent innovations to the table for this watch. I already touched on the use of the Master Chronometer movement, but what about the use of ceramic for the dial and bezel, or the new bracelet with a clasp that can be resized with little effort?

A mature icon

The Seamaster 300M Diver matured in the past 25 years, gradually, almost like a human being. It became an adult, a serious player in the market of divers' watches that shows its seniority by its appearance and specifications. Because of the new movement, the watch grew slightly in height (to 13.56mm), but the case diameter increased, too, from 41 to 42mm.

The aforementioned 14 new models come with Omega's in-house Caliber 8800, and the limited edition in tantalum, titanium and Sedna gold is powered by Caliber 8806. The difference is the lack of a date in the limited edition. These movements are cutting-edge in-house designed and manufactured calibers, officially certified as Master Chronometer by the Swiss Federal Institute of Metrology (METAS). Master Chronometer movements perform extremely well, even when being exposed to magnetic fields up to 15,000 gauss. With an average daily rate of 0 to 5 seconds, METAS is much stricter than the more-common Chronometer standards.

Besides being very reliable and accurate movements, they are also very pleasing to the eye: with rhodium-plated rotor and bridges, fin-

Left page: there are bi-color versions with yellow gold and Sedna (rose) gold, respectively.

Above: the beautiful basic model is the variation with black dial and stainless-steel bracelet.

Top left: the model with blue dial and stainless-steel bracelet comes nearest to the original watch from 1993.

Bottom left: the Caliber 8800 combines state-of-the-art movement technology with high-class decoration.

Above: the striking Seamaster 300M Diver in titanium, tantalum and Sedna gold is limited to 2,500 pieces.

ished with Geneva waves in arabesque and blackened screws, barrel and balance wheel. In order for you to enjoy all this, Omega decided to give this watch a wave-pattern case back with a sapphire crystal installed. The limited edition has an image of the famous Omega Seahorse logo on the sapphire crystal.

You will also discover that the wave dial that has been taken off the Seamaster 300M Diver in 2011 is back. Now it is made of polished ceramic, and the limited edition has a dial made of titanium. All indexes on the dial are luminous, using Super-Luminova of course. The date aperture moved from 3 to 6 o'clock. The skeleton sword hands have undergone a slight update as well and are rhodium-plated, blued or made of 18-karat gold. These changes result in a super-legible dial, which is mandatory for any divers' watch. The ceramic bezels have the diving scale in either white enamel or in Ceragold, Omega's own mix of ceramic and gold.

One more thing that you will immediately notice is the shape of the helium-escape valve. An extra crown at 10 o'clock has always been one of the characteristics of this icon, and it is still there, but now in a conical shape. Additionally, it has been patented with a technology that will ensure that the watch will retain its water resistance (up to 5 bar) even if the valve is accidentally being opened underwater.

Highly functional bracelet

The bracelet also received an upgrade: Many enthusiasts felt that the old bracelet looked a bit too 1990s, but Omega didn't want to let it go. So instead of replacing it with a design from scratch, they chose to use it as a basis for a new bracelet with modern features: an extendable fold over rack-and-pusher with a helpful diver extension. With the extension(s), the bracelet can become 33mm longer. The bracelet is available in steel and in bi-color, i.e. steel with yellow or Sedna gold. Besides the bracelet, you can also opt for a rubber strap (in black or blue) with a pin buckle. The keepers of the rubber strap have "Omega" and "Seamaster" in them. Although the case size increased to 42mm, the size between the beautiful lyre lugs did not change (20mm).

With the 14 models of the Seamaster 300M Diver, Omega created an interesting value proposition in the market for (luxurious) divers' watches. With its movement upgrade and use of ceramic for the bezel and dial, the difference between the Seamaster 300M Diver and the Seamaster Planet Ocean 600M is rather one of style than of quality. Whether you are a watch collector that is searching for a divers' watch or someone who just wants to buy one good watch for a lifetime, you won't be disappointed.

Compared to the earlier generations of the Seamaster 300M Diver, the new references add quite a touch of luxury with their polished "glossy" dials and bezels. If you don't mind a bit of exposure, you can always opt for the versions with yellow or Sedna gold bezel, crowns and hands. With a rubber strap you can tone it a bit down again, or dress it up with the bi-color bracelet.

The new collection sets the bar high for future expansions of the collection (e.g. chronographs). I can't wait to see that happening. Happy 25th birthday, Seamaster 300M Diver!

SIR PETER BLAKE

SAILING PRO

The late yachtsman and environmentalist Sir Peter Blake (1948–2001) and Omega began working together in 1995. Blake represented the watch brand and the Seamaster 300M Diver. When he started his own environmentally focused missions, Omega remained aboard with him, in more than one way, until the legendary sailor was sadly killed by a pirate in Brazil in 2001.

TEXT: PAUL DEZENTJÉ

NEW ZEALAND-BORN Peter Blake was an extraordinary yachtsman, who won every significant blue-water race during his 30-year career, including the biggest sailing prize of all, the America's Cup, which he also defended successfully. Blake crushed the record for the fastest non-stop circumnavigation of the world under sail and after he won all prizes, he followed his passion and set sail to achieve environment goals. He wanted to show people how beautiful and unique the world is. In 1997, before he quit professional sailing, Blake became head of expeditions of the Cousteau Society and skipper of the *Antarctic Explorer*. Later, he bought this ship and renamed it *Seamaster*.

After leaving the Cousteau Society he led expeditions to Antarctica and the Amazon aboard *Seamaster* during 2001. The same year, Blake was named special envoy for the UN Environment Program. He began filming documentaries for his company "Blakexpeditions." It is still unbelievable, that this good man was killed by a pirate in 2001 during one of his environmental missions in Brazil. The website of the Sir Peter Blake Trust calls him a true Kiwi Hero.

Sir Peter Blake was a perfect partner for Omega. He became brand ambassador in 1995. His sports achievements, leadership qualities and environmental goals connected with Omega's brand values. His extraordinary character and accomplishments appealed to many fans around the world. While the Swiss watch brand supported Blake's activities, the Kiwi Hero himself represented the brand's values and beliefs. He was featured in ads and brochures, representing Omega's Seamaster 300M Diver series in print. But he also actually used the watch as a reliable piece of equipment, while the Omega brand name and logo were clearly present on Blake's sails during the America's Cup in 1995 and 2000. And a proud, red Omega flag on *Seamaster* showed the brand's involvement in Blake's environmental enterprises.

Peter Blake and the sea

From the very beginning, the sea had a powerful influence on Peter Blake. He grew up in a wooden bungalow in Bayswater, New Zealand. His father, Brian, had been a gunboat captain in the Royal Navy during World War II. The family always had boats, so their kids grew up with the sea as their playground. Peter wasn't interested in traditional team sports. For him it was boats, boats, boats. Peter was always dreaming about boats and with his brother Tony he read sailing magazines to follow design trends. They would dream of the latest yachts and draw their own, improved versions.

When Peter was eight, his father built him a P-Class yacht, a single-handed 7ft wooden dinghy. *Pee Bee* was launched with the appropriate ceremony and lemonade instead of champagne. Peter spent hours racing and idling about aboard. "Friends and I used to go all over Waitemata Harbour in our P's together and sometimes ended up being blown into the mangroves around the edge," Blake wrote in his book, *Peter Blake Adventurer*. "We explored all the creeks near home. I can remember sailing on evenings after school, the sun going down on the water. I'd sail through flotillas of water birds. Really peaceful. I had as good a time then as sailing around the world years later." The P-Class graduated into a Z-Class he called *Tango*.

When Peter was 13 years old, his parents sold their land at Mairangi Bay and bought a 30ft sloop called *Ngarangi* (a Maori word for sky), which was replaced 18 months later by a 34ft Woollacott ketch. *Ladybird* was to have a big influence on the family and Peter in particular. His mother once remarked: "He was a natural. You just put him on a boat and he knew exactly what he wanted to do and did it." Peter once joined his parents sailing from Auckland to Tonga, Fiji and back. During this trip he experienced his first sea storm, something he later said he would never forget.

After Peter left school he began his studies in mechanical engineering at Auckland Technical Institute; his passion for sailing was as strong as ever. It was inevitable that he would build his own boat, which he did: a 23ft (7m) Van der Stadt design keelboat he called *Bandit*. Peter and *Bandit* won the Junior Offshore Championship in its first season, and although *Bandit* was often the smallest boat in the offshore racing fleets, lessons learned from the wild rides across the harbour on their Z-class dinghies were put to good use as they popped the orange and black spinnaker and surfed through the fleet. By the time *Bandit* reached the next mark, they were two miles ahead of other boats.

Overseas experience

Peter's sailing talent was gaining wider recognition. He was invited to crew on other yachts in major events. His first offshore ocean race was as a crewmember of Doug Hazard's boat, *Red Feather*. According to his brother, Peter was always very serious about racing. Very com-

petitive and out to win. Professional yachting was still unheard of at the time, but Peter's interest in racing at higher levels continued to grow.

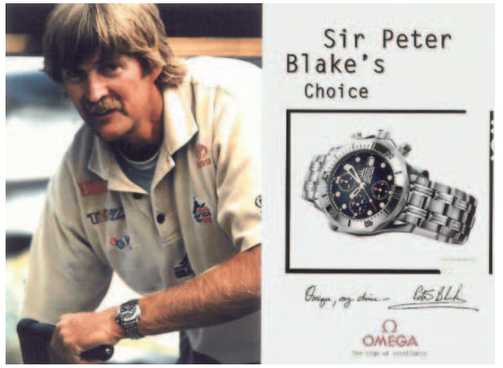
It was time to widen his horizons. He sold *Bandit* and built a 26ft Holman & Pye design boat called *Oliver Twist*. But Blake also sold *Bandit* to pay for a flight to England to get some overseas experience. Soon he was crewing all sorts of yachts on the European racing circuit, starting in 1971, as watch leader on the yacht *Ocean Spirit*, which had won the inaugural Cape Town to Rio de Janeiro Race (but this time struck a sandbank off the notorious coast of Namibia).

After leading the 17-strong fleet into Cape Town at the finish of the first leg, the yacht was forced to withdraw from the race during the second leg to Sydney, suffering structural damage in a Southern Ocean storm. A stormy career set sail to an unbelievable list of achievements.

Blake's later obsession with planning and meticulous attention to detail might well have been rooted in the chaos of this first Whitbread attempt, but eventually, he won. Four more Whitbreads followed (1977–1978, 1981–1982, 1985–1986 and 1989–1990). In 1993, Blake attended The Jules Verne Challenge, "an intriguing race against the clock." Blake crossed the finish line in a world-record time of 74 days, 22 hours, 17 minutes and 22 seconds. Between 1987 and 1992, Blake attended Early NZ Challenges (KZ 7, KZ 1, NZL-20), followed by NZL-32 America's Cup Challenge from 1992 to 1995. Defending the Auld Mug (1999–2000) would be the stage for the 2000 America's Cup. Through all this experience, on land and on water, working under tremendous pressure with many different crews, Blake proved to be an exceptional as well as a natural leader. For this leadership, he is also remembered.

Environmental goals

After the second America's Cup, Blake stopped sailing to focus on his environmental aspirations. At www.sirpeterblaketrust.org/sir-peters-history you can read day-to-day-reports of Peter's Blakexpeditions from November 2000 until December 2001. On December 4, 2001, he wrote his last post, sailing down the Amazon river: "We work closely with Omega – the Swiss timing company who are instrumental to our being able to operate. And the Omega people also firmly believe in what we all want to achieve, even if the top of the environmental awareness mountain that we are endeavouring to climb is out of sight through the clouds right now." The next day, an armed and hooded man came aboard the *Seamaster* and shot Sir Peter Blake.



Top: advertisement presenting the Seamaster 300M Diver as "Sir Peter Blake's Choice"

Left: Blake in the south polar region on his sailing ship called *Seamaster*. Above his head, the Omega flag was blowing.

Ever since Blake's passing, Omega has remained committed to worthy projects and ideas to make the world a better place. For example, Omega co-produced *Terra*, a compelling documentary directed by Yann Arthus-Bertrand and Michael Pitiot that asks us to see the world differently, so that we can establish a more harmonious co-existence between man and the wild. And with the eco-documentary *Planet Ocean* and the Time for the Planet conservation projects, Omega and the GoodPlanet Foundation show how we can all help preserve the health of our planet. In that way, Omega continues the tremendous work that the unique Seamaster Sir Peter Blake was so passionate about.

The great sailor lives forth in the Sir Peter Blake Trust, established in 2004 by his wife Pippa and his family. It is a non-profit organization to help New Zealanders make a positive difference for the planet through activities that encourage environmental awareness and action, and leadership development through a unique network of outstanding leaders and extraordinary leadership and environmental programs.

LIMITED EDITIONS

FOR THE COLLECTOR

TEXT: BALÁZS FERENCZI

The Seamaster 300M Diver gained worlwide success by being the timepiece of James Bond and became a regular “attendee“ at sporting events. Omega often commemorates such events (and especially the Olympics) with limited editions. This is a selection of some fascinating and popular examples.

JAMES BOND 40TH ANNIVERSARY

(2537.80.00)

The first James Bond Limited Edition was created in 2002 to celebrate *Die Another Day* as well as the 40th anniversary of the James Bond franchise (*Dr. No*, the first James Bond movie, was released in 1962). This watch was the updated version of the Seamaster 300M Diver as seen in the movie. However, the watch had a special dial with the famous 007-gun logo placed under "Chronometer" and it also had an inscribed case back as well as a unique bracelet. The watch was limited to 10,007 pieces and proved to be a huge success among collectors. As the 40th anniversary model followed the color combination of the regular watch worn in the movie, at first glance it looked like an "ordinary" Seamaster 300M Diver. This under-the-radar look was a key factor why many favored this particular model.

JAMES BOND CASINO ROYALE EDITION

(2226.80.00)

Four years later, a new James Bond movie was released presenting Daniel Craig as a new James Bond. This meant that a fresh watch had to be introduced. To mark this milestone, Omega came up with not only one but two limited editions. They redesigned the Seamaster Diver 300M Co-Axial 41mm and also the Seamaster Planet Ocean Co-Axial 45.5mm. The 007-gun logo was relocated from the dial to the counterweight of the second hand on both models. The Seamaster 300M Diver received a dial featuring the inside of a gun barrel as seen during the opening of every Bond movie. The color scheme was still the classic 300M blue, but with this special dial design, the watch became much more distinctive and easily recognizable. Again, it was limited to 10,007 pieces, just like the 40th anniversary model.

JAMES BOND QUANTUM OF SOLACE

(212.30.41.20.01.001)

In 2008, with the release of *Quantum of Solace*, Omega graced us with yet another watch. As the brand put it, the watch "was designed to celebrate both the 007 pedigree and Bond's ongoing relationship with Omega watches rather than a specific film release, which gives it a timeless quality." The Seamaster Diver 300M James Bond Collector's Piece had a black dial instead of the standard blue, with the now familiar 007-gun logo second hand. That was actually the only special element of the timepiece aside from the fact that it was a black James Bond edition. The *Quantum of Solace* watch, like its predecessors, was produced in an edition of 10,007 units.

JAMES BOND 50TH ANNIVERSARY

(212.30.41.20.01.005)

The year 2012 was a very special one; it marked the release of the 23rd James Bond movie, *Skyfall*, as well as the 50th anniversary of the Bond franchise. Like 10 years before, the company also prepared something outstanding. The timepiece was called "Bond at 50," produced in limited numbers of 11,007 in 41mm and 3,007 in a 36mm version. The color scheme features the same black as we saw four years earlier with the *Quantum of Solace* watch, only with an additional touch of red. This time, there is no "007" second hand but the number is visible as an integrated texture of the dial. The "50" on the bezel is colored red instead of the usual white. The rotor of the automatic Omega Caliber 2507 bears the motif of a 9mm bullet.

OLYMPIA SEAMASTER (1994)

Just one year after the Seamaster 300M Diver was officially introduced, Omega created a watch for the Swiss Olympic team traveling to Norway for the Lillehammer Winter Olympic games. The watches were either 41mm or 36mm and came with a chronometer-certified automatic or a quartz movement. The logo of the Swiss Olympic team was placed at the 6 o'clock position on the white dial. The indexes and hands were identical to any other series-production model. A "Limited Edition for 1994 Olympic" engraving decorated the back of the watch that came in a deluxe calfskin box for the automatic version and a dark blue cloth one for the quartz version. The Seamaster 300M Diver came with five straps in Olympic colors and a changing tool to make swapping between the straps easier.

VANCOUVER OLYMPICS (2010)

Sixteen years after the first Winter Olympic Seamaster 300M Diver limited edition, a new model came to light to commemorate the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver, Canada. The watch was available in 41mm and 36mm stainless-steel cases, with a steel bracelet. They were very similar to the 1994 Lillehammer watches as they also featured white dials, chronometer-certified movements and had a small nod on the face of the watch that would signify the connection to the games. In the case of the Vancouver edition it was the five Olympic rings that served as the counter weight on the seconds hand. Unlike the Lillehammer edition, this Seamaster had a red bezel inlay and the word "Seamaster" was also painted on the dial in red, while the rest of the text was black. Both 41 and 36mm versions were limited to 2,010 pieces.

OLYMPIC COLLECTION RIO (2016)

For the 2016 Olympic games in Rio de Janeiro, Omega came out with an extraordinary Seamaster 300M Diver. The base model was a plain black-bezel-black-dial version but on the Rio Seamaster the numerals on the diving bezel were painted in the colors of the five Olympic rings; red for 20, green for 30, yellow for 40 and blue for 50. The fifth color (black) was the base on the whole bezel. While for many, the wave texture on the dial was reminiscent as a trademark of the earlier 300Ms, it was actually a different kind of wave. Inspiration for that came from Rio Calçadão de Copacabana, the famous beach and landmark of the city. The official logo of the games was placed on the back of the watch with the limited-edition number. The Rio Seamaster 300M Diver was limited to 3,016 pieces.

A TRUE SEAMASTER

Omega ambassador Jacques Mayol (1927–2001) had a deep bond with the sea and a special connection with dolphins. As a free-diver, he set many records since the 1960s, but his real fame came with Luc Besson's 1988 movie *Le Grand Bleu*. Since the 1980s, Mayol tested and co-designed Omega watches.

TEXT: PAUL DEZENTJÉ

JACQUES MAYOL was born in Shanghai in 1927 to French parents and spent the first 13 years of his life in Asia. He became interested in diving on family holidays in Japan, even though his father died in a diving accident. During one of his summer vacations in Karatsu, Japan, he had his first dolphin encounter. Jacques was seven, skin diving with his older brother in the seas around the Nanatsugama caves, when he saw a dolphin for the first time. Later, in Miami, Mayol met a dolphin named Clown at the Miami Seaquarium. Clown was the mother of Flipper from the famous 1960s TV series. Mayol once said: "I learned everything from Clown."

Mayol's gratefulness to Clown can be linked to his physical and physiological diving abilities. That's why he was known as "The Dolphin Man." Dolphins have lungs and breathe air. They are adapted to depth-pressure related phenomena. Their heartbeat slows drastically when diving and they always exhale completely before they dive.

Removing all air (= gas) from their lungs is an important key in several adaptions. No air means no problems with changing pressure and buoyancy, no decompression problems. Dolphins store oxygen in their blood and muscles, not in their lungs. So, most problems for human divers are no problems for dolphins because there is no gas. And last not least: marine mammals have an extensive "net" of blood vessels feeding into their brain which catches bubbles from the blood stream.

Homo Delphinus

In his book, the challenging idea that "all humans have the potential to awaken the dolphin that lies dormant within all of us." His theory was that humans evolved from a sort of aquatic monkey. How else can we explain that we have so many physiological adaptations to freediving, like "apnea" (holding your breath purposely). Although maybe a bit too much back in the day, his ideas are alive and kicking today: a hard cover copy of Mayol's book on Amazon will cost you over $800.

Another important part of Mayols diving technique was yoga. He was the first diver to introduce yoga into freediving. His technique was more about psychological preparation and concentration than about muscle training and maximizing air retention. In the 1960s, Mayol visited Kaivalyadhama, the oldest yoga institute in the world, to learn the breathing techniques and physical exercises of pranayama yoga. Mayol wanted to reach a certain state of mind based on relaxation to accomplish apnea, and applied the new knowledge to his freediving technique.

Between 1966 and 1983, Mayol was eight times no-limits world champion. In 1966 he passed the 60 meters "limit of no return" off the Freeport coast (Bahamas). In 1976 he broke the 100m (330ft.) barrier with a no-limits 101m dive off Elba, Italy. During this dive that lasted 3 minutes and 40 seconds, his heartbeat decreased from 60 to 27 beats per minute, a reflex normally found in marine mammals. According to the website of Mayol's son Jean-Jacques, this dive was the peak of over 20 years of hard training, experimental and medical research. It represents one of the greatest achievements in sports while doctors predicted that Mayol would "for sure this time collapse under the pressure."

Mayol's last deep dive was in 1983 when he reached the depth of 105m at the age of 56. But despite his diving records, he felt more an explorer and adventurer than some-

Left: before Omega introduced the Seamaster 120M Quartz in the 1980s, Jacques Mayol tested the dive watch under water.

Above: the Seamaster Professional 300M Apnea from 2003 is based on a draft that Mayol made some years before.

Right: this image shows why many people called Mayol the "Dolphin Man."

one seeking to become a World Champion for glory and monetary means. One award, however, he was very proud of and felt his diving career stood for was the International Award for Valour in Sport. In 1981 he was nominated for sustained valour in his conquest of a new frontier. It is awarded to someone who is a path seeker; someone who dares to go into the unknown to lead the way and find the truth. This phase in his career was later the subject of Luc Besson's cult film *Le Grand Bleu*.

In his later years, Mayol had become very troubled about our planet's health and "man's greedy ways." Like many before him, he contemplated what kind of changes we would need to make and what would really make us start to re-think and re-evaluate our ways, our beliefs and life styles for a better world. Mayol believed that all life is interconnected, from the smallest grain of sand to the galaxy; and that as humans we must understand this and stop prioritizing what is best for ourselves and seriously give thought and consideration to how we can live in harmony with all animals and each other.

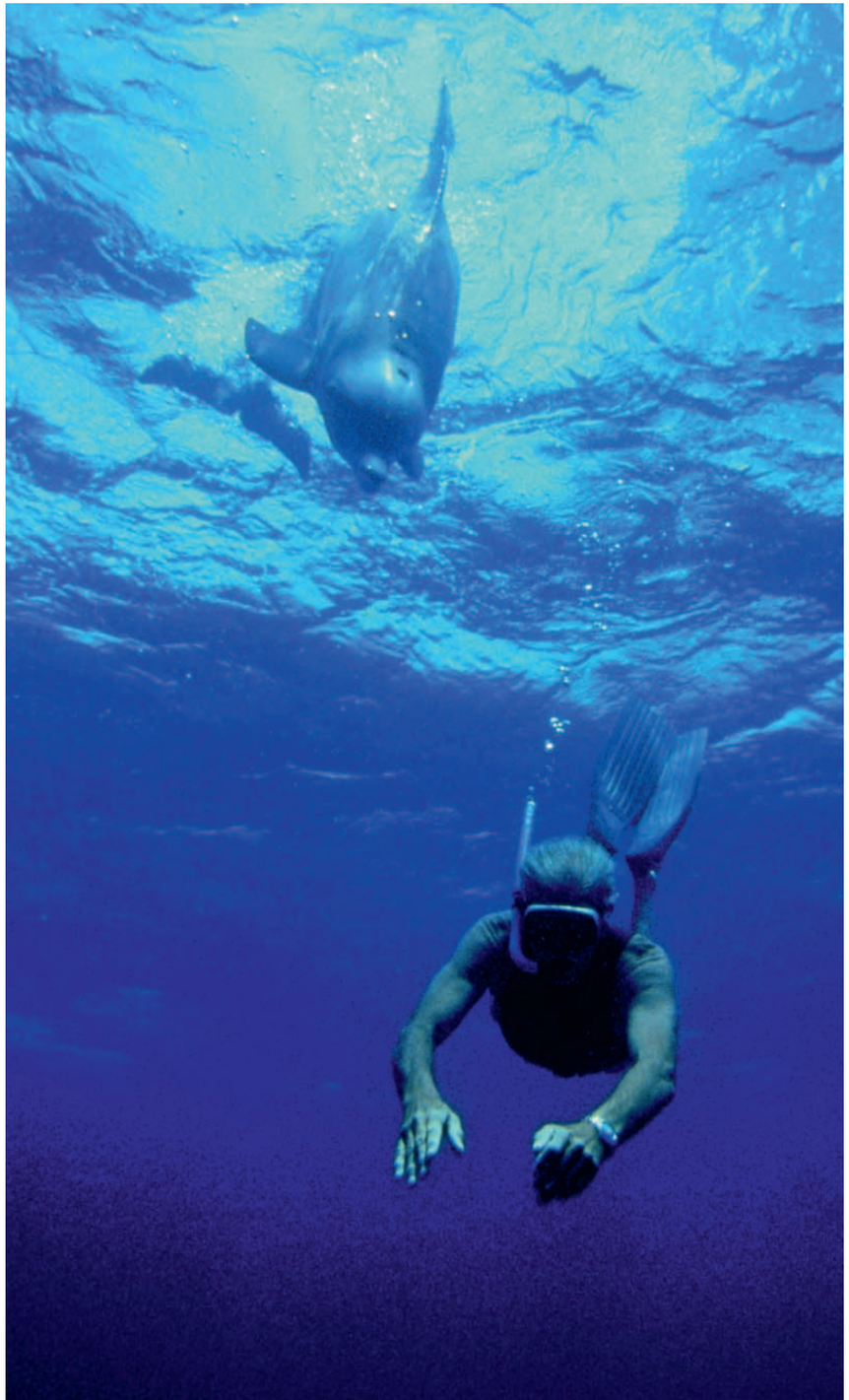
Mayol and Omega

For Omega, Jacques Mayol was an important brand ambassador in the field of sea and earth. As an extraordinary, record-holding diver far ahead of his time, and as a naturalist and spokesman for ecology, he perfectly fitted the bill. Besides his records and his unique technique, he saw the vulnerability of life, especially at crucial places like coral reefs, and realized that all life is connected.

In the 1980s, the world's best freediver was involved in testing a new Seamaster watch, the thin Seamaster 120M Quartz (reference ST396.0900), the first with a screw-down crown. And Omega participated with material and technical support to Mayol's project "Homo delphinus Apnea Elba 1981," when Mayol dove to provide science with further data about the human body in extreme conditions.

From the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, Omega released different Seamaster watches, limited editions commemorating Mayol and his records. Some of the watches were only available for the Japanese market, and some were available (in sets) for men and women. Some of these commemorative Seamaster 120M watches had a dolphin decoration in the center of the dial, others had "Jacques Mayol" plus a year engraved in the left side of the case, and others had an engraved case back, including dolphins.

These watches were delivered in beautiful dark blue boxes with wave-cut sides, sometimes carrying a holder for the watch and a smaller holder for a double dolphin emblem, referring of course to "The Dolphin Man." There were also commemorative Seamaster 300M Diver watches with a typical diving appearance: a numbered diving bezel, a dial with better legible markers and typical dive-watch hands.



Mayol wore a Lemania Regatta Timer, which is now part of Omega's reference collection. This watch might have inspired Mayol when he co-designed a watch with Omega in the early 2000s. This diving watch, especially for apnea divers, has a rare, specifically adapted movement in order to operate the regatta-style diving timer for 14 minutes (2 x 7).

As a result, the Seamaster Professional 300M Apnea was released in 2003. Unfortunately, its creator never saw it in real life. The man who recognized dolphins as the link between sea and man, had passed away in 2001 at the age of 74. In his memory, a monument was sunk off the coast of his residence on the Italian island of Elba, where he had lived for 30 years. This monument is located in 16 meters depth in the southeast of Elba.

Team Mayol

Today, Mayol's legend is paid forward by his son Jean-Jacques, who is in love with the sea and all its creatures, just like his father. In 1992, Jean-Jacques was the first in the world to introduce the unique Mayol concept, focussing on how to rediscover yourself through apnea and yoga. The course includes meditation, breathing and visualization techniques in interaction with nature and the ocean.

With his Team Mayol, Jean-Jacques provides several courses in Villa Glaucos, his father's former house on Elba.

THE PERFECT ALL-ROUNDER

A WATCH FOR EVERY DAY

With a depth-rate of 300 meters, a helium escape valve, divers' extension and 60-minute scale diving bezel, the Seamaster 300M Diver has all the ingredients to be the perfect watch for (professional) divers. That said, only a small percentage of the owners of a Seamaster 300M Diver take it into water other than that of the hotel swimming pool. Which is absolutely fine of course, because besides having all the professional diving specifications, it is also just a good-looking watch.

TEXT: ROBERT-JAN BROER

WHILE WE EXPLAINED TO YOU in this magazine what makes a watch a dive watch, or what use the extra crown has at 10 o'clock, the Seamaster 300M Diver is also a perfect companion on land. A divers' watch is, generally speaking, the most versatile watch for every-day use. Especially when it is a good-looking model, you can also wear it with your Brioni suit and Crockett & Jones shoes, just like our secret agent from the United Kingdom. But it will look just as good when you're in your swimming shorts enjoying a holiday in Italy or Florida, for example. The design of the Seamaster 300M Diver allows you to use this watch everywhere and with everything. It is a watch for any occasion, whether you have one of the first references like the blue dialed 2531.80 that was made famous in the *Tomorrow Never Dies* and *The World is not Enough* James Bond movies or have bought the 2018 Seamaster 300M Diver in stain-less steel and Sedna gold with a rubber strap, you can basically wear it every day for the rest of your life. One might complain that this watch has become a very com-mon sight when you look at someone's wrist, but that surely has a good reason as well. It is just a good watch, and many people found out in the last 25 years.

If you want something less common, there are always models that are definitely out of the ordinary. Anything with tantalum, for example, whether it is the first Sea-master 300M Diver Chronograph, the America's Cup model or the 2018 limited-edition Seamaster 300M Diver using tantalum – all shown in this issue – these will surely be conversation makers. We also mentioned the Seamaster 300M GMT with white dial, "The Great White," as something rare. The Seamaster 300M Diver collection has a lot to offer, even if you want to have something special or rare.

Vintage watches

Also interesting is the fact that the first Seamaster 300M Diver watches are considered to be vintage. Per-haps not to the standards of die-hard collectors who swear by plexi crystals and basically everything older

than 1980, but in general we consider 20–25 year old watches to be vintage. This means you would be able to find a Seamaster 300M Diver with tritium hour markers and hands, and still be able to swim with it and use it for daily wear. An interesting contender would be an early white dialed Seamaster 300M with tritium dial, especially when the hour markers turned slightly yellow (patina). It gives a great contrast to the watch. Put it on a light-brown strap and you'll definitely get some conversations started among watch collectors.

For every Seamaster 300M Diver there are a number of options to choose from regarding straps. Whether it is a rubber strap, nylon NATO strap, leather strap or bracelet, you can tailor the watch a bit to your own needs this way. Just make sure not to swim with this watch when you wear it on a leather strap.

Ready for the future

In the last 25 years, the Seamaster 300M Diver has been praised for its versatility, and in certain markets it became the number-one selling model from the Omega family. Since 1995, the world has come to know it as the "James Bond" watch and it is slowly starting to become a cult watch already. And slowly is of course relative, as it took much longer for most other watches out there, if they reached this status at all.

The new Seamaster 300M Diver with its in-house manufactured Caliber 8800 has slightly grown in size, but also adopted most of the innovations that Omega has introduced in the past years. With the Master Chronometer standards and certification, the Seamaster 300M Diver is ahead of its competition and ready for the years to come. But not only on a technological level, also when it comes to design, it received some powerful updates. With its new 42mm-sized case, updated nine-row bracelet and ceramic bezel, the watch is ready for the future. It will also be a solid basis for extension of the collection with complications like chronographs and regatta timers.

The essence of the Seamaster 300M Diver: 2018's stainless-steel model with blue dial

FRATELLOWATCHES

OMEGA SEAMASTER 300M MAGAZINE

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