

Pioneering



With Speake-Marin's instantly recognisable Piccadilly case, Spirit Pioneer comes in a limited edition of 68 pieces.

Spirit



On the reverse of the watch, the 'topping tool' winding rotor is visible as well as the motto "Fight, Love and Persevere", which is engraved on the caseback.

Having produced a world premiere at SalonQP, boutique brand Speake-Marin honours its founder's past while looking forward to a spirited future.

Elizabeth Doerr

In the modern age Britain has, unfortunately, produced few watchmakers of note. The good old days were full of them: historical names such as Graham and Mudge, who had ideas that changed the face of watchmaking. And, whereas it could be said that modern British watchmaking began with George Daniels and his handmade style of inventiveness (continued today by Roger Smith), there is one Brit who has opted for a decidedly different approach and migrated to Switzerland to achieve it.

Peter Speake-Marin is a watchmaker in constant transformation, having gone from restorer to developer and now to the face of a brand. His independent style of watchmaking incorporates traditional artisanal processes as well as modern manufacturing methods. Such transformation, almost like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon, is hard to do without losing soul and sight. However, Speake-Marin is managing the process beautifully.

Spirited timepiece

The newest step of this transformation process, which sees Speake-Marin moving from 'independent' to 'boutique brand', is a timepiece that honours fans and aficionados of the maker and bares a part of Speake-Marin's own soul. As Speake-Marin has thus far specialised in timepieces for collectors that have cost upwards of SFr.50,000 and produced no more than 200 pieces per year, they have been quite inaccessible for the 'Average Joe'. However, the eloquent AHCI member has amassed quite a following over the years. The Spirit Pioneer, which debuted at SalonQP, is a 68-piece limited edition that retails for 'only' SFr.9,200, making it relatively affordable – or at least accessible – for fans. If they can get one, that is.

The Spirit Pioneer is a 38mm stainless steel beauty housed in one of Speake-Marin's typical cases from the Piccadilly line. And the case isn't the only element taken from previous Speake-Marin watches: the hands are also the same shape as those on the experienced watchmaker's original Foundation Watch, which is currently undergoing refurbishment. Turning the watch over, one finds Speake-Marin's typical rotor winding Calibre FW2012.

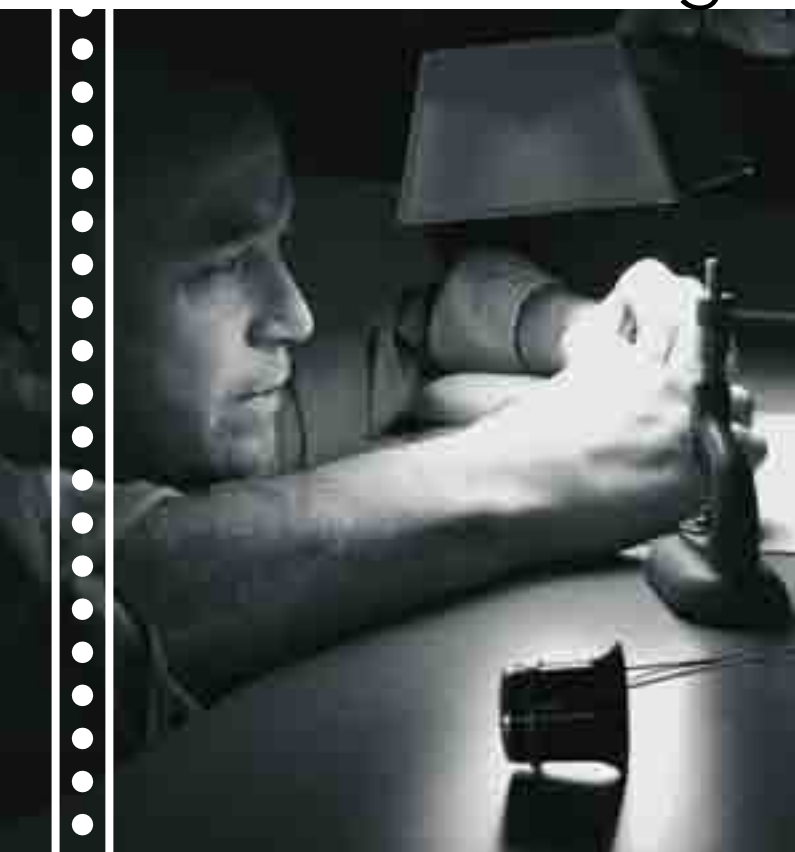
Style departure

Upon seeing this watch, the immediate thoughts for a watch connoisseur concern its style departure: this is the debut of an aviation-style timepiece within Speake-Marin's collection, and the first piece to bear a black dial.

"Spirit is inspired by a timepiece I bought 15 years ago when I was restoring antique pieces in Piccadilly," the 43-year-old watchmaker explains. "It was an authentic military watch from the first half of the 20th century [a vintage Longines] that I restored in my own time and wore regularly as my own timekeeper. I always wanted to create my own piece based on this personal favorite and have toyed around with ideas to realise this ambition ever since I founded Speake-Marin."

This new model symbolises even more to Speake-Marin. Firstly, it is an 'affordable' Speake-Marin created at least in part as a gesture to the many fans wishing to own one of his timepieces. This was made possible by the use of the rest of his stock of Calibre FW2012, an automatic ETA-based movement that he also used in the original Piccadilly line. Its bridges, gear train, setting lever spring, base plate and rotor wheel were replaced and/or redesigned. The whole movement has been polished and finished by hand with *perlage* and straight graining. But don't think that this is an off-the-rack ETA movement – it has been customised, redesigned, reconstructed and hand-finished according to Speake-Marin's house style and quality standards. Spirit's limitation of 68 pieces is a natural one dictated by the number of movements he had left.

Pioneering Spirit



Get the message

Most striking and telling, however, is the message engraved onto the case back: "Fight, Love & Persevere." This message from the watchmaker is simultaneously a sort of a personal motto.

"The global economic downturn and natural disasters of the past few years have meant that people all over the world – myself included – have had to face up to increasing challenges that can test the limits of endurance," he explains. "But what has struck me in my experiences is the drive people possess to fight on, to adapt and to forge forward, with their capacity for love never diminishing. The themes of determination, tenacity and love were at the forefront of my mind when I created this timepiece and so I have paid tribute to them by christening it 'Spirit' and by engraving the motto on the caseback."

With its casual appearance, it has the ability to appeal to a wide audience. While the 38mm case diameter may not be a Panerai lover's cup of tea, the size of this stainless steel timepiece is authentic and classic. The sophisticated and friendly black lacquered dial is eminently legible both day and night as a good pilot's watch should be. The quality and thought process allow even the most casual observer to see that this is a genuine Speake-Marin, from the inside out. England should be proud.

Further information: www.speake-marin.com

Above left: Having studied at London's Hackney Technical College, Peter Speake-Marin continued his education at WOSTEP, the Swiss watchmaking school. He worked for several watch companies in the UK before moving back to Switzerland where he began to acquire his own machinery whilst working for Renaud & Papi (now Audemars Piguet).



Right: The contrast of the black lacquer dial and the three-dimensional Super-LumiNova white hands, indexes and 60-minute markers give this watch a clean feel.