

chrono

ISSUE 7 2009

'BECAUSE TIME IS PRECIOUS

FREE
WITH
Octane
MAGAZINE

Lewis Hamilton

SEIKO

Japanese tradition with high-tech craftsmanship

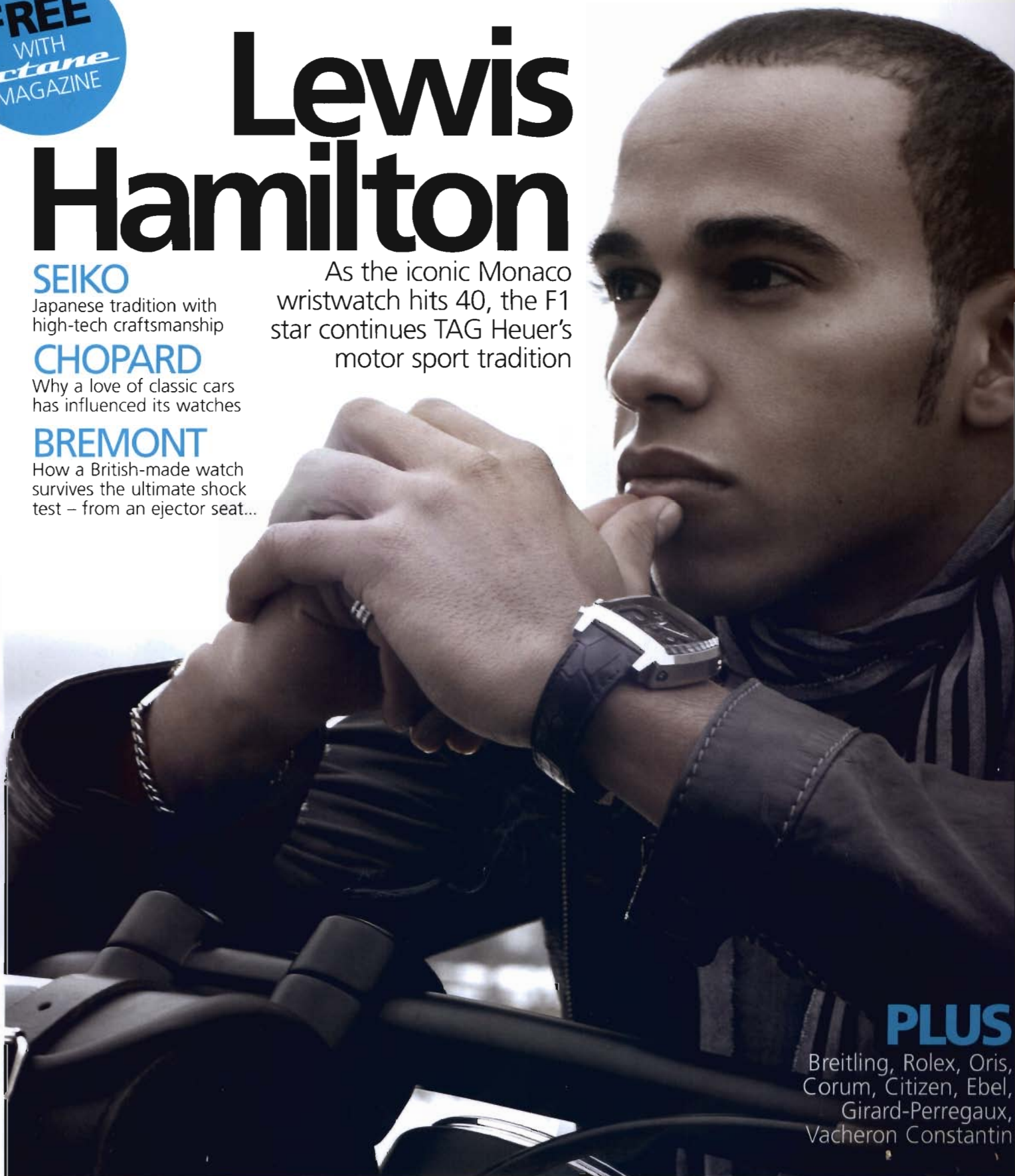
CHOPARD

Why a love of classic cars has influenced its watches

BREMONT

How a British-made watch survives the ultimate shock test – from an ejector seat...

As the iconic Monaco wristwatch hits 40, the F1 star continues TAG Heuer's motor sport tradition



PLUS

Breitling, Rolex, Oris,
Corum, Citizen, Ebel,
Girard-Perregaux,
Vacheron Constantin

CRITICAL EQUIPMENT



The people who have been saved by a Martin-Baker ejection seat are part of a very small and select unofficial 'club' – and now there's a watch made with them in mind, thanks to English watch brand Bremont





IN MAY THIS YEAR, an un-named RAF fighter pilot joined the very special club of people whose lives have been saved by a Martin-Baker ejection seat after escaping with his life from a burning Harrier jump jet at Afghanistan's Kandahar airfield.

At the time of writing, the tally of ejectees that is kept at Martin-Baker's UK headquarters in Higher Denham, Buckinghamshire, stood at 7289 since the first seat was put to use in May 1949, when a 'pre-Mk1' version was used in earnest by Flight Lieutenant JO Lancaster to escape from an out-of-control Whitworth AW-52 Flying Wing.

It was just seven years after Sir James Martin had been moved to pen the original designs for the Mk1 following a plane crash that killed Captain Valentine Baker, with whom he had

Right
English by name...
Giles and Nick
English say their
M-B watches are
especially 'Anglo'.
MB2 version (far
right) has passed
high-G ejection
trials with ease.



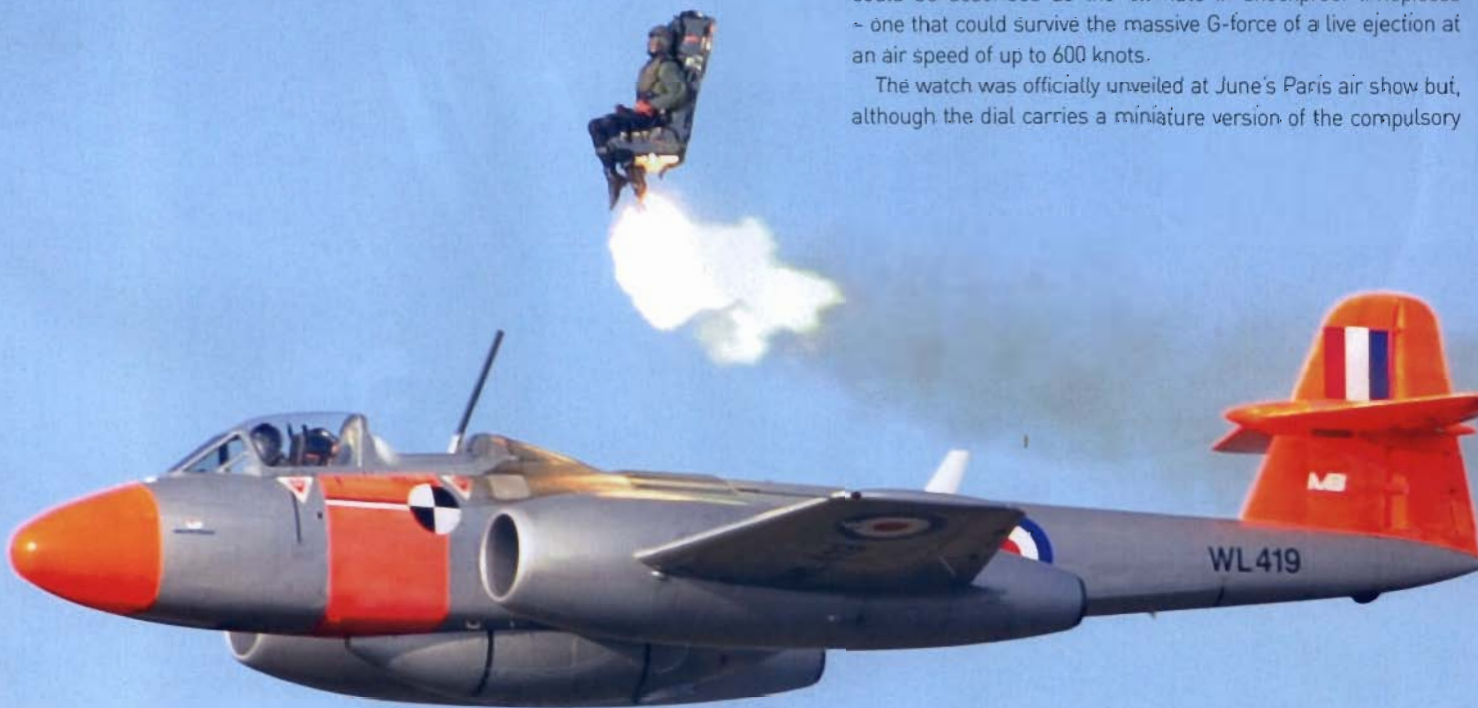
'The young Bremont brand has produced a pilot's watch that has passed the toughest Martin-Baker tests with, literally, flying colours'

founded the Martin-Baker Aircraft Company in 1934.

As of now, anyone who has the right to wear the Martin-Baker tie (which denotes that they have used one of the seats for the purpose that it was intended) will also be able to wear a special Martin-Baker timepiece, because the young Bremont brand has produced a pilot's watch that has passed the toughest M-B tests with, literally, flying colours.

British-based Bremont, which was founded in 2006 by aviator brothers Nick and Giles English, has already attracted an impressive following with its range of extra-tough, no-nonsense, pilot-inspired watches. But around 18 months ago it entered into a collaboration with Martin-Baker to begin development of what could be described as the ultimate in shockproof timepieces - one that could survive the massive G-force of a live ejection at an air speed of up to 600 knots.

The watch was officially unveiled at June's Paris air show but, although the dial carries a miniature version of the compulsory





warning sign found on all aircraft that are fitted with an ejection seat, merely looking at the Bremont MB2 will not give much of an insight into the work that went into making it.

In order to reach the Martin-Baker standard, prototypes of the watch were strapped to the wrists of mannequins attached to a vibration machine set to run at maximum force for hours on end to simulate the entire 30-year service span of a military helicopter. Then there were the temperature variation tests between minus 40 and plus 120 degrees Fahrenheit, the corrosive fog test to ensure the watch wouldn't deteriorate in the harsh environment of an aircraft carrier's deck, and, most importantly, the series of live ejections to prove that the Bremont could really cut the mustard. One particular prototype endured no fewer than nine and was still ticking away nicely.

In keeping with the patriotic spirit of the Bremont brand, the M-B watches will be assembled in a special workshop in

genteel Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, with the result that they will be, according to Nick English, 'more "Anglo" than any watch we've ever made'.

A special movement holder incorporates a suspension system to absorb impacts, and the entire mechanism is contained within a Faraday Cage to protect it from extreme magnetism. As with all Bremont watches, the cases are nine times more scratch-resistant than standard stainless steel, and even the strap has been designed to be extra-durable.

The unlimited 'public' versions of the watch will incorporate colours and design features inspired by parts of an ejection seat. However, the limited-edition models (with a red anodised case centre) will be available only to those who have been saved by one of Martin-Baker's products.

The Bremont MB2 watch costs around £2800 and the company's website is at www.bremont.com.

Above

Dial is simple and highly legible. Anodised red case centre denotes MB1 available only to ejectees.