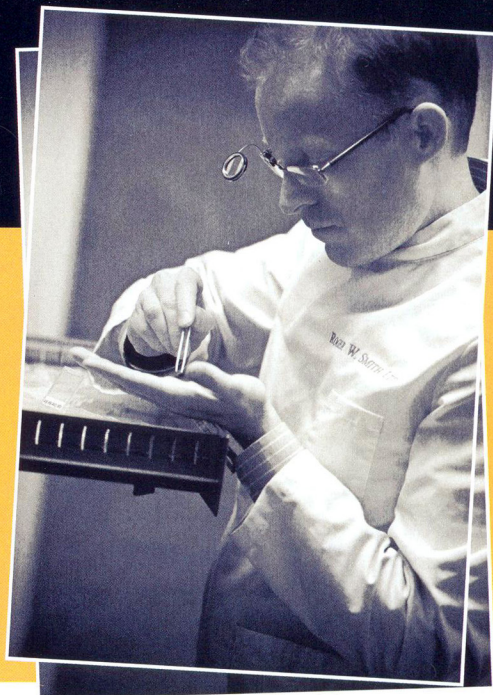


# Questions *for* Roger Smith

The Proust Questionnaire, named for the French writer Marcel Proust, asks a variety of questions with the intent of revealing something of their manner, aspirations and character. This form has been used and modified by others through the years, most recognizably by James Lipton, host of *The Actors Studio*. Following their lead, we offer this horologically inspired 'quick set' list of questions to Roger Smith, who had completed a tourbillon pocket watch by the age of twenty-two.

Now forty, Smith, following the foot steps of George Daniels, has mastered his craft, fulfilling the legendary watchmaker's quest to revive the tradition of fine English watchmaking. Creating some of the world's finest handcrafted watches, using a combination of traditional and modern methods, the best English watchmaking resides in the Isle of Man workshop of Roger Smith.



## How long have you been a watchmaker?

It seems no time at all, but it was twenty-three years ago that I enrolled on a three-year course at the Manchester School of Horology at the age of sixteen where I studied for three years. I took my first steps into actual watchmaking at the age of twenty when I began to make my first handmade tourbillon pocket watch in my bedroom at home.

## Why did you choose to become a watchmaker?

I have always been practical and interested in finding out how things worked. Knowing this my father gently pushed me in the direction of the course. My first few days at the college were simply amazing and for the first time in my life I found education exciting. Watchmaking was a natural progression of my learning process and after reading George Daniel's book *Watchmaking* and meeting with him, I knew that making, as opposed to repairing, was the direction I wanted to take.

## What is your favorite aspect of watchmaking?

I love every stage of making a watch, right from the first drawings, where I start to visualize the finished watch, through its first tick and finally the pleasure of the finished piece. There is nothing to beat this process! Even now, although I have produced many Series 2 models, each one is different and I still get the same satisfaction from each one that goes out of the workshop. To me, watchmaking is a form of art and I need to be happy with every piece that I produce.

## What is your least favorite aspect of watchmaking?

The administration! Fortunately my wife enjoys this and has now joined the team full-time to take over the office role so that we can increase production and I can spend more time in the workshop where I am happiest.

## Whom do you admire in watchmaking (past or present) and why?

My choice of watchmaker from the past has to be Thomas Mudge for his great inventiveness and beauty of construction. For my present day choice of watchmaker it has to be George Daniels. He's shown that the world's finest watches can be made outside of the mainstream watch industry and was the first independent watchmaker to do so. In addition he proved

that watches could be made by hand and with such sublime artistry and beauty while still focusing on the improvement of mechanical timekeeping. This combined approach to horology had all but disappeared from watchmaking with the birth of the mass-produced wristwatch and its new set of values.

## What, if anything, would you change about the current state of watchmaking?

Nothing. The mass-produced watches suit the masses.

## Why are you an independent watchmaker?

There is not much actual watchmaking involved in working for the big brands. When I first saw George Daniels' talk when I was eighteen, the occupation of independent watchmaker had not really been invented yet, but I knew straight away that I wanted to make my own watches from start to finish. I started off making pocket watches, but then realized that while there were plenty of great vintage pocket watches out there, I had never seen a great wristwatch. The modern mass-produced wristwatch lacks life and it is for this reason that I strove to create the Series 2.

## What profession, other than your own, would you like to attempt?

I have great admiration for artists, whether they paint, sculpt or design buildings. What I enjoy above anything else is seeing the skill in people's work.

## What profession would you not like to attempt?

Window cleaning. Much safer to sit at a bench.

## What aspects of watchmaking in general, and/or your work specifically, are underappreciated?

As business owner I wear many hats and am involved at all stages from the watches' initial conception and discussion with the clients through to final delivery of their pieces. In addition I have had to learn many disciplines from management through to accounting and marketing, which all come with their own set of challenges. Fortunately my clients appreciate the methods I use to create their watches and over the years have shown great support, which has been gratefully received especially during the creation of my new English calibers, the Series 1 & 2.