

# Specialist spots gap in show market

## London calling

**Simon de Burton**  
on QP's efforts to stage an event catering to a new British interest

When talk turns to watch shows, the inclination is to think of Switzerland – namely the internationally renowned Salon Internationale de la Haute Horlogerie in Geneva which takes place each January, and the Baselworld fair that takes place in early spring.

But London in November has now become an important destination for any serious horophile, thanks to the arrival of a new show organised by the UK's leading specialist watch magazine, QP.

Salon QP, as it is known, was inaugurated last year in the imposing surroundings of Number One, Marylebone, the former Holy Trinity church designed by Sir John Soane and built during the late 1820s to celebrate the defeat of Napoleon.

Staged during the depths of the economic downturn, the show nevertheless attracted more than 20 important brands – including such blue-chip names as Jaeger-LeCoultre, Vacheron Constantin and Officine Panerai.

About 1,500 people bought tickets. The second edition of Salon QP is taking place today, with 34 brands attending and a capacity for up to 2,500 visitors.

The brain behind the event is James Gurney, QP's editor, who, a specialist watch journalist with experience of dozens of watch shows around the world, concluded that London could support such an event.

"Over the past decade, interest in luxury watches has grown at a very fast rate in the UK, particularly in London," says Mr Gurney.

"It seemed to me that London deserved and would appreciate its own show, because all those people who are either buying watches or thinking about buying them are bound to be keen to acquire knowledge and discover new brands," he says.

"Salon QP gives them the chance to do this, whether they are serious collectors already or just starting to take an interest in quality pieces," says Mr Gurney.

"Initially, some brands



On display: visitors to last year's inaugural Salon QP show

were sceptical about what the show could do for them, but most of them now realise we share the same vision – Salon QP is not about pure, commercial satisfaction but about imparting and acquiring knowledge.

The thing that makes it different from walking up and down Bond Street is that we have many exceptional pieces. In addition, there are watchmakers and senior representatives of the different brands on

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hand for people to speak to on an informal basis."

Nevertheless, a large number of sales were made last year as a direct result of people attending the event and several brands subsequently reported an increased level of interest, either from people who attended the show or who found out about it through the media.

Salon QP is primarily intended as a consumer event, although few self-respecting watch retailers who would miss it.

One who attended the first show is Robert Ungar, a watch specialist with north London jeweller, CS Bedford. "When I received the invitation to the first Salon QP, I expected it to be another lacklustre attempt at staging a watch show in

the UK. What I found could be described as a mini-Baselworld and I was amazed at the number of people who had gone to the effort of travelling to be there," says Mr Ungar.

"I also noticed that the significant companies that weren't exhibiting made sure representatives turned up to see what was going on – including Rolex and Cartier," he says.

"That is most unusual and shows that Salon QP is being taken seriously. From a retailer's point of view, it was great to be able to see new brands that I might not encounter in the UK and there were one or two that I'm fairly sure I would have clients for."

The highlight of this year's event is the world premier of the latest watch to carry the name of George Daniels, dubbed "the greatest living watchmaker".

The Daniels "Anniversary" watches, which are a collaboration between him and his protégé, the Isle of Man watchmaker Roger Smith, have been created to mark 35 years since Mr Daniels perfected the groundbreaking Co-Axial movement that he developed during the 1970s and which was subsequently adopted by Omega. The anniversary watches are set to cost about £142,000 and are truly English made.

There could hardly be a more appropriate place for the first one to be unveiled than at London's very own watch show.

Tickets to Salon QP cost £20. See [www.salonqp.com](http://www.salonqp.com) for more information.