

# The **GQ** Lifestyle Guru

## The Vintage Watch Company

It's time for Jamie Millar to take a lesson from the Rolex experts at a London store dedicated to rare and vintage pieces

**WHEN** it comes to getting its name known, Rolex is something of an old hand. "It's one of the top brands, full stop," explains David Silver, managing director of The Vintage Watch Company in London's Burlington Arcade. (In fact, Rolex came second in the 2011 Consumer Superbrands survey, behind Mercedes-Benz.) "When we first started we did a mixture of brands but Rolex always outsold everything else, so for about 16 years we've dedicated ourselves purely to Rolex. It is the best in terms of its heritage and its association with various Sixties cult films, such as James Bond; we showcase probably the best timepieces from that period. It's a unique store worldwide."

Time-worn Rolex watches, in particular, have a unique selling point. "Individuality is the main reason to buy a vintage Rolex," says Silver. "In the Eighties, it was very important for successful men to be seen wearing the gold President. It showed that they had made some money. Now they want something that nobody recognises. They want to hear, 'That's an unusual piece,' and, 'I've never seen that before.' We sell some very important sports watches that wouldn't look like they were worth anything to most people, but they're worth a great deal."

Here's why old school's cool with Rollies:

### WRIST ASSESSMENT

The Vintage Watch Company's window display is practically a timeline. So how do you choose the one for you? "We sell a lot of watches by birth year," says Silver. But I always say buy something you love, whatever your budget, not because it's rare. We sell watches like Prada sells clothes: you see it, you love it, you buy it. Straps tend to be less sporty than bracelets, but some watches have both, so the customer has a choice," says Silver. We don't want to sell



Watch this face: David Silver helps GQ's Jamie Millar choose a Rolex for the sartorially oriented

to watch buffs who only take them out at night and look at them with a torch."

### KEEP ON TICKING

Aside from the choice, the main advantage to buying from The Vintage Watch Company is the service – and we don't mean Silver's sales

patter. "The back-up of the workshop is the most important thing," he says. "Because you're buying something old, you need the two-year guarantee and then the ongoing servicing. We have a unique workshop as well: we only do repairs for watches bought here, which allows us to be very quick, and we restore all our watches back to the condition they were originally sold in. Everything goes through the same process. Someone could bring a watch in [to sell] and say it was serviced yesterday. It doesn't matter – it goes through the workshop."

### ADDED AUTHENTICITY

Ultimately, you can buy from somewhere like The Vintage Watch Company with a confidence that even the most positively feedbacked powerseller can't instil – and, crucially, have some recourse. "Fakes are not something we really have to worry about," says Silver. "There isn't enough of a marketplace for someone in China to start making Sixties

Submariners. They're not going to sell them on the beach in Italy. But I can't tell you how to spot fakes because no one can learn all the tricks. It's down to specialist people like myself to take those pitfalls away. All you have to worry about is choosing a watch that you like." **GQ**  
vintagewatchcompany.com

## The choice of vintage 'Rollies'



### Submariner

From around £7,000, but if you spy a Fifties "James Bond" one, expect to pay at least £19,000.



### GMT Master

Originally designed for Pan Am pilots, Seventies all-blue dials go for more (£15,000) than the red and blue (from £6,000).



### Daytona

One particular dial layout wound up as the "Paul Newman", and it adds about £30,000 to the price (£26,000).



### Oyster

Can't afford a Bond or Newman? You can still find some elegantly simple pearls from just £2,500.