



# DIVING WITH THE SEAHORSE

*Omega has achieved a great deal in divers' watches and was a true pioneer in water-sealed timepieces. The Omega seahorse symbolizing water resistance has even become one of the best known logos.*

BY JENS KOCH

**T**he history of divers' watches at Omega began not only at an extremely early point in time but with a timekeeper that was better known for its elegance than its robust construction. This is not surprising, for it was the age of art deco and thus rectangular watches. In 1932, the Omega Marine was already defining revolutionary case making: a double case ensured water resistance, while a tensioning lever pushed the inner case against a leather seal. The outer crystal was crafted in scratchproof sapphire, a rarity at the time. The watch was available in rust-free Staybrite steel as well as in gold. A strap crafted in seal leather guaranteed resistance to salt water, and the folding clasp offered length adjustment.

In an extreme temperature test in 1936, three Marine models were placed in water heated to 85° C (185° F) for four minutes and then lowered 73 meters



*The Omega Marine, introduced in 1932, with a double case, sapphire crystal, and a strap made of saltwater-resistant seal leather*





The foundations of a grand line: Seamaster models from 1948, one of them in chronometer version



The Seamaster Professional 600 from 1970, nicknamed ProPlof, with a monocoque case and security button for the rotating bezel

(240 feet) down into Lake Geneva for a half-hour at a temperature of 5° C (41° F). All three watches still ran perfectly after the test, with no traces of moisture inside their cases. A year later, the Laboratoire Suisse de Recherches Horlogères in Neuchâtel also tested the Marine. It placed the watch in water corresponding to a depth of 135 meters (443 feet) for more than 14 hours. No water penetrated the watch in this test either.

It was during this period that diving was beginning to develop and the Marine was soon worn for true underwater action: diving pioneer Yves Le Prieur, who had developed the first air tank for diving in 1926, started using an Omega Marine, as did underwater researcher William Beebe, who wore it in 1936 at a depth of 14 meters (46 feet) in the Pacific. The Marine was ahead of its time but never attained widespread popularity, despite its extreme water resistance, because the outer case needed to be removed for winding.



The first Seamaster 300 from 1957

However, the water-resistant Seamaster collection, introduced in 1948, did become a commercial success. By today's standards, also those watches were more elegant than robust. Omega incorporated aspects of its military watches in the Seamaster's design, including screw-down casebacks and innovative o-ring gaskets, first made of lead, then rubber. Among the factors contributing to the watch's success was its automatic caliber, a movement type that was still uncommon at the time. In 1943, Omega had introduced its first automatic movements, Calibers 28.10 and 30.10. They used a hammer automatic device, which restricted the motion of the winding mass to a limited amount of space. This allowed the use of a thin movement of only 4.8 millimeters in height, so the brand could continue to make beautifully flat watches.

The robust and excellently legible Seamaster models contributed substantially to Omega's reputation at this time.

**When you take your life  
in your hands, you need a good watch  
on your wrist.**

When the divers of Cronium...  
The 600 is carved from one block...  
Equivalent of a leap from the bottom...  
Is there any watch that can withstand...  
The 600 is carved from one block...  
Equivalent of a leap from the bottom...  
Is there any watch that can withstand...  
The 600 is carved from one block...  
Equivalent of a leap from the bottom...  
Is there any watch that can withstand...

**Ω OMEGA**

Those who put their lives on the line need a good watch on their wrists: an Omega ad from 1970 for the Seamaster Professional 600



The Seamaster Professional 1000m/3300ft from 1971 with a monocoque case was Omega's most water-resistant watch.

A seahorse emblem has graced the casebacks of this line since 1958 as a symbol for water resistance, and is now one of the best-known trademarks in the world of watches. The logo was conceived by engraver Jean-Pierre Borle, who was inspired in Venice by an image of Neptune, the Roman god of the sea, driving a chariot pulled by seahorses (this is why the Omega seahorses wear bridles). However, despite the logo on this original Seamaster, it was suitable for swimming, but could not be called a true divers' watch.

This changed in 1957 with the introduction of the Seamaster 300. Visually, it ushered in the era of the modern divers' watch at Omega with its rotating bezel for dive times. This automatic watch, developed specifically for professional divers, held up under pressure to a much greater depth than the 200 meters (656 feet) that could be tested in these days. This was thanks in part to its new double crown seals, pressed even more firmly in-

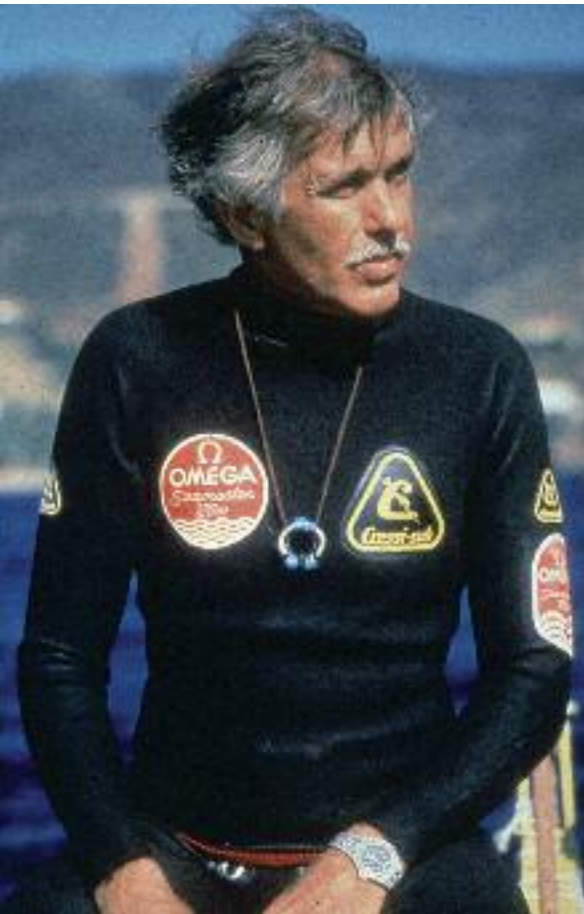
to the case by pressure, and to its crystal which was three times as thick as a normal one. The arrow-shaped hands inlaid with luminous substance were easy to read even underwater against the matte black dial with luminous markers; the rotating bezel also had a luminous reference marker. When the marker was positioned at the minute hand before diving, the minute scale on the rotating bezel provided information about the current dive time at a glance.

Various professional divers relied on the Seamaster 300. Frenchman Alain

Julien and his two colleagues wore the Seamaster 300 on more than 1,500 dives between 1958 and 1959. The watches easily withstood such trials and tribulations as the repair of harbor installations and the laying of underwater pipe. A Seamaster once even spent several days at a depth of 45 meters (148 feet) when a small plane sank after an emergency landing. The passengers were saved, and the pilot, who was also a diver, rescued the watch, which still ran perfectly, from the wreckage. He later wrote a thank-you note to Omega.

**THE SEAMASTER 300, INTRODUCED IN  
1957, USHERED IN THE ERA OF MODERN  
DIVERS WATCHES AT OMEGA WITH ITS  
ROTATING RING FOR DIVE TIMES.**





Jacques Mayol dove 101 meters (331 feet) with the Seamaster 120m Quartz on his wrist in 1981 — a new record.

In 1960, the next generation of Seamaster 300s arrived on the market. They once again displayed the Arabic numerals 3, 6, 9, and 12, but had different luminous markers and, almost as notably, different hands: a diamond-shaped hour hand and a bar-shaped minute hand with a pointed tip. Caliber 28 RA SC – 501 followed Caliber 552. Two years later the Seamaster 300 was also available with a pointed-tipped bar-shaped hour hand, rectangular markers, and a large luminous triangle in place of the numeral 12. In 1964, Omega introduced a rotating bezel with larger numerals and a clearer luminous triangle. A year before its official market introduction, legendary ocean researcher Jacques-Yves Cousteau put the watch to use in two un-

derwater stations he had opened off the coast of Sudan — one at a depth of 11 meters (36 feet) and the other at 25 meters (82 feet). Several divers lived in the stations for a month. The frogmen of the Royal Navy also wore this model. In 1966, responding to military prerequisites, the Seamaster was outfitted with a screw-in crown.

The same year, the Seamaster 120 was introduced as the first Omega divers' watch with a date display. It was also available with an orange divers' bezel, as well as without date, and either with or without a manually wound movement. A year after the Seamaster 120's introduction, the Seamaster 300 received a date display, courtesy of Caliber 565. The military versions, such as those used by the Royal Navy, are recognizable by the printed "T" inside a circle on the dial, symbolizing the use of tritium as a luminous substance.

Since 1968, Omega has worked with well-known diving company Comex. In the same year, Comex divers Ralph Brauer and René Veyrunes set a new world record in simulated diving at 365

meters (1198 feet) and their Seamaster 300s were right there with them. In 1969, Omega extended its divers' watch collection by adding two models: the Seamaster 60 with 60 meters (197 feet) of water resistance and the Seamaster 200, which was water-resistant to 200 meters (656 feet).

Omega made divers'-watch history again in 1970 when it introduced the sensational Seamaster Professional 600 — nicknamed the PloProf (Plongeurs Professionnels) — after four years of development. The most obvious new elements included its monocoque case, milled from one complete piece of metal; the red security button on the side of the case, unlocking the divers' bezel; and the square crown on the left-hand side, sealed by a fluted compression nut. The great challenge at the time was not only to achieve an enormous water resistance at 600 meters (1969 feet), but also to solve the helium problem for professional divers. In diving bells, which are lowered to great depths, helium is mixed with the air, preventing the partial pressure of oxygen and nitrogen from reach-

ing a toxic level. Since helium atoms are especially small, they can get inside a watch easily, especially at great depths where inside pressure is far lower than outside pressure. During decompression, there is danger of a watch bursting since the helium gathered inside it will expand with decreasing pressure.

While experimentation with helium valves was taking place, Omega also researched another option: making the ProPlof watch so tightly sealed that helium couldn't even enter. Omega owned the only mass spectrometer in the watch industry, and it was located within the developmental testing laboratory. It was possible to determine whether helium had entered a case with this highly sensitive machine.

Its automatic Caliber 1002 was outfitted with a date display, and its orange minute hand was extra large to deliver the most important information needed under water. Its dials were navy blue or black. In order to make room for the security button of the divers' bezel, the technicians put the crown on the left side of the case. This watch was used in nu-

merous underwater expeditions. The Seamaster Professional 600 was not only popular because of its professional appearance. Today, the Seamaster Professional 600 is a very sought-after collectors' watch.

In 1971, just one year after introducing the Seamaster Professional 600, Omega went a step further with the Seamaster Professional 1000, conceived to withstand 1,000 meters (3281 feet) of diving depth. Although it was also housed in a one-piece monocoque case and had a crown on the left side, it did not look clumsy. Its five millimeter-thick mineral crystal also contributed to its enormous resistance to pressure.

The divers' chronograph Seamaster Automatic 120m introduced in 1972 was also a sensation. This was the first watch to have non-screwed buttons that could be used under water without danger of water getting in the case, even at a maximum depth of 120 meters (394 feet). Caliber 1040 powered this watch.

The quartz era also affected the Seamaster range: in 1971 the tuning fork



Developed especially for free divers, the Seamaster Professional Apnea from 2003 has seven round windows for a dive time of up to 14 minutes.



The first chronograph to function at 120 meters (394 feet) depth: the Seamaster 120m Chrono from 1972



The Seamaster Professional Chrono Diver from 1993, here in a titanium-tantalum-red gold case, works at 300 meters' (984 feet) depth.



An ad for 1995's Golden Eye, the first James Bond film to feature the secret agent wearing an Omega

watch Seamaster f300Hz, water-resistant to 120 meters (394 feet), made its debut. In 1981, the Omega Seamaster 120m Quartz followed, a watch that free diver Jacques Mayol, known as the dolphin man, wore when he dove 101 meters (331 feet) on just a single breath of air in the same year. Although this was a functional divers' watch with a rotating bezel, it remained flat and elegant-looking thanks to its quartz movement. This model inspired other versions, even some with black chrome-plated cases. The Seamaster Professional 200m from 1988 was available with a choice of a chronometer-tested automatic movement, Caliber 1111, or a thermo-compensating quartz movement, Caliber 1441.





*Daniel Craig is the second actor to wear Omega as James Bond.*

## Omega Releases James Bond Seamaster “Skyfall” Limited Edition

You knew it was coming... as inevitable as James Bond seducing a femme fatale and ordering a shaken-not-stirred martini, Omega launched its latest limited-edition Seamaster watch to coincide with the release of last fall’s long-awaited Bond film, *Skyfall*.

Bond, who was famously a Rolex wearer in the original novels by Ian Fleming, has been an Omega man in his big-screen incarnation since 1995’s *Goldeneye*, in which Pierce Brosnan, debuting in the role of Agent 007, wore an Omega Seamaster Pro. Both Brosnan

and his successor, Daniel Craig, have worn Omega models in every Bond movie since. (In fact, in 2006’s *Casino Royale*, the first movie with Craig in the lead role, Bond even corrects his female companion, Vesper Lind, who mistakes his Omega for a Rolex.)

As it has done on several occasions since 2002 (the 40th anniversary of the Bond films), Omega released a limited-edition watch to accompany the latest film — Craig’s third installment as Bond and the seventh to feature an Omega — which opened worldwide in November 2012.

The Seamaster Planet Ocean 600M “Skyfall” Limited Edition, like every watch in the Seamaster collection, is a divers’ model equipped with a unidirectional rotating diving bezel (here in matte black ceramic with a chromium nitride diving scale) and a helium escape valve, and is water-resistant to 600 meters (2,000 feet). The watch has a 42-mm brushed and polished stainless-steel case and a matching, patented screw-and-pin bracelet with a divers’ clasp engraved with a “007” logo.

The applied indices on the matte black dial, along with the polished,

faceted, rhodium-plated hands, are coated with white Super-LumiNova, which emits a light blue glow in the dark. The only exception is the minute hand, which glows green instead, as does the dot on the diving bezel. The contrasting colors are meant to make it easier for divers to keep track of the time at a glance underwater. The index at the 7 o’clock position is a “007” logo. The date is in a window at 3 o’clock.

The watch’s movement is Omega’s exclusive new co-axial Calibre 8507, here

embellished with a black-varnished engraving of the “SKYFALL 007” logo on its rotor. In addition to Omega’s familiar co-axial escapement, the movement also features an “Si14” silicon balance spring for added stability. The movement is visible through a sapphire window in the brushed, screw-down caseback. Omega offers a four-year warranty on the watch.

The Seamaster Planet Ocean 600M “Skyfall” is being produced in an edition limited to 5,007 pieces and is delivered in a special presentation box.

— Mark Bernardo



*The Seamaster Planet Ocean Skyfall Limited Edition features the 007 logo at 7 o’clock.*







The late Sir Peter Blake on board of "The Seamaster" during a research expedition in the Antarctic

water free diving at 80 meters (262 feet) while wearing one. The three-hand version, the Seamaster Professional Diver, has also been on a much more celebrated wrist: that of the world's most famous spy, James Bond. In the 1995 Bond film *Golden Eye*, Pierce Brosnan, as Bond, wore the Seamaster Professional Diver with a blue dial. In the movie, the watch even played a role beyond that of a fashion accessory: in one scene, Bond escapes death by cutting through the floor of a train in which he has been locked using a laser from his watch. In the following film, 1997's *Tomorrow Never Dies*, the Seamaster also plays a role, this time with an integrated remote control for a bomb. In *The World is Not Enough* (1999), *Die Another Day* (2002), and in 2006's *Casino Royale*, starring Daniel Craig as a new, harder Bond, the Seamaster continued its run as Agent 007's watch of choice.

The James Bond films and advertising campaigns not only gave the Seamaster Professional Diver the nickname, "James Bond watch," but also enormous sales success: alone in 1996 Omega sold 10 times more Seamaster Professional Divers than the previous year. There were also limited edition models of this Seamaster decorated with the 007 logo to celebrate the Bond movies. Craig's second Bond film, *Quantum of Solace*, opens in November 2008 and once again sees Her Majesty's favorite secret agent wearing an Omega. Last summer, the company already released another spe-

A good 20 years after introducing the first chronograph used underwater, Omega presented another chronograph in 1993 — the Seamaster Professional Chrono Diver — which could be utilized to a depth of 300 meters (984 feet). At the same time, a three-hand version was presented that was also water-resistant to 300 meters (984 feet): the Seamaster Professional Diver. These two models were the first Omega watches outfitted with helium valves, which were opened by turning a crown at 10 o'clock. The watches used titanium, as well as steel and gold, as a case material, and were powered by chronograph Caliber 1154 and automatic Caliber 1109, both officially certified by the COSC. Their dials had a fresh, modern look, with wave decorations and skeletonized hands. Both models are still available in the collection today, with small changes: the Seamaster Professional Diver with skeletonized hands has been equipped since 2006 with the chronometer-certified Caliber 2500,

featuring a Co-Axial escapement. The collection now includes a version outfitted with a deep black dial. Also, these models are available with quartz movements and as automatic GMT versions.

The chronograph became well known largely due to free diver Roland Specker, who set a new record in fresh-

Inspired by the Seamaster 300 from 1957, the Seamaster Planet Ocean line was introduced in 2005.



The Bond watch for collectors: the limited-edition Seamaster Professional Diver with a black dial, called the "James Bond 007 Collector's Piece"



The Marine 1932 from the museum collection is a re-edition of the first Omega divers watch.

cial edition of the Seamaster Professional Diver for Bond fans. Matching Bond's work clothes of choice — the tuxedo — the model is outfitted with an elegant black dial. The watch, also featuring a 007 logo as the counterweight on the second hand, is limited to 10,007 pieces.

*Casino Royale* was the first movie in which James Bond wore two different watches: along with the Seamaster Professional Diver was the Seamaster Planet Ocean. It represents the second Omega divers' watch line introduced in 2005, and echoes the design of the first Seamaster 300 from 1957. It boasts an impressive water resistance of 600 meters (1969 feet), a sapphire crystal, and Caliber 2500 featuring a Co-Axial escapement. The Planet Ocean versions with orange bezel and/or orange numerals were also popular. The Planet Ocean Chrono, which came along in 2006, is powered by Caliber 3313, with a column wheel and Co-Axial escapement.

2002 saw the release of the Seamaster America's Cup Racing model, a special chronograph with a regatta countdown function. The Apnea, introduced the following year, is a timepiece developed specially for free divers with the help of Jacques Mayol. It displays the dive time

using seven round windows. When the chronograph is activated, the first window begins to turn red. Each window stands for one minute, so that when seven minutes have passed all the windows are red. After seven minutes, the color disappears from each window again. Thus, it is easy for the diver to recognize an elapsed 14 minutes. To increase legibility, there are no other sub-dials on this watch; only the sweep chronograph second hand makes revolutions around the dial when the chronograph is activated.

In 2007, Omega came full circle with the reissue of its first divers' watch, the Marine model from 1932. This timepiece featuring a double case was issued as N° 7 of the Museum Collection and was limited to only 135 pieces. The inner case crafted in white gold is inside an outer case crafted in red gold. Like the original, the re-edition is powered by a manually wound movement. Caliber 2007 is, however, very modern with its Co-Axial escapement and can be seen through a transparent window when the case is open.

In 2009, the Seamaster 600 — the PloProf — experienced its own rebirth, as Omega re-introduced yet another highlight in its divers'-watch history. ○



The Seamaster PloProf was re-introduced in 2009.