

Keeping Time

...with Contemporary Swiss Technology

By: C. Holden Hatfield



Schofield/Sidewinder

"The 'Gunslinger Line', available fall 2006; 150-piece and 200-piece collection, retail at US\$5,700 and US\$5,900 respectively."

Bozeman, by now, is firmly on the map as an outdoor enthusiast's Mecca with world class skiing and fishing and miles of surrounding biking and hiking trails.

Chris Wardle aims to put the town on another map. The watch map.

The CEO of the country's newest manufacturer of fine timepieces, the Bozeman Watch Company, wants to turn this corner of south-western Montana into America's own Switzerland, the long-time home for the global watch-making standard.

Wardle, a collector since childhood, knows a thing or two about watches, and his store proudly displays, like

museum showpieces, a well chosen selection of his own Swiss and early-American timepieces. While most would be happy to simply add unique and rare watches to their collections, Wardle was unsatisfied with the direction - or lack thereof - within the watch world.

"Contemporary Swiss watch technology is comparable to none, and you just can't beat turn of the century American design," says Wardle, "but American companies designing exclusive, luxurious mechanical timepieces simply did not exist two years ago." Less a deterrent than an opportunity: he and fellow watch enthusiast Patrick Ayoub launched their own brand, the Bozeman Watch Company.

Opening for business at 11 East Main in December of 2005, with only one model, the SmokeJumper Chronograph, for sale for almost ten months, the Bozeman Watch Company has won loyal clients and a fan base eagerly anticipating the company's fall releases, which, by the end of the year, will swell their "Montana Class Watch Collection" four-fold.

The SmokeJumper Chronograph set the bar for these and future Montana Class Watch Collection originals. At 100 pieces it's extremely limited, and with a Swiss-certified mechanical movement, each SmokeJumper is as accurate as it is exclusive. As the official timepiece of the Missoula-based National Smokejumper Association, the Bozeman Watch Company recently teamed up with



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Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer to launch an ambitious auction of a special "Governor's Edition" SmokeJumper Chronograph to benefit the highflying fire-fighters.

With the release in the fall of 2006 of The Sidewinder, The Schofield, USS Montana, and ladies' Gallatin, the Bozeman Watch Company is staking its claim as a leader in American design and innovation. As with the SmokeJumper Chronograph, each is produced in limited editions ranging from 50 to 200 pieces. All incorporate highly-accurate Swiss movements and all, save the ladies' Gallatin, are certified Swiss chronometers.

For Wardle, what goes into the watches is just as important as what comes out of their creation. Many of the BWC's clients, like Wardle, live part of the year out of state. Many return for the singular charms of the Big Sky Country again and again over the years. "For many people it's nice to have something that reminds them of the area."

Bozeman, as well, gains from the creative process, as the company's "One for the Community Project" puts 1% of each watch's value back into local non-profits. "With the terrible fire season we've had, we wanted to redouble our efforts for the NSA," says John Bailey of the BWC. He tells me that the company has signed agreements with "a handful of groups" ranging from the Predator Conservation Alliance to the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, and is continually working to develop new relationships within the community. Says Wardle, "We draw inspiration from this slice of the map, and want to return as much to the community as possible." ■

For more information:
877-878-1780
WWW.BOZEMANWATCH.COM



Ladies' Gallatin
"Not just for men, anymore. The BWC's first foray into women's fashion is an instant classic."



USS Montana
"Designed as a tribute to "America's Greatest Generation", the BWC made only 50 of their USS Montana."