

MOBILE

Breitling positions mobile connectivity as timepiece accompaniment

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Breitling's B55 Connected watch

By JEN KING

Swiss watchmaker Breitling is taking the smartwatch concept to new heights with its flight-ready B55 Connected timepiece.

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Luxury Daily

As Apple prepares to begin selling its much-anticipated Apple Watch next month, many traditional watchmakers have upped their technology strategies to incorporate mobile touchpoints that do not tarnish or diminish their dedication to craft. These mobile updates allow a timepiece to keep its classic feel, but embrace modernity and the wants and interests of present-day consumers.

"This is a natural next step for Breitling as a leader in creating watches for professionals," said Thierry Prissert, president of [Breitling USA](#), Wilton, CT. "The B55 Connected is designed to leverage the synergies between a chronograph and a smartphone, to complement what each one does best.

"The chronograph remains the main focus and the connection with the smartphone is primarily designed to improve its user friendliness," he said. "Since the main assets of a smartphone are its screen and its ergonomic interface, owners of the B55 Connected can

use their phone to perform certain adjustments.

"The result is a considerable gain in comfort and efficiency. At the same time, the user may also upload the results of various measurements from the chronograph to the smartphone so as to be able to read them more easily, store them or pass them on. Essentially, it is the future of smart watches, especially for the aviation community."

New generation

Smartwatches are often synced to a smartphone application that tracks the wearer's physical activity and sends push notifications. Breitling has taken the opposite approach by having the smartphone service the B55 Connected chronograph to enhance functionality and conviviality.

Breitling began testing an analog and digital display in 2014 with the introduction of the Caliber B50. The electronic multi-function includes both types of displays and offers pilots a vast range of functions that are easily read.

Through the Caliber B50 timepiece, Breitling was looking toward the future as smartwatches were becoming a certainty. But, Breitling wanted to keep the timepiece, rather than the smartphone, the focal point.

Breitling describes its outlook toward smartwatches as: "The chronograph remains the absolute master and the connection with the smartphone is primarily designed to improve its friendliness." Thus, the two-way communication, powered by Bluetooth connectivity, allows for the pair of instruments to do what they do best, but together.



Breitling B55 Connected app

For example, a smartphone's screen and interface allows for easy timepiece adjustments such as time-setting, time zones, setting alarms, operating parameters and night mode functions.

Also, the watch wearer can easily upload the results of various measurements, flight times for instance, from the chronograph to the smartphone. By doing so, the measurements can be read much more easily and can be shared and saved accordingly.

Aesthetically, the Breitling B55 Connected keeps with the brand's spirit of authentic instrument for professionals. The watch is technical looking and features a titanium case with black carbon-based coating and a dial adorned with a blue wireless symbol. The blue and black theme is also reflected on its rubber strap.

Through a small port found where the timepiece's crown would traditionally be, the B55 Connected can be plugged into a smartphone for synchronization. The watch also communicates with smartphones via Bluetooth.

In a three-minute video hosted on its Web site, Breitling takes consumers through the B55

Connected's details through computer animations. In the video, the consumer is shown how the app can be used to update the time based on various time zones, set alarms and track flight data.

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/gkFXJVCh8jA>

B55 Connected

The B55 Connected is highly functional and exceeds the abilities of a standard timekeeping device.

"Breitling has long been known as the authentic partner of aviation, so we created the B55 Connected for pilots in order to provide a vast range of functions while making it as easy to use as possible," Mr. Prissert said.

"There are many aviation driven functions in the B55 Connected including an electronic tachometer, a countdown/count up system enabling a sequence of countdown and 'long duration' timing (Mission Elapsed Time) operations, along with an eminently aviation-oriented 'chrono flight' device that is useful in recording flight times while memorizing the take-off time, landing time and date," he said. "It is equipped with a particularly simple and logical control mode, involving function selection by rotating the crown, and activation/deactivation by means of two pushpieces.

"The two ultra-legible LCD screens features a high-intensity backlighting system that may be activated merely by pressing the crown – or when the user tilts his wrist at a more than 35 degree angle, which proves particularly effective when the hand is gripping aircraft controls or a steering wheel. It has two independent alarms that can be set via smartphone, and thanks to an innovative miniaturized rechargeable battery system, the watch may be recharged via the main grid or a computer USB port."

On your own terms

As the development of wearables has continued to move forward there have been ample opportunities for Swiss watchmakers to enter the space through collaborative efforts.

Collaborations, in any space in the luxury market, allow the partnering brands to explore their own heritages and best practices in a new way that may amplify their offerings. Oftentimes, these collaborations connect brands that seem like an unlikely duo such as Silicon Valley and Switzerland's watch manufacturer partnership to create the first Swiss Horological Smartwatch.

For example, Frederique Constant, Alpine and Mondaine's will launch 10 different smartwatch models for men and women in 2015, all of which will be powered by MotionX's Horological Smartwatch Open Platform and will have bi-directional communication with iPhone and Android applications.

At first glance, the watches outfitted with the MotionX platform appear to be traditionally designed timepieces ([see story](#)).

Also, Germany's Montblanc has embraced wearable technology with the introduction of

the e-Strap, a device that can be added to any traditional timepiece.

In general, watchmakers were not inherently threatened by the emergence of smart wearables due to their dedication to craftsmanship. But, as the technology was developed some watchmakers, as well as retailers and accessories makers, have realized the potential of collaborations to maintain relevancy in a changing marketplace ([see story](#)).

Honoring its brand codes through this product allows Breitling to protect its craftsmanship and innovation found across its watches. This will also its enthusiasts to feel that the brand has not undergone a shift in priorities by embracing technology.

"With everything being hyperconnected now, this was simply a progression of innovation for Breitling," Mr. Prissert said.

"Last year, we came out with the Caliber B50 – an electronic multifunction chronograph movement with analog and digital displays – the Caliber B55 takes that one step further by having the wireless data transfer, in addition to the functions that the B55 Connected can perform.

"The B55 Connected is a prime example of how Breitling is constantly innovating to provide user friendly instruments for professionals," he said. "It reflects Breitling's commitment to providing cutting edge technology for the professionals who wear our timepieces."

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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