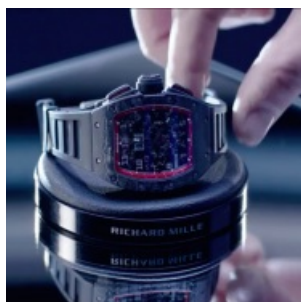


INTERNET

McLaren and Richard Mille shake hands on 10-year partnership

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Richard Mille x McLaren Formula 1 timepiece

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

Swiss watchmaker Richard Mille and British automaker McLaren are highlighting their exclusivity with an extended brand partnership.

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Richard Mille announced its partnership with the automaker's Formula 1 team on social media the morning of Friday Feb. 18. The exclusivity and rarity of the vehicles, along with a keen sense of design, make the high-priced brands a match.

Automakers (particularly those involved in auto racing) and timekeepers have gone hand in hand for some time," said Donnie Pacheco, principal at [Clean Channel Consulting](#), Inc., Seattle. "Not only is racing all about precision timing from a technical driving standpoint, but the ultimate goal is to have the fastest time.

In essence the two are locked in a race against one another, with automakers using technology to go faster and timekeepers using technology to be more precise in how time is measured," he said.

In the nick of time

The deal between Richard Mille and McLaren's Formula 1 team is for 10 years. Longer partnerships give the feeling of authenticity and suggest common ground has been found rather than reading as an arbitrary or financially motivated bargain.

A long-term relationship makes sense because it allows the brands to be more strategic and long-term in their thinking," Mr. Pacheco said. Over the course of a decade, it will allow the two to become synonymous, fully reaching the others' audience.

It will also allow them to be more creative and try more things than a brands whose partnership is on a shorter term or unknown length," he said. Additionally, for Mille, it provides a stable, long-term partnership that is almost as long as the brand is old."

In its Facebook post, Richard Mille noted a shared passion for technology, meticulous design and high standards of craftsmanship as rationale for the partnership.



McLaren driver Jenson Button wearing Richard Mille watch

"The McLaren brand has existed at the very pinnacle of Formula 1 racing for 50 years, and its reputation for continual technical innovation, painstaking attention to detail and race-winning success perfectly matches the philosophy of the Richard Mille brand," Richard Mille, chairman & CEO, Richard Mille Horometrie, said in a statement.

As per the terms of the agreement, drivers Fernando Alonso and Jenson Button, McLaren's world champions, will wear Richard Mille timepieces as they drive. In addition, the watchmaker's branding and logo will appear on McLaren's new MP4-31 racing vehicle.

In the long-term, the partnership will lead to an exclusive series of watches inspired by McLaren and its heritage.



McLaren P1 by MSO 400

Richard Mille has also posted a video to social media channels and on its Web site to display the partnership.

The video begins with Mr. Button walking into the center of a pedestal in a large room putting on his racing suit. After he puts on his jacket, he picks up a watch clearly branded as Richard Mille, slips it onto his wrist, looks at the camera and says, "It's time."

The next cut shows Mr. Button putting on helmet and gloves and then standing on the room's center platform. Another close-up of the watch follows before the names of both brands appear on the screen.

"McLaren-Honda Richard Mille"

Both brands are extremely exclusive, as suggested by the high price points, among the highest in their respective sectors. Relatedly, each keeps products very low in number. McLaren models are routinely limited to triple digits, and Richard Mille's annual production hovers around 3,400.

While painstaking production and design aligns the brands' ethos, a shared penchant for exclusive numbers and price points help ensure that fans of one brand can logistically translate into customers for the other.

Stopwatch

Because a race is a competition not only against other participants but time itself, watchmakers are common partners for racing events.

In October 2014, Swiss watchmaker IWC Schaffhausen optimized its Formula One partnership by creating a campaign around the Mercedes AMG Petronas Formula One Team.

Formula One drivers Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg, as brand ambassadors for IWC Schaffhausen, helped design their own limited-edition watches and starred in a social video for the watchmaker. The relationship marked

a three-year renewal of IWC Schaffhausen's partnership with the Formula One team ([see story](#))

Other kinds of sporting connections are also popular for timekeepers.

In August 2014, Swiss watchmaker Hublot became first luxury watch brand to embrace American football through the creation of themed timepieces.

For its partnership with the Dallas Cowboys, Hublot created themed timepieces, which likely appealed to the team's biggest fans. The partnership also added to the brand's more general involvement in professional athletics and directed a slightly different sporting audience toward the brand's products ([see story](#)).

"At the consumer level, [McLaren and Mille's partnership] will help to cement Mille's reputation in the watch industry as a long-term brand and not as a novelty," Mr. Pacheco said. "For McLaren, it will expose them to a newer generation of watch enthusiasts.

"Watch brands have long partnered with auto racers so the concept is not new," he said. The key will be for the two to keep their messaging on brand and to focus on the brand values they call out. If they begin to deviate from the core values, they run the risk of a partnership that exists solely to put a watch on a driver's arm."

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