

JEWELRY AND WATCHES

IWC shares founder's origin story in cinematic campaign

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James Marsden stars as IWC founder F.A. Jones. Image credit: IWC Schaffhausen

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Swiss watchmaker IWC Schaffhausen has released a new installment of its "Born of a Dream" film campaign, this time sharing the true story of its founder.

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IWC tapped brand ambassador actor James Marsden to play the role of Florentine Ariosto Jones, who founded the watchmaking brand in 1868. The cinematic short is a follow up to a chapter released this summer featuring fellow IWC brand ambassador, American football player Tom Brady.

"Storytelling is so essential for luxury brands because they need to establish a strong connection to the brand," said Dalia Strum, educator at [The Fashion Institute of Technology](#) and founder of the branding agency [RethinkConnect](#). "By visually and contextually storytelling their collections, brands are able to develop a stronger emotional connection with their target market."

Man of the future

"Born of a Dream: A Man of the Future" begins with the sound of a ticking clock, before the rhythm is interrupted by the sounds of the American Civil War. Surrounded by chaos on the battlefields of Gettysburg, Mr. Jones remembers his life in Boston before the start of the war.

When he enlists for the Union army, Mr. Jones gives his occupation as a watchmaker. In the next scene, he is shown talking to his wife about his dream for the future before he leaves to fight.

In a postwar Boston, a series of scenes show Mr. Jones recruiting partners and investors for his watch company.

A teaser for the IWC short film "Born of a Dream: A Man of the Future"

It is clear he has a passion for precision and Swiss watchmaking, taking a Swiss pocket watch with him to the war. When asked by one investor where in Boston he plans on starting his company, he replies that his future is in Switzerland.

Mr. Jones is shown arriving in Schaffhausen in 1874 with his wife and business partner, Charles Kidder. When Mr.

Kidder reminds him to set his watch ahead six hours, he confidently replies, "I guess that makes us men of the future."

As Mr. Jones is seen touring the floor of his new watchmaking factory, which is on the banks of the Rhine, there is a brief flashback to him during the war, nervously gripping his rifle alongside his fellow soldiers. Back in Schaffhausen, Mr. Jones is ridiculed by some of the Swiss for being an American "who will tell the Swiss people how to make watches," but he shrugs it off.

As the pressure from investors builds, Mr. Jones remembers the life-and-death struggles of the war. In one meeting, an investor yells at him to stop dreaming and be realistic, while the battle scenes make it clear it was his dream that sustained him.

He is removed from the International Watch Company by the investors. Forlorn, he asks his wife if he dreamed too big, while holding the same pocketwatch he took to war now cracked after Mr. Jones survived a blast.

His wife encouragingly replies "never." Mr. Jones is seen leaving the factory, with the employees rising to their feet as he walks away.

The scene fades to black, then title text explains that F.A. Jones returned to the U.S. in 1876. Although he never worked in watchmaking again, the text reads that "every IWC watch is engineered just as Jones imagined it," more than 150 years later.

American dreams

The first short film of IWC campaign's was called "Born of a Dream: A Boy from San Mateo," telling the story of how Mr. Brady pursued his childhood dream to become a champion quarterback. The storytelling element of the video plays up the similarities between Mr. Brady's core values and the values of the IWC brand ([see story](#)).

A third video edits together scenes from Mr. Jones and Mr. Brady's narratives. Their connections to Boston is made explicit, as an introduction reads: "In the city they call the Cradle of Liberty, two men, divided by a century, dare to dream the impossible."

Both men's humble beginnings are shown, as well as other similarities. As Mr. Jones is working on blueprints for his watches, a young Mr. Brady is seen reviewing his playbook.

While Mr. Jones is not able to see the full scope of his dream become realized, Mr. Brady has become the greatest quarterback in the history of his sport exceeding all expectations, except perhaps his own.

An interactive IWC microsite further breaks down the timelines of the two men and their dedication to their crafts. The online component further underscores the campaign's storytelling.

"The video featuring the IWC founder, F.A. Jones felt like a new piece of content with an interesting story to keep us as viewers engaged for an extended period of time," Ms. Strum said. "This strategy works well to build emotional connections as well as increase their SEO because of the additional time spent on site.

"The nostalgic part of this video allows potential consumers to connect with something from the past: to provide hope for a more positive future, to believe that we're a strong society and things will get better," she said. "The association from the past to the present provides an updated allure to timeless pieces."