

EJECTOR SET

BY: KEITH W. STRANDBERG

Rocketing out of an aircraft at 690 mph is no one's idea of fun—except, that is, for Nick English, co-founder and co-owner (with his brother Giles) of the British watch company Bremont. English revels in the fact that his MB collection watches, associated with Martin-Baker Aircraft Company, the world's leading ejector seat company, are put through hell.

An accomplished pilot himself, English was well aware of Martin-Baker, a major supplier to military forces in the Western World, and, when representatives of that company approached Bremont about making an exclusive watch for its Ejector Tie Club, he jumped at the chance. The club has an extreme initiation requirement—members must have ejected in a Martin-Baker seat in order to join the ranks. Since 1949, more than 7,280 people have become part of this exclusive “ejector set,” having ejected in flight using a Martin-Baker seat. Because these pilots only eject in emergency situations, the manufacturer characterizes the bailouts as 7,000-plus lives saved, which is no small thing. And, not content with offering only the traditional necktie as a symbol of these users' hard-earned status, Martin-Baker sought to develop a watch available only to members of the club.

“Martin-Baker approached us, and we got on really, really well,” English recalls. “They have been a family business since the 1920s, and they love



MB1

- ▶ Swiss-made BE-36A automatic chronometer movement
- ▶ Trip-Tick case design with inner rotating bezel
- ▶ Aluminum Trip-Tick case barrel
- ▶ Water resistant to 100 meters
- ▶ Anti-magnetic Faraday cage
- ▶ Patented anti-shock movement mount
- ▶ Super-LumiNova dial
- ▶ Sapphire crystal with nine layers of anti-reflective coating
- ▶ 43-mm case diameter
- ▶ Leather or NATO canvas strap

MB1 SPECIFICATIONS

A PAIR OF BRITISH BROTHERS
HELPS PILOTS CELEBRATE BAILING OUT



PROPERTY OF MARTIN-BAKER
EJECTOR TIE CLUB

CAUTION
DO NOT PULL

what we are doing, and they love that we are British. The idea was to produce a watch that, if you have ejected, you have earned the right to buy.”

Martin-Baker has an area outside London where it tests ejector seats. When English toured the facility, his head began spinning with ideas, as he considered the challenges of designing a watch that would survive all the extremes that the ejector seats withstand. “It’s a great place to walk around,” English says. “Explosions are going off all the time. This company makes ejector seats for more than 70 percent of the jet aircraft in use today, so if you are sitting in an F-16 or F-18, you are most likely in a Martin-Baker seat.”

“The watch they wanted to produce had to be quite unique,” English continues. “It had to go through all the tests that the ejector seat had to go through—vibration tests, shock tests, climate tests, temperature extremes, saltwater tests and more.”

Quickly, Bremont set to work on the MB1.

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—NICK ENGLISH

It took two years of designing, prototyping and experimentation to make a watch that could withstand all the stresses of ejection. In the first trials, the watches were shaken apart by the vibration tests, the crystals popped out at -40° Celsius (the approximate temperature at 100,000 feet) and more. “We had to redesign the way the watch worked,” English admits. “We have a whole new technology in the case, where the movement is suspended in a rubber mount. I am sure that

this has got to be one of the most tested watches in the world.”

According to English, back in the 1940s and ’50s, Martin-Baker used human subjects in the tests, but, now, crash test dummies are the only ones going for these rides.

For the past two years, every seat Martin-Baker has tested has had a Bremont watch strapped to it. Today, the MB1 passes with flying colors—even enduring the test that requires that the watch accelerate from 0 to 690 mph and then return to zero in seven seconds.

Looking at a test watch, it’s impossible to tell that it’s been through hell and back, and that’s precisely the point. “We wanted to design a watch that is classic, easy to read, iconic, with a simple face and a clear display,” English says. “We have an inner turning bezel with ball bearings, so it feels very nice. I love the durability and the readability of the Martin-Baker watch. It’s a really nice tool to use in the cockpit. As a pilot

and a guy who is into guy things, like bikes and planes, I see it as a tool watch, really. It’s got everything, and if you want to buy only one watch, this is the watch to buy.”

The MB1 watch is available only to ejectionees, and each watch will be engraved with the individual’s ejection number, but a second unengraved version featuring the same technology and called the MB2 is offered to the general public. In addition, the anti-shock movement mount technology developed in testing has been built into Bremont’s Supermarine dive watches. As with all Bremont timepieces, however, annual production is limited.

Bremont watches are simple, straightforward and attractive. Because the brothers English are both pilots, it’s important to them that the watches are easy to read, which makes them immediately iconic. They aren’t for everyone, but for those who want a watch that has been put through incredible torture tests and has a unique, classic look, this just might be the thing.

bremont.com, martin-baker.com



Nick and Giles English

STAGES OF EJECTION

