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FASHION

How to Buy Iron Man's Watch

A major December watch auction—already noteworthy for featuring a watch owned by Marlon Brando—adds timepieces from astronaut John Glenn and Robert Downey Jr.'s Iron Man



The UR-105 CT Iron is the watch Robert Downey Jr. wears in character as Stark's Iron Man. PHOTO: COURTESY OF PHILLIPS

By Michael Clerizio

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If you've ever coveted Tony Stark's life, there's hope for you yet.

The watch Robert Downey Jr. wears in character as Stark's Iron Man—an Urwerk 105 CT Iron, featured in *Avengers: Endgame*, as our hero charges into battle with the rest of the Marvel gang—goes on sale December 10th.

Also up for grabs in the same auction—dubbed “Game Changers” at Phillips auction house in New York—are golfer Jack Nicklaus's 1966 gold Rolex Day-Date, actor Marlon Brando's *Apocalypse Now* Rolex GMT Master and a two-watch collection from the late U.S. senator and astronaut John Glenn.

One of Glenn's watches might be the oddest token of national gratitude he received after his February 1962 space flight, which pushed the U.S. into the space-race lead. In July of that year, the Anti-Superstition Society of Chicago, a club whose members strolled under ladders, smashed mirrors and cuddled black cats to prove such occurrences did not engender bad luck, presented Glenn with a watch featuring an unusual dial. Instead of the numerals 1-12, the numeral 13 appears on the dial 12 times. Wearing the watch, the Society said, would prove that the number 13 was not to be feared.



The LeCoultre “Lucky 13” was presented by the Chicago Anti-Superstition Society to Lt. Colonel John H. Glenn Jr. to commemorate his historic achievement of becoming the first American astronaut to orbit the Earth. PHOTO: COURTESY OF PHILLIPS

The 1962 watch has a Swiss Jaeger-LeCoultre movement inside a gold-filled, American-made case. Phillips puts the estimate at \$20,000 to \$40,000.

The second Glenn watch up for auction is a Breitling Navitimer—a pilot watch that debuted in the 1950s equipped with a circular slide rule for calculating fuel consumption, air speeds and

rates of ascent and descent. Glenn's fellow astronaut Scott Carpenter suggested a few tweaks to the Navitimer, including adopting a 24-hour dial that would be more useful during space flight. The 1962 version of the watch owned by Glenn is known as the Navitimer "Scott Carpenter" Cosmonaute, and could fetch between \$40,000 and \$80,000.

Added cachet and higher auction prices often accompany watches that have a famous backstory. In December 2017, the previously lost Woodward-Newman Rolex Daytona, purchased by Joanne Woodward and worn by her husband Paul Newman, sold at Phillips for \$17,752,500.

None of the "Game Changers" watches are expected to top Newman's price, says Paul Boutros, Phillips's head of watches for the Americas. "All of these watches have rock-solid provenance and each of the people connected to the watches was a larger-than-life figure," he says. "Each watch tells a great story."

Boutros believes Glenn's watches appeal to a different audience than the merely celebrity-obsessed. "There will be museums and brands bidding at the sale, in addition to private collectors and people who are into space exploration," he says. A portion of sales will go to the John Glenn College of Public Affairs at Ohio State University. Proceeds from Downey's Urwerk will go to Random Act Funding, a philanthropic organization started by the actor and his wife, film producer Susan Downey.

According to Urwerk, Downey liked one of its watches he had seen in a magazine. He first wore one in *Spider-Man: Homecoming*. The actor did not buy the UR-105 CT Iron for *Avengers: Endgame*, but borrowed it for filming from Urwerk, which still owns the watch.

Urwerk is an independent Swiss brand that produces 150 watches a year. Its watches are unconventional in appearance, with hour hands called "satellites" that skim along the minute gauge. The company's watchmakers Felix Baumgartner and Martin Frei claim diverse inspirations, including *Star Wars*'s Millennium Falcon.



The Rolex GMT-Master was worn by Marlon Brando in Francis Ford Coppola's film *Apocalypse Now*, released in 1979. PHOTO: COURTESY OF PHILLIPS

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