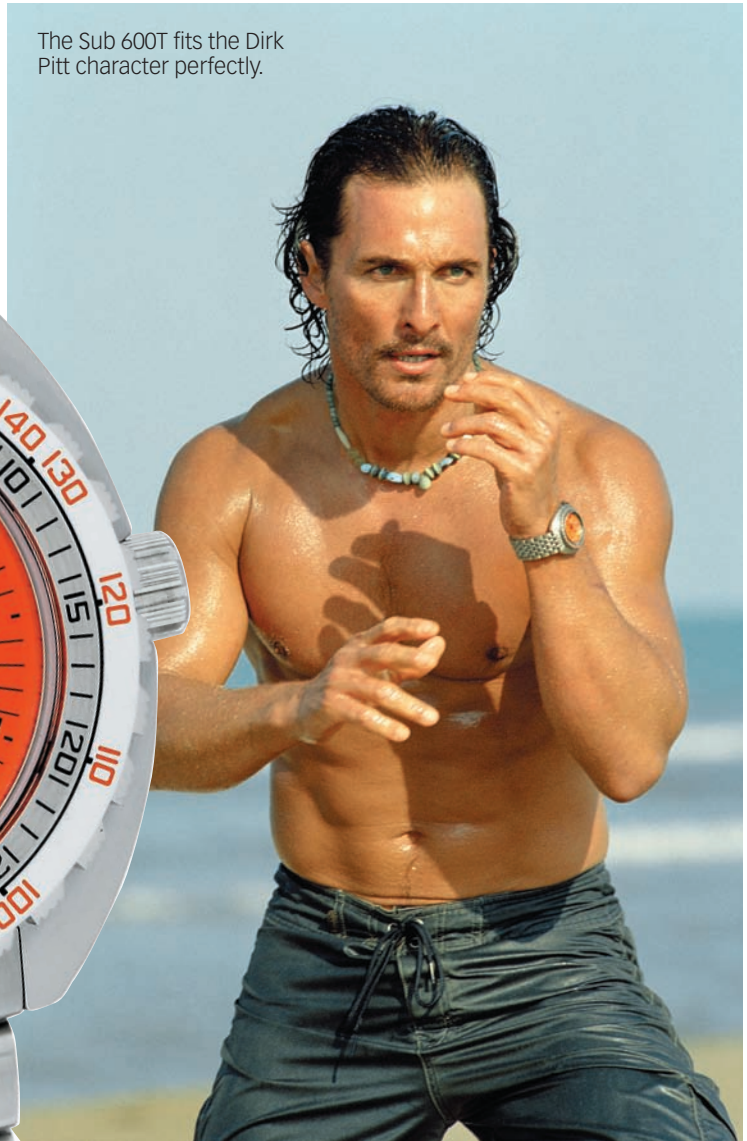


Dirk's Real

Before watches were routinely placed onto celebrity wrists, Clive Cussler gave a real-life orange-dialed diver model to his fictional hero Dirk Pitt

The Sub 600T fits the Dirk Pitt character perfectly.



The Dirk Pitt watch, Doxa's SUB 750T.

Doxa Deal

Product placement is a very prolific marketing trend among watch companies today. It is intended to increase awareness for their ticking treasures. This tendency, where the firm places high-end timepieces on stars' wrists in Hollywood movies, is an interesting yet somehow superficial practice aimed at getting the companies a great deal of attention.

But at least one cooperative positioning recently took place in Hollywood that was actually very authentic, making a whole lot of sense for its brand and the motion picture in question alike: Doxa and Dirk Pitt.

Clive Cussler is the successful author of the Dirk Pitt series of novels that feature a James Bond-type NUMA (National Underwater and Marine Agency) agent by the name of Dirk Pitt and his sidekick, Al Giordino. And the high-powered film version of his 1992 adventure "Sahara" hit the big screen in the spring of 2005 with main character Dirk Pitt wearing an "orange face Doxa dive watch."

While the horologically uninitiated have probably wondered if the watch found on the pages of Cussler's novels is real or not, *International Watch* readers know the authenticity of the brand. But what about Pitt's use of Doxa use in the books?

Diver Origins

Clive Cussler and Doxa actually go back a long way. Dr. Cussler, the real-

life founder and chairman of NUMA, personally had a thing for the first-ever commercial diver's watch, manufactured in 1967, spying it for the first time in the dive accessory store he worked in while penning his second Pitt novel.

The previous year, Doxa, a Swiss manufacturer of elegant men's dress

eral professional divers and experienced Doxa watchmakers.

Among the members of the diving team was Claude Wesly, the first man to swim the Mediterranean and a collaborator of famed underwater scientist Jacques Cousteau, who was then called in to add his expertise to the project. This new timepiece, dubbed the Doxa SUB, introduced two revolutionary features. One was the unidirectionally rotating bezel that showcased a non-decompression limit table. This official U.S. navy dive table was engraved right onto the bezel to assist divers in keeping track of time and water depth. The other very progressive feature broke with all designing norms known in that day: A bright orange dial.


The dial utilized was beneficial to divers. It allowed for extreme legibility under dark diving conditions and also lent the timepiece an excellent recognition factor. This successful addition to the new model motivated many others in the industry to follow suit, thus setting off a trend for dial colors other than the usual black, white, and cream that had been en vogue until then.

And in actuality, it was the SUB 300T's unusually bright orange dial and large steel bracelet that attracted Cussler to the masculine timepiece, not only for his wrist but also that of his new fiction action hero, Dirk Pitt.

After finishing the novel, which he wrote on a portable typewriter when business was slow, he received the orange-face Doxa he had so



watches founded in 1889, had introduced a diver's watch to its line. This was intended to be an instrument for professional divers, and Doxa mastered the challenge by adding unique features to it. The product, initiated in 1964 by Urs Eschle, the company's then-commercial director, involved setting up a research team with sev-



Clive Cussler's Dirk Pitt is never without his "orange-face Doxa."

admired as a parting gift. Not only has it been inseparable from his wrist since then, but also from Pitt's wrist. In the novels, he is often seen looking at the time on his own—very real—"orange face Doxa."

Though all this might seem like a somewhat trivial topic to the average watch connoisseur, the Doxa association in Clive Cussler's books was historic for a number of reasons. This was product placement before the term product placement was really coined. It is a well-known fact that James Bond, whose books were basically written in the same years, wore Rolex watches on-screen because Ian Fleming had him wearing them in his novels. During the filming of "Dr. No," legend has it that the prop man had however forgotten to get the proper Oyster Perpetual that Fleming had originally described, so director Terence Young just took off his own Rolex Submariner and handed it to Sean Connery to wear in the movie.

If one watches the Bond movies in the order they were made, it soon becomes obvious when product placement entered the picture, literally. The next Bond, Roger Moore, wore the Submariner in "Live and Let Die" (1973) and "Man With the Golden Gun" (1974), and George Lazenby wore the famous timepiece in "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" (1969).

Although the quartz revolution of the 1970s prompted the Bond series' marketers to have Roger Moore film four movies with a Seiko on his wrist, Timothy Dalton returned to the mechanical icon in "The Living Daylights" (1987) and "License to Kill" (1989). Not to mention the well-publicized contracts the Bond makers now have with Omega in the modern day. Long live product placement.

Cussler, a diver, also wears Doxa

Not so with Doxa and Dirk Pitt. Cussler, like Fleming, simply chose the "orange-face Doxa" because he liked it and felt it fit exceedingly well with his character—a large, obvious, masculine watch for a hero to whom he would like to attribute the same elements.

Then there is the connection with the diving and underwater intentions of the timepiece. The Doxa watch's association with official United States diving associations and its distribution through U.S. Diver, a company that supplied shops with various diving equipment, only increased the natural manner in which Cussler chose the watch, a true diving instrument, contrary to other water-resistant watches of the day.

This early association with an emerging sport is one of the elements that aided in solidifying the Doxa SUB series's reputation as a serious instrument, making it a "must-have"

for divers, who proudly wore it both in and out of the water. And the popularity of Cussler's books spurred the popularity of these watches—free of charge. Cussler used them because he believed in them, and not because he was paid to do so.

Intervention

At this point it might be important to mention that Doxa itself had fallen on some hard times due to the quartz crisis in the 1980s (as did all other companies producing mechanical watches) and the production of the SUB diver's watches was discontinued, though the novels had indeed created a certain constant demand for them.

It was only when Rick Marei, a former Microsoft marketing executive and vintage watch collector, entered the scene that the SUB series began a marvelous run of re-issues.

Though the firm had changed hands twice in the two decades leading up to the new millennium, Marei rescued this model, his personal favorite. His infectious enthusiasm and marketing savvy convinced the new owners to hire him, and his re-editions have now made it all the way to the large screen.

Twenty years ago, another of Cussler's novels, *Raise the Titanic*,



Matthew McConaughey and Penelope Cruz, alias Dirk Pitt and Eva Rojas, in "Sahara."

was made into a Hollywood film. It bombed, something Cussler attributes to the fact that his storyline was not followed closely enough. Thus, when he was approached about a celluloid version of "Sahara," he stood his ground and received script, director and casting approval rights for the film, something that obviously worked because the movie was a hit. And it was certainly Cussler who insisted on keeping the Doxa for Matthew McConaughey's wrist, the actor chosen to depict Dirk Pitt, to maintain an air of authenticity.

"I wouldn't have it any other way," said Cussler.

In the movie version of *Sahara*, McConaughey's timepiece is obvious, and he wears it with aplomb. Though the one-dimensional Dirk Pitt started out wearing the SUB 300T in 1967 (a model that was reissued in a limited edition of 1,000 pieces upon its thirty-fifth anniversary), McConaughey mainly sports the SUB 600T in the film. However, Marei confirms that he ended up wearing all of the orange SUBS in Doxa's line.

"The shooting for "Sahara" lasted more than one year," reports Marei, "so we needed to deliver watches to the set again and again. During the entire film, Matthew McConaughey wore all of Doxa's SUB models."

The SUB 600T is a one hundred percent replica of the original from 1969. A stately watch, its brushed stainless steel case measures 42.1mm in diameter and 13.1mm in height. The screwed-down case back is engraved with the words "Clive Cussler edition xxxx/3000" on the back, denoting which piece it is from the limited edition of 3,000 pieces, and the owner also received a certificate hand-signed by Cussler, who was presented with watch number one. The unidirectionally rotating stainless steel bezel is engraved with the U.S. Navy maximum non-decompression limit times in feet (imperial system), and the orange dial is outfitted with replicas of the original hands from 1969, including the dwarf hour hand filled with SuperLumiNova, as are the hour markers for better vis-

ibility. The 600T is water-resistant to 600 meters.

Larger model

Riding the sandstorms of "Sahara," Doxa has now issued a Dirk Pitt watch dubbed the SUB 750T because it is water-resistant to a full 750 meters, a timepiece Marei terms "the crowning glory of the Doxa SUB series."

This replica timepiece, slightly larger than its predecessors at 44.7 mm diameter and 14 mm in height, is limited to 5,000 pieces worldwide. The reliable ETA 2824 powers the watch (as in the SUB 600T).

"This watch is larger and more solid than the others. It has been re-worked technically, and optically it stands out with a new, larger orange dial," Marei reveals. Cussler is also impressed with the new model, commenting, "I wore my Doxa SUB 300T for thirty-five years, and only now am I ready to replace it."

The question really remains as to whether product placement in Hollywood films is effective. Does the consumer base his or her decision to buy a watch on whether a movie star might be wearing it? Marei is enthusiastic, confirming the cooperation: "Absolutely. The demand following the movie was so large that we had delivery problems for four entire months."

The answer could also be found on Doxa's own website, where the following testimonial by Doxa customer David Cusick can be found: "I recently traded my Omega Seamaster (Bond model) for a Doxa 300T re-issue, and the Doxa watch is everything I hoped for...." And when he wakes up in the morning, it's guaranteed that he checks the time on his "orange-face Doxa," just like his hero, Dirk Pitt. ☺