

From car design to timekeeping

Dutchman Laurens de Rijke embarked on an unexpected career change as the result of a lengthy road trip on a Vespa



The story goes that, during a stop in Tbilisi, Georgia, de Rijke visited a flea market where he found a vintage Vostok watch that he bought and wore for the remainder of the journey, after which he returned to Delft with a plan to build development of his own driver's timepiece into his graduation year.

With the help of Professor Bruno Ninabar van Eyben - a renowned designer who created the look

of the Dutch euro coin - de Rijke learned to use a lathe and milling machine, studied watch case design and created his first working prototype.

He subsequently set-up his own, small workshop in 2016 and has now launched the first commercial de Rijke wrist watch in the form of the Amalfi Series No.1S, which features a Swiss Soprod mechanical movement housed in an ingenious 38mm case with a slot and ratchet mechanism that enables the watch head to be turned up to 90 degrees in order to make it easier to read at a glance while holding a steering wheel.

With a simple gloss black, lacquered dial, de Rijke's own crown design, a shaped, anti-reflective sapphire crystal and a nifty quick-change strap system, the watch is both elegant and functional - in short, it could be described as the perfect gentleman driver's dress watch.

If you want one, however, you'll need to get your order in - de Rijke is making only 99 before moving on to his next design, which is likely to be a more robust-looking 'tool watch'. And we're looking forward to it already. €2495 (£2190)

derijkeandco.com

EMAILS FROM THE SLICK PR departments of the big luxury watch brands pour in on a daily basis with details of new models, relatively few of which are truly different.

So there's a certain irony in the fact that information about one of the most interesting driver's pieces we've seen in ages came via Dorset-based classic car adviser and bespoke bicycle builder Darron Copping (check out svencycles.com), who told me about a young Dutch watch maker who has spent five years conceiving, designing and creating the rather brilliant Amalfi pictured here.

Laurens de Rijke grew up tinkering with old scooters and mopeds before enrolling on a car design course at the University of Delft, during which he found part-time work with a Vespa restoration specialist.

Before graduating, de Rijke decided to satisfy his thirst for adventure by throwing a leg over his own 1962 Vespa Grand Sport and riding it from the Netherlands along a large section of the ancient Silk Road that passed through countries such as Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.