

TAG Heuer to partner with Google, Intel to create smartwatch (Update)

March 19 2015, by Nathalie Olof-Ors



The watch, which aims to combine Swiss watchmaking know-how with high-end technology, is expected to hit stores by the end of the year, Tag Heuer chief Jean-Claude Biver told the Baselworld watch fair

Luxury Swiss watchmaker TAG Heuer announced Thursday it was joining forces with technology behemoths Google and Intel to develop a smartwatch that can compete with the new Apple Watch.

The timepiece, which aims to combine Swiss watchmaking know-how

with high-end technology, is expected to hit stores by the end of the year, TAG Heuer chief Jean-Claude Biver told the Baselworld watch fair.

"Silicon Valley and Switzerland are going to conquer the market of the connected watch," he told a press conference at the world's largest trade show for timepieces, in the northern Swiss city of Basel.

Biver, an industry legend who also leads the watch division of TAG Heuer's owners LVMH, did not reveal how much the watch would cost or which functions it would feature.

"We don't want the competition to know what we are going to do," he said. "We want them to be surprised."

In a statement, the three companies said their partnership "signifies a new era of collaboration between Swiss watchmakers and Silicon Valley, bringing together each company's respective expertise in luxury watchmaking, software and hardware."

Guy Semon, TAG Heuer general manager, added that when renowned Swiss watchmaking "is allied with the creative technology and the global power of two companies like Intel and Google, using the Android Wear platform and based on Intel technology, we can see the launch of a technological revolution in our industry."

David Singleton, head of engineering for Android Wear, said Google was "thrilled" with the project, telling the news conference the three companies were ready to "a better, beautiful, smarter watch."



Tag Heuer Director General Guy Semon (L), CEO Jean-Claude Biver, Intel's new device general manager Michael Bell and Google's engineering director for Android David Singleton during the announcement on March 19, 2015 in Basel, Switzerland

And it's a partnership aimed at taking on industry giant Apple.

On March 9 Apple CEO Tim Cook unveiled its new gadget aiming for wrists.

"Apple Watch begins a new chapter in the way we relate to technology," said Cook at a media event in San Francisco.

It marked Apple's first new category gadget since the iPad.

While the Swiss-Silicon Valley version is still on the drawing boards, the Apple Watch will be available in nine countries from April 24, at a

starting price of \$349—although there is a limited edition gold watch for \$10,000.

Connecting wirelessly to a user's iPhone, the watch is designed as a wrist device for messaging, calls and a cornucopia of apps, especially those geared toward health or fitness.

'This one's called TAG Heuer'



Tag Heuer Director General Guy Semon (L), Google's engineering director for Android David Singleton, Intel's new device general manager Michael Bell and Tag Heuer CEO Jean-Claude Biver during the anoucement on March 19, 2015 in Basel, Switzerland

The smartwatch market already has a number of players, from South Korean giants Samsung and LG, to Japan's Sony and startups such as

Pebble.

The global market for smartwatches may rise to 28.1 million units this year, from 4.6 million in 2014, with Apple capturing more than half of it, reported Bloomberg citing researcher Strategy Analytics.

"But in so doing, Apple will bring very valuable attention to the market, essentially releasing a rising tide that will float all their boats," said Forrester analyst James McQuivey after the Apple Watch unveiling.

And the new smartwatch partnership hopes to launch the timepiece equivalent of a yacht.

"The collaboration with TAG Heuer and Google brings us closer to realising the vision of wearable technology with a distinctive smartwatch that elevates the category," said Intel's Michael Bell.

TAG Heuer watches start from around \$1,500 and prices for more exclusive models can reach over \$10,000.

"The difference between the TAG Heuer watch and the Apple watch is very important," said Biver. "That one is called Apple and this one is called TAG Heuer."

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