

IT IS A CLICHE THAT race-car drivers have little to say away from the racetrack. But you can talk to Stefan Johansson about a wide array of subjects beyond just horsepower and clipping apexes. More than that, you can enjoy and even use the products of his varied passions. That's because throughout his 30-plusyear racing career, the affable Swede has engaged in interests outside the cockpit.

"I still love racing, but I've always had an interest in art and design, anything that's creative, really," Johansson says.

Best known on this side of the Atlantic for his exploits in the CART series with
Bettenhausen Racing (1992-96),
Johansson spent eight seasons in Formula One before racing in the United States (1983-91), including stints with Ferrari and McLaren. During his time in F1, Johansson found an outlet for creativity away from the track. Inspiration came in part from the loss of a friend.

"The true story is that it happened when Elio de Angelis got killed," Johansson says.

Popular on the 1980s Grand Prix circuit, de Angelis was one of the sport's true characters, a skilled classical pianist and sketch artist as well as a double Grand Prix winner. He died after an accident in testing at Paul Ricard in 1986, driving a Brabham BT55.

"Elio and I were really good friends," Johansson says. "It was a pretty difficult time for me. I still don't know why, but for some reason, it led me to get some equipment, and I started to paint."

During the following years, Johansson painted whenever time permitted, developing his style. "It's hyperrealism with a bit of tongue-in-cheek" he says. "I like to render things in large scale, because I think it can bring ordinary objects into completely different context."

Although he has painted less

in recent years, Johansson has no shortage of ideas for new works. He simply needs to find time for them. In a sense, however, time has found him. Watches have fascinated Johansson for many years.

"I began collecting them while I was at Ferrari," he says. "Then later, not long before I left F1, I was approached by a company, a Swiss brand, to endorse one of their watches."

Intrigued, he suggested that they collaborate on design, but that never came to fruition. Still, he'd started thinking about what a racing-inspired watch should incorporate, and through friends, he began a casual investigation of the watch industry.

Years passed as he competed in CART, successfully returned to sports-car racing (winning Sebring and Le Mans in 1997) and launched a successful Indy Lights team.

In 1999, as future Indianapolis 500 winner and IndyCar champion Scott Dixon signed with Johansson Motorsports (Johansson still manages Dixon), Johansson began designing his own line of watches, the Växjö Mark VIII series he offers today. During the last decade, he has devoted serious effort to the endeavor, learning all he can about the science and business of watchmaking.

"It's been a long, slow process, but most of my creative outlet now comes through the design of watches and the ideas I have around them," Johansson says.

From dial design to case material choice, the Mark VIII chronographs (powered by ETA 7750/7751 movements) are the product of Johansson's mind. Balancing colorful detail with racing cues, each watch includes the driver's signature symbol, the Växjö crest (a tribute to the Swede's hometown). Le Mans 24 Hours-inspired countdown subdials, FIA rac-





Captions here. Captions here.

ing-flag hour markers and perforated dials (à la drilled body panels and brakes) add to the racing theme. You can check them out at www.stefanjohansson.com.

But there's "more to come." The active professional racer is in the process of creating what might be the most legit racing

watches ever. Future Växjö timepieces will include a mechanical movement designed by the driver himself. And, tying racing and watches still closer, Johansson will use many of the same suppliers that manufacture parts for racing cars (F1, Indy cars, sports cars) to build his cases and dials—not

the Swiss watch industry.

"An aspect of racing that I've always loved is race-car design," Johansson says. "The skill level of the craftsmen in racing is unparalleled. You could take any part from an Adrian Newey-designed car and put it on a mantelpiece. Just sign it, and you have modern