

# REVOLUTION

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## Vintage Curio: The Tool Watch You've Probably Never Heard Of

VINTAGE

By [Adrian Hailwood](#)

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There is no end to the tool watches we desire to answer life's myriad challenges, and last year, Richard Mille's collaboration with Sylvester Stallone to build the ultimate tool watch resulted in the Richard Mille RM 25-01. The intention was to create the watch that Rambo would have worn, sporting as it does, a tourbillon, chronograph, compass, spirit level and a capsule containing water purification tablets – everything a Hollywood action hero might need.



Richard Mille RM 25-01

I can only assume that Sly and Mille were thinking of the more ambitious Rambo III, as it is hard to square the idea of John Rambo, the drifting, homeless Vietnam vet of First Blood sporting a watch costing over £750,000.

When thoughts turn to what he might have worn in reality, a number of candidates spring to mind, maybe the tiny Timex Sprite with its black dial and military style 24hr numerals (actually my own first watch as a seven-year-old who was certainly no Rambo candidate), possibly he might have hung onto the service watch from his tours in 'Nam — a Hamilton, a Zodiac or even the iconic Apocalypse Now Seiko 6105.



Zodiac Sea Wolf





Seiko 6105

But I hope he would have worn something a little more exotic, a lot more Rambo. Complications are one thing, but if you are surviving in the wild, what you really need is a knife and there has only been one watch as far as I know which comes with build-in cutlery – the Sicura Safari.

The Sicura name dates from the early 1950s, but in the 1970s it was under the ownership and direction of Ernest Schneider, who would later go on to rescue Breitling. Despite the quartz crisis, Sicura was producing a million mostly mechanical watches per year in 1975 and thriving rather than just surviving. Schneider had a good eye for trends and delivering what the customer wanted, developing large colorful and often technical

watches but keeping prices low. Some Lemania and Valjoux movements made it into the higher-priced pieces but the majority were cheap and cheerful pin-pallets housed in chrome-plated brass cases.



Sicura Safari

The Sicura Safari is an archetypal Sicura, easily dismissed as a gimmick, but possibly quite useful to the owner in an emergency. It's a hefty

42mm case in chromed base-metal. The movement goes in through the front, making it quite watertight, although not a dive watch. Not ever having had the chance to dismantle one, I cannot be certain, but other similar Sicuras were powered by hand-wound EB8021 or 8808 movements. At least the Safari qualified for the ungraded "Kif" shock-protected variants. The dials are pure 1970s funk, with bright greens, blues and oranges, blocky indices and broad hands in contrasting colors. A bi-directional bezel gives the watch a purposeful look, ideal for the aspiring adventurer. Of course, the star of the show is the knife, and being Swiss it must be a Victorinox blade. While it is no machete, the 50mm lug-to-lug case houses the blade along almost its entire length, meaning this is not just for cleaning your nails with.

You could imagine myriad uses for such a blade, whittling kindling for a campfire to stay warm, trimming fishing lines, cutting paracord to set tripwires in case you are pursued by a crazed sheriff and his deputies, a little impromptu backwoods surgery as the need arises.

Of course, you can't put it down and lose it because... here it is strapped to your wrist. Away from the American backwoods, the Sicura Safari was marketed as an active sports watch in car and lifestyle magazines. A particularly rare variant appeared as a commemorative watch for the 50th anniversary of the MG sports car, although as the MG was produced by British Leyland at the time, a company that could do very little properly, the anniversary was celebrated two years late in 1975.





Commemorative Sicura Safari for MG

So why didn't the watch/knife combo catch on and why is the Safari such an obscure reference? The proximity to the wrist of a sharp slicing implement may have something to do with it. While the blade opens back-first like a regular pen-knife, it doesn't take much to imagine the tip getting caught, dragged half-open, followed by a potentially life-threatening puncture wound. The impracticality of having to remove the watch to use the knife in any meaningful way is another flaw, it really is only for emergency use as the design is far from ergonomic. In truth, the Schneider Sicura years were a veritable blizzard of eye-catching case and dial designs, and the marketing just moved onto promoting something else new but affordable. Anything to keep the buyers out of the clutches of quartz.

*\*\*With thanks to Matt Woolley @woolley7 for information and images.*

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