



Do You Really Want to Buy a Fake?

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The Baronage Press

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One of the most interesting aspects of the Internet's development has been its effect on those of its users who seek to become someone they are not, and for whom the fraudsters offer masculinity enhancements (*"She will prefer you above all the other men in her life."*), university degrees (*"Why has your true ability never been recognised when all you need is a piece of paper?"*), millionaires' lifestyles (*"Do you have two hours a day spare and a bank account?"*), and "titles of honour" (*"Be treated with the respect which is your due; be automatically upgraded on airlines; always be given the best table in a restaurant."*)

Regular readers of the Baronage web pages over the last twelve years will know of the special attention we have paid to the bogus titles scams, not because we find them particularly worth editorial time, but because from our earliest months online these have been among the most commonly discussed questions in the e-mails we receive. Many of the letters were saddening to read and to these we responded privately, but the information passed to us by other correspondents was collated and published regularly until Lord Bradford founded his [Fake Titles](#) website and relieved us of this routine, allowing us to restrict ourselves to publishing only the occasional PDF files, such as [Are You Being Conned?](#)

Those trapped into buying fake titles are sometimes not only of innocent intent: they are sometimes innocent of the realities of life on the Internet. Half asleep, they browse late at night and thoughtlessly enter the sixteen digits of their card into the inviting window. (*Tomorrow he will be a lord! — by Friday the documents will have arrived and on Monday envious colleagues will for the first time be treating him as he deserved, and then that sweet newcomer in the typing pool Wow!)*

It's not only the bogus titles merchants who are out at night conning the unwary. Fancy a [Chopard](#) watch? No, of course you can't afford one, but here is a replica indistinguishable from those made by "the profit-hungry capitalists" in Switzerland. For you it is only \$399 and the people you do your business with will be impressed by the classy image you give when they glimpse it on your wrist as you slip the cuff back to look at the time.



But will they? Yes, perhaps, but what might you really stand to *gain* with the masquerade? Very little, if anything at all. You might feel good for a while, inside yourself, but you know you're now a fake, as bogus as your new watch. Right, but what do you stand to *lose* if your “replica” is recognised for what it is — a fake ornament pretending to be a genuine masterpiece? Is this the impression you want your business friends to have of you? Will they do a deal with a fake? No, they won't, and the reason this article is being published on the Baronage website is to explain why.

The last two paragraphs have not been written in a serious manner because we know that our readers are not the type to buy fakes knowingly, but now it is time to drop the jollity. Really serious businessmen abhor the counterfeit industry for two principal reasons, the first being the damage it does to honest industry, and the second being the support it gives to international criminals who need to find a use for the profits earned from drugs, prostitution, and people smuggling. Last year their activities cost genuine manufacturers around US\$660 million — which gives a fair indication of the further profit made from the invested criminal profits. It is big business, and it is based on child labour.

Fake titles do not earn this sort of money for the conmen who sell them on the Internet, although their

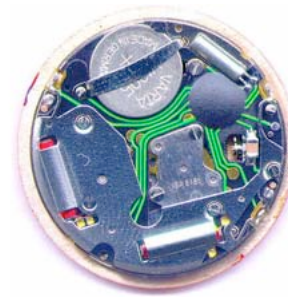
victims can be badly hurt. We know of attempted suicides, of nervous breakdowns, house repossessions and bankruptcies all triggered by realisation that what had been believed to be an investment in a platform for personal advancement, often in “the last chance saloon” of the desperate, was a cruel deception. In all, however, it is doubtful whether the annual take averages more than a couple of million dollars, but the existence of the trade justifies research into its success because the weakness of the victims is often the same as that of the customers for “replica” [Gucci](#) handbags, [Mont Blanc](#) pens, [Piaget](#) watches and [Tiffany](#) jewellery. Often the buyers will be the same people, especially when purchases are made in the knowledge that the goods are fake.

We have to classify the scenarios. With respect to the buyers we recognise two, those who are buying a fake in the knowledge that it surely is a fake, and those who buy the fake innocently. With respect to the fake items themselves there are three, the “cheap and nasty”, the “replicas” and the high-quality forgeries. In respect of the bogus titles there is the rubbish sold for a couple of hundred dollars, there are the persuasive concoctions offered for any combination of five digits, and then at the top end of the market are the “unique opportunities” that are so expensive they must be genuine, although, of course they are not. This same classification is valid also for Swiss watches.

At the bottom end of the counterfeit watch market the [Rolex](#) and [Omega](#) imitations can be bought for one hundred dollars or less. These trashy products may not be a great financial danger directly to genuine manufacturers, but they impact the market in two important ways — first, their presence damages the image of the genuine originals; second, the processes employed to produce the illusion of quality uses chemicals that will damage human flesh. The buyers, of course, are aware they are fakes and thus cannot complain if they are confiscated at a customs check, or if they fall apart, or if they cause unsightly blisters on the wrist.

The “**replicas**” are better made and are offered for sale as replicas — indeed, in recent Internet advertisements they have been promoted as “genuine replicas” ! These perhaps present the greatest challenge to those whose task is to police the market, for the sales pitch is based on the buyer’s willingness to accept that the sale is legal – *it’s a replica, right?* – and that unless the back is removed no one will ever suspect it is not a genuine [Dunhill](#), [Cartier](#) or [Patek Philippe](#). This is a credible, persuasive presentation, for often the buyer, although knowing he is buying a fake, willingly fools himself to the extent that he truly believes the imitation is visually exact, and he is too inexperienced to recognise that the weight is wrong. The killer punch, of course, is the price: 400 dollars for a ***genuine*** replica – fantastic!

When the back is off



Fake Girard-Perregaux



Genuine Girard-Perregaux

The **forgeries** are capable of deceiving all except the specialists. Their movements are not assembled by children, retired from prostitution and now slaving sixteen hours a day in Asian sweatshops, but by craftsmen in Turkey or Eastern Europe. Their cases are made of gold, not chemically treated base metal. Documentation and packaging are prepared with the same care lavished on counterfeit currency. In consequence the investment in each item is comparatively substantial, and the return expected is commensurate — which means that a buyer will be asked to pay around 85 per cent of the price of the genuine item, the discount being explained as an end-of-line clearance or termination-of-business price.

To avoid the embarrassment of being caught with a fake, one should never buy a “cheap and nasty” imitation, never buy a “replica”, and never buy any genuine watch new unless the seller is an authorised agent.

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