

WATCHES OF THE YEAR

A look beyond the trophy timepieces to the real-world watches that strike a chord with innovation and panache

BY LAURIE KAHLE

Once again this year, watchmakers rolled out an array of six- and seven-figure timepieces for the world's elite collectors. Such timepieces as A. Lange & Söhne's \$2 million-plus Grande Complication, Richard Mille's \$1.6 million RM 56-01 Tourbillon Sapphire, Patek Philippe's Sky Moon Tourbillon Ref. 6002 (1.2 million in Swiss francs) and Audemars Piguet's \$750,000 Royal Oak Offshore Grande Complication will be produced in mere single-digit quantities. Only dozens of men will get to wear Harry Winston's Histoire de Tourbillon 4,



**OMEGA SPEEDMASTER
DARK SIDE OF THE MOON**

Hublot's Masterpiece MP-05 LaFerrari and Ulysse Nardin's musical Stranger, among other super watches. Much like Formula One cars, these cutting-edge horological machines push the limits of technology, micro-engineering, modern materials and human inventiveness, continually advancing the art of watchmaking. But with their nosebleed prices and limited availability, the reality is that they will be seen on more magazine and web pages than actual wrists. Our watch picks for 2013 present a wide variety of real-world watches that hit pulse points of style and design, function and technical innovation, and value, with none exceeding \$40,000 (and three are under \$5,000). With so many show-off watches getting all the attention, these timely timekeepers quietly impress while remaining practical to own and wear on a daily basis.

Oris Aquis Depth Gauge

Oris's Aquis Depth Gauge (\$3,500) applies Boyle's Law to develop an innovative system for depth measurement, an essential function for hard-core divers. The patented design features an extra-thick sapphire crystal that has a channel milled into the side running counterclockwise and ending between 1 and 2 o'clock. An inlet in the crystal at 12 o'clock allows water to flow into the channel as you descend, compressing the trapped air in the channel as pressure increases. The line where water and air meet allows you to read your depth down to 100 meters on the yellow scale around the perimeter of the dial. A rubber gasket seals the crystal from the case, which is water resistant down to 500 feet. The 46-mm, stainless-steel Aquis Depth Gauge also includes the requisite unidirectional bezel in black ceramic and comes with a rubber strap and a steel bracelet plus tools that include one to clean out the channel after your dives.

oriswatchesusa.com

Nomos Ahoi Datum

Known for its pure design aesthetic and no-nonsense German craftsmanship, Nomos Glashütte has married those qualities with sport features in the new Ahoi (\$4,500 with date; \$3,940 without). The clean

dial layout is reminiscent of the brand's Tangomat, but Berlin designer Thomas Höhnel updated that classic with a more robust, waterproof case and an extra-thick sapphire crystal that can handle depths down to 20 bars, or 200 meters. Luminous indices and hands enhance nighttime legibility. Ahoi's automatic movements deliver the accuracy and reliable performance that is characteristic of watches made in the historic watchmaking town of Glashütte. Ahoi comes with a waterproof webbed fabric strap and an alternate Horween Shell Cordovan strap, plus a tool for quick changes that take it from the beach to the boardroom without missing a beat.

nomos-glashuette.com

Tudor Heritage Chrono Blue

Nearly a decade after its parent company Rolex pulled Tudor from the U.S. market, the bridge brand has returned with vintage-inspired designs, including the Heritage Chrono Blue (\$4,425). The redesign of the 1973 original features a lighter shade of gray on the dial and three-dimensional hour indexes with beveled edges filled with SuperLuminova for better readability. Echoing 1970s-era Tudor chronographs, blue trapezoidal shapes highlight the small seconds counter at 3 o'clock and the brand's signature 45-minute counter at 9 o'clock. Powered by an automatic movement with a 42-hour reserve, this 42-mm, stainless-steel sport watch with a bidirectional bezel is waterproof down to 500 feet. Heritage Chrono Blue taps into the popular retro trend and comes with a stainless-steel bracelet and a striped fabric strap.

tudorwatch.com

Tag Heuer Carrera Calibre 1887 Chronograph Jack Heuer Edition

Tag Heuer marks the 50th anniversary of its flagship Carrera line with a number of new chronographs including the Carrera Calibre 1887 Jack Heuer Edition (\$7,800), which takes its design cues from 2012's Carrera Mikrogirder 10000, winner of the grand prize at last year's Geneva Watchmaking Grand Prix. In designing the 1963 original,



TAG HEUER CARRERA CALIBRE 1887 CHRONOGRAPH JACK HEUER EDITION



HERMÈS DRESSAGE CHRONOGRAPH



BREITLING EMERGENCY II

named for the dangerous Carrera Panamericana Mexico Road Race, Jack Heuer—CEO during the 1960s and 1970s and grandson of the founder—set out to answer the needs of professional racecar drivers with a rugged, shock- and water-resistant sport watch with a streamlined, modern design and an open, easy-to-read dial. Today's Carrera chronograph range is powered by the in-house-manufactured Calibre 1887, an integrated column-wheel chronograph movement that features a reengineered oscillating pinion, an invention that Edouard Heuer patented in 1887. The pinion functions like a clutch, while the column wheel acts as a gearbox for starting, stopping and resetting the chronograph. The 45-mm Jack Heuer Edition is distinguished by its alluring asymmetrical bullhead case that gets thicker at the top where the crown and chronograph pushers are positioned, while the hand-brushed and polished black titanium carbide steel bezel gives the watch a high-tech feel. The Calibre 1887 movement is visible through a smoked sapphire crystal case back that also bears Jack Heuer's signature and coat of arms.

tagheuer.com

Hermès Dressage Chronograph

Hermès' handsome Dressage Chronograph (\$11,600) is powered by the French luxury brand's first proprietary chronograph movement, designed and produced in partnership with Vaucher Manufacture Fleurier. Hermès holds a 25 percent stake in Vaucher, which is owned by the Sandoz Family Foundation, also the parent company of Parmigiani. In addition to Parmigiani, Vaucher has produced movements for Corum and Richard Mille. The hand-finished Manufacture H1925 movement is named for the first chronograph to bear the Hermès name in 1925. The opaline silvered or black dials combine subtle vertical striping with applied Arabic hour markers that alternate with baton indexes, while the Dressage Chronograph's tonneau-shaped case features distinctive lugs that evoke stirrup bars in a nod to the brand's equestrian roots. And as you might expect, special attention is given to the alligator straps, which are padded and saddle-stitched in La Montre Hermès workshops in Bienne, Switzerland.

hermes.com

Omega Speedmaster Dark Side of the Moon

Omega's Speedmaster "Moonwatch," which famously traveled to the moon on all six lunar missions, got a space-age facelift this year. Designers imbued the timeless classic with a modern edge in all-black ceramic, a risky move that pays off with a slick new aesthetic. The Speedmaster Dark Side of the Moon (\$12,000) goes ceramic all the way with a zirconium oxide ceramic dial and a brushed and polished ceramic 44.25-mm case—even the chronograph pushers, which function independently, are made of ceramic. Two blackened subdials measure passing time, with the subdial at 3 o'clock functioning as both the 12-hour and 60-minute counter with two hands. The subdial at 9 o'clock serves as a small seconds display, and a date window is located at 6 o'clock. One of the Speedmaster's most identifiable features—its tachymeter scale—stands out in matte chromium nitride on the polished black ceramic bezel. Polished white gold indexes also pop against the black dial for legibility. Like its brethren, the Speedmaster Dark Side of the Moon is powered by Omega's Co-Axial calibre 9300, which is equipped with a Si14 silicon balance spring, and Omega backs it up with a full four-year warranty.

omegawatches.com

Breitling Emergency II

Breitling's Emergency II (\$15,740) is a superhero watch with a dual-frequency transmitter that might just save your life if you find yourself in distress. This second-generation Emergency watch (the first launched in 1995) meets the specifications of the Cospas-Sarsat international satellite alert system that can issue distress alerts and guide rescuers to your location. Breitling worked with scientific groups to develop micro-electronic and microtechnical innovations that include a rechargeable battery, a miniaturized dual frequency transmitter, and an integrated antenna system. The new Emergency operates on both the 406 MHz digital frequency and the standard 121.5 MHz analog frequency for enhanced homing capability. Emergency II is also an electronic 1/100th second chronograph with analog and digital time displays, alarm, timer, second time zone, multilingual calendar and an indicator that alerts you when



ORIS AQUIS DEPTH GAUGE



NOMOS AHOI DATUM



TUDOR HERITAGE CHRONO BLUE

battery life is waning. The watch's power source operates independently from the transmitter. But don't activate the beacon unless it's a real emergency, or you could face a hefty fine for triggering a false alarm.

breitling.com

Jaeger-LeCoultre Master Ultra Thin Jubilee

Jaeger-LeCoultre marked its 180th anniversary this year with a trilogy of limited-edition Jubilee timepieces that pay tribute to the brand's founder Antoine LeCoultre. The Jubilee lineup includes the astounding Master Grande Tradition Gyrotourbillon 3 Jubilee (about \$560,000), the impressive Master Grande Tradition Tourbillon Cylindrique à Quantième Perpétuel (\$178,615), and the more approachable Master Ultra Thin Jubilee (\$17,800), the world's thinnest mechanical manual winding watch measuring a mere 4.05 mm in height. Limited to 880 pieces, this über-elegant extra-white platinum watch drew its purist design inspiration from a 1907 ultrathin pocket watch that was powered by a movement that was the thinnest of its kind at the time. The wafer-like 39-mm, knife-edged case houses the manual winding movement 849. Measuring a mere 1.85 mm thick, it's a testament to Jaeger-LeCoultre's mastery of the art of ultrathin watchmaking. Beneath the logo on the crisp white dial is the date 1833, designating the year of the company's founding in the LeCoultre family farmhouse in Le Sentier, Switzerland, which remains the brand's home.

jaeger-lecoultre.com

Girard-Perregaux 1966 Column-Wheel Chronograph

Girard-Perregaux adds another chapter to its chronograph legacy with the 1966 Column-wheel Chronograph (\$37,400), featuring a new manual-winding chronograph movement that was in development for five years. The GP0 3800-001 movement is composed of 312 components with impeccable hand-finishing, such as bridges that are beveled and decorated with Côtes de Genève striping and circular-grained wheels. The chronograph's seconds display at 9 o'clock features a central direct

drive second hand for smoother action, while the minutes counter at 3 o'clock has an unusual jumping hand that instantaneously moves to the next minute for an easy read of the elapsed time. The new movement is housed in an 18-karat pink gold 40-mm 1966 case with your choice of elegant opaline silvered or anthracite dials with relief hour markers, a railroad minute circle, tachymeter scale and date at 6 o'clock.

girard-perregaux.com

Breguet Classique Chronométrie 7727

With its Classique Chronométrie Reference 7727 (\$40,000), Breguet carries on the tradition of technical innovation that made its founder, 18th-century watchmaking genius Abraham-Louis Breguet, famous. The watch's hand-wound Caliber 574DR movement applies the brand's recent technical developments to achieve heightened timekeeping results with a high-frequency 10 Hz balance and the use of special silicon for its double balance-spring, pallet lever and escape wheel. While magnets are known to wreak havoc on a watch's performance, the engineers at Breguet devised a patented magnetic pivot using powerful micro-magnets that resist outside magnetic forces while harnessing magnetism to improve the pivoting, rotation and stability of the balance, making it more resistant to the affects of gravity and shocks. The ingenious system has achieved impressive results: an average rate of -1/+3 seconds a day that handily beats the COSC chronometer standard of -4/+6 seconds a day, and the rate differential in COSC's six positions has been reduced to -2/+4 seconds a day on a maximum wind. With six patents, this revolutionary new movement is housed in a beautiful classical watch with an intricate guilloché-engraved dial featuring an off-center hours and minutes display, a small seconds at 12 o'clock, a power-reserve indicator at 5 o'clock and a tenth-of-a-second indicator with a silicon hand at 1 o'clock. An aperture at 2 o'clock reveals the pare-chute shock absorber, recalling A-L Breguet's 1790 invention.

breguet.com ❖

Laurie Kahle writes regularly about timepieces for CIGAR AFICIONADO.



JAEGER-LECOULTRE MASTER
ULTRA THIN JUBILEE



GIRARD-PERREGAUX 1966
COLUMN-WHEEL CHRONOGRAPH



BREGUET CLASSIQUE CHRONOMÉTRIE 7727