

They're Swiss, to be precise...



TO SAY watchmaking is a real labour of love for Switzerland's International Watch Co. (or IWC as it is better known) is an understatement.

IWC dates back to 1868 when American Florentine Ariosto Jones teamed up in Schaffhausen, Switzerland, with industrialist Johann Heinrich Moser, who was making pocket watches for Russia's royalty. Their teamwork led to superbly engineered, innovative watches, many featuring intricate "complications". IWC's reputation soared when it produced highly accurate, specialised pilot's watches during World War II. (Luckily they didn't make bomb sights; the Allies accidentally bombed Schaffhausen in 1944 but the IWC factory escaped destruction).

While computer-aided design has become an integral part of IWC's "modelling" for new pieces in the 21st Century, highly skilled craftsmen continue a 140-year tradition of putting the IWC pieces together by hand. Depending on the complexity of the watch, development can take up to six years and then each individual piece will take hundreds of man-hours to produce (the case alone has 60 tiny parts). No piece leaves the factory without undergoing – and having to pass with flying colours – a punishing testing regime.

It's no surprise, like parents wanting to keep track of their beloved children, that IWC has kept a detailed record of every watch it has produced since 1885. This registry, of course, also serves as

INNER BEAUTY:
(Right), the incredible mechanics of an IWC watch and (left from top) their Portuguese Perpetual Calendar (\$47,000) and Mark XVI (\$7400) pieces.

a repository of information for prospective buyers or heirs to watches that have been handed down through the generations.

Two of the most sought-after IWC models are the Portuguese range and Pilot's watches. Models range from \$9800 to the incredibly complex Portuguese Perpetual Calendar (\$47,000), which displays phases of the moon. Considering all the bells and whistles are mechanically driven, this is a mind-boggling feat of miniaturisation. The Pilot's watches range from the Mark XVI (\$7400) to \$37,000 for the Big Pilot in white gold.

IWC makes many variants in extremely limited numbers (sometimes 50 or less) and will soon relaunch its range of Aquatimer divers' watches in Australia. In a nutshell: IWC's range isn't for the budget-conscious.

But in terms of craftsmanship, investment value and collectability, the miniature machines from Schaffhausen are up there with watchmaking's elite. *Stockist: Watches of Switzerland, 39 – 41 King St, Perth, (08) 9322 8800, watchswiss.com.*

One out of the box

FREDERIQUE CONSTANT is something of a rarity among top-end Swiss watchmakers; it wants its mechanical marvels to be accessible to everyone, not just those with pockets as deep as Lake Geneva.

"Our mission is not to restrict the interest in Frederique Constant watches to a limited and elitist circle of connoisseurs but rather to a broader selection of appreciative enthusiasts who want to enjoy high quality classical watches at sensible prices," says the company on its website. *Touche.*

Like many of its rivals, Frederique Constant has a marketing

tie-in with sports cars, in this case the classic English marque Austin Healey. The elegant new Healey Chrono Automatic (RRP \$4210) celebrates the classic brand (and a gathering of Austin Healey enthusiasts and their cars held in Canada in June).

The 43mm hand-polished case highlights my "must" in a watch, whatever the price tag; at a glance you should be able to instantly tell the time. The Chrono Automatic delivers with a superb, large, easy to read, Arabic numbered face. Just 1888 pieces are available worldwide and the watch comes in a special presentation box with your own miniature Austin Healey. *Stockist: Mazzucchelli's Jewellers, Carillon City Arcade, 207 Murray St, Perth (08) 9485 2127.*



• FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A FABULOUS LIMITED EDITION EDOX SWISS WATCH VALUED AT \$2800, SEE PAGE 91 •

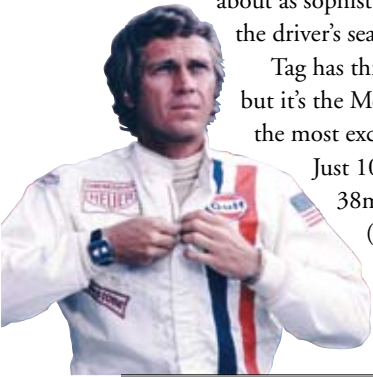
The need for speed

ASSOCIATING WATCH BRANDS with movie stars and fast cars is nothing new but with the release of its eye-catching Monaco Automatic Chronograph "re-edition", Tag Heuer scores a double whammy.

First worn by the late, great, ultra-cool actor Steve McQueen (memo Gen Y readers: look him up on Google) in the 1970s, the Monaco is a nod to an age when motor racing was a far more brutish battle between man and machine. Indeed, unlike the computer-laden controls of modern racing cars, the mechanical watch worn by many drivers – McQueen wore the original Monaco in his classic 1971 movie *Le Mans* – was probably about as sophisticated as the wizardry in the driver's seat got.

Tag has three flavours of Monaco but it's the McQueen tribute that's the most exclusive and collectable.

Just 1000 pieces of the bold, 38mm square-face watch (engraved "In tribute to Steve McQueen" on the case) will be released worldwide to mark



the 40th anniversary of the *Le Mans* movie. One can be yours for \$11,000 – considerably less than McQueen's original Monaco, which fetched \$113,000 at auction in New York in June. *Stockists: Smales, 143 Rokeby Rd, Subiaco, (08) 9382 3222, smaless.com; Watches of Switzerland, 39-41 King St, Perth, (08) 9322 8800.*



IT'S A WATCH, JIM, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT...

VENTURE INTO the pointy end of expensive and you discover some watches defy conventional notions of design, form and function. The Urwerk range is a striking example of this twilight zone where art, engineering and imagination blur into one seamless, dazzling creative firestorm – for those with very deep pockets (\$100,000 and up). For a mind boggling animation (think *Blade Runner* meets *Transformers*) on Urwerk's creations, check out urwerk.com.



also out...

- **CITIZEN'S** new Super Chronograph (\$1300, right) is a traveller's, and car buff's, dream. It can record up to 20 lap times, has a seven-year power reserve and can show time in 43 world cities. No batteries needed; the Super Chronograph's Eco-Drive converts light into energy. *Stockists: Angus & Coote Carousel (08 9458 8700); Murray St (08 9321 7742).*
- **OMEGA'S APOLLO** 40th anniversary Speedmaster (\$7050) is a must for space/watch buffs. The mechanical chronograph is limited to 7969 numbered pieces. *Stockist: Smales (08 9382 3222).*
- **FROM** Girard-Perregaux; the WW.TC Financial Limited Edition chronograph displays the world's 24 time zones and business hours of the New York, London, Hong Kong and Tokyo stock markets. RRP \$22,420 (leather strap) and \$24,770 (steel bracelet). Limited to 150 worldwide. *For stockists, call (02) 9363 1088.*
- **FROM JEANRICHARD:** The "Diverscope" diver's watch. Water-resistant to 300m, it features JeanRichard's in-house automatic movement. RRP \$12,140. *Enquiries, (02) 9363 1088.*

Out of the box

