

TEN CLASSICS OF TIMEPIECE DESIGN

EF.What's a "classic" watch?

It's one in which form and content combine to create a timelessly appealing whole. A design that proves its value and popularity over the years. The watchmaking sector has produced countless models that would meet these criteria. We have selected ten undisputed classics of chronometer design to present to you here.

The Audemars Piguet Royal Oak (1972)

Rarely does a new watch give rise to a whole new genre. But



that was the case with the Royal Oak of 1972 – the first stainless-steel wristwatch in the luxury chronometer category. The characteristic case, with its octagonal bezel and trademark hexagonal screws, was the product of top Swiss designer Gérald Genta. Genta created an unmistakable model that looks as fresh and modern today as it did 30 years ago. Today's Royal Oak is available in various versions, from automatics to chronographs.

The Blancpain Moon Phase (1983)



The Moon Phase is the embodiment of the renaissance experienced by the traditional watchmaking industry in the 1980s. When marketing specialist Jean-Claude Biver and top watchmaker Jacques Piguet took over

the Blancpain brand in 1983, few of their contemporaries held out much hope for the future of the mechanical-movement wristwatch. The only models that were still fashionable were the moon-phase watches from the 1940s and 1950s. It was a trend the two enthusiasts latched on to immediately. And, in doing so, they helped engineer a sensational revival for both the Blancpain brand and the classical watchmaker's craft.

The Cartier Santos (1904)

The Santos was the first wristwatch that Cartier ever produced. And it remains today one of the most important "classics" in the entire watchmaking tradi-



tion. The inimitable Louis Cartier designed the piece for Brazilian aviation pioneer Alberto Santos-Dumont. And when this

intrepid aviator completed his historic 220-metre flight on November 12, 1906, he was wearing one of the square watches with their rounded corners and typical screw decorations on his wrist. The model experienced a second wave of popularity following its relaunch in 1978, and is still much in demand today.

The IWC Mark XV (1999)

The Mark XV is the archetype of a whole genre of timepieces, the pilot's watch. Typical fea-



tures of these chronometers from the 1930s and 1940s are the easy-to-read black face and its bright Arabic numerals. IWC created the first Mark, the Mark XI, in 1948. The model had become a coveted collectors' item by the time production was ceased in 1984. It was followed by the Mark XII in 1994. IWC currently features the Mark XV in its range – a worthy addition to the pilot's watch tradition.

The Jaeger-LeCoultre Reverso (1931)



The watch with the unique reversible case was invented by Jaeger-LeCoultre's technicians as early as 1931. At the time, only thin crystal glass was available to protect the watch face. But the sporty aristocracy of the time wanted a more robust timepiece: the glass could easily be broken during a game of polo or tennis. Thus, the famous reversible-case watch was born. Jaeger-LeCoultre has carried the distinctive art deco Reverso in its collection ever since; and the model is now available in several variations, sizes and price ranges.

The Mondaine Swiss Railway Watch (1986)

The famous Swiss station clock, designed in the 1940s by engineer Hans Hilfiker, has been available as a wristwatch since 1986 – and in several versions, too. The most faithful and fascinating is the "Stop to Go," which, like the clock original

that can be seen at any Swiss rail station, features a red second hand that turns full-circle in around 58 seconds and then waits at 12 o'clock for the black



minute hand to move on before starting its next rotation.

The Movado Museum Watch (1965)



It was back in 1947 that US artist Nathan George Horwitt designed a radically minimalist watchface that consisted solely of two hands and a dot where the 12 would otherwise be. The New York Museum of Modern Art found Horwitt's design so ingenious that it incorporated it in its permanent collection. Swiss watch manufacturer Movado acquired the rights to the design from Horwitt in 1961, and gave the resulting creation the appropriate name of "Museum Watch". The watch has since become an acknowledged classic of watchmaking design.

The Omega Speedmaster Professional (1957)

It's not just the fact that it's the only watch to have ever been worn on the Moon that makes the Omega Speedmaster Professional such an outstanding success. The product itself exudes quality: even in the watchmaking sector's darkest business times, Omega never took this popular piece out of its range; it just continued making them in smaller quantities. Today, this black-faced quality chronograph is one of the classic watches of all time.

The Patek Philippe Calatrava (1932)



The Rolls-Royce of watchmakers offers an embarrassment of riches when it comes to selecting a single model from the range. But the Calatrava, with its trademark hobnail-patterned case, is a worthy representative of this top manufacturer, especially since it bears the name of the cross that features in the Patek Philippe logo. And, as a watch, the Calatrava is every bit as understatedly distinguished as this Geneva-based watchmaker: an elegant men's wristwatch that is

admired and worn by women, too.

The Rolex Daytona (1970)

The Rolex Daytona is probably the most desirable wristwatch in the world. While the model, which was created at the peak of the quartz boom, proved less than an immediate hit, it was updated during the chronograph trend of the late 1980s and went



on to celebrate a comeback that few had foreseen. The stainless-steel version in particular fetched spectacular black-market prices, and a watchmaking classic was born. The company added further to its range in 2000 with the Cosmograph Daytona, incorporating a new movement developed in-house – a step that will probably produce an even longer waiting list for this already-legendary timepiece.

