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REVOLUTION

THE TECHNICAL GUIDE TO LUXURY WATCHES

JAEGER-LECOULTRE'S
EXTREME WORLD CHRONOGRAPH

IWC'S INGENIEUR AUTOMATIC

VACHERON CONSTANTIN'S
16-COMPLICATION TOUR DE L'ÎLE

A. LANGE AND SOHNE'S
DOUBLE SPLIT:
REBIRTH OF THE RATTRAPANTE

ROGER DUBUIS
THE NEW FACE OF LUXURY

A SALUTE TO INDEPENDENT
WATCHMAKING
BY THE HOUR GLASS



REVOLUTI★N'S COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE CHRONOGRAPH

238
TECH TALK



VOLKER
VYSKOČIL THE PIONEER



The culmination of Vyskocil's dreams, the VK 30.

WITH LEAN, RAW-BONED good looks that remind one of a fighter pilot or a cowboy, Volker Vyskocil is a man who is finally living his lifelong dream.

Vyskocil has always wanted to make watches. When he told his friends this at the age of 16, back when the industry was mired in the Quartz crisis, everyone told him that he was "crazy". "It is a dead craft", they said. So Volker took a pragmatic route. He learned "tool-making" and became a mechanical engineer.

For many years, he plied his trade constructing machines that bent steel pipes and tubes for industrial applications. But Vyskocil was desperate for an escape. He found it burying himself in books on watches and repairing antique pocket watches. He also started a watch appreciation and discussion forum called www.clockwatch.de to communicate to other watch nuts. Every night, he would fall asleep reading massive tomes on Breguet or George Daniels' masterpieces. Each day, his consuming passion for horology vied with pragmatism.

Eventually, passion won out. In 2002, Vyskocil quit his job to focus on watchmaking. Along the way, he sold his car and television to keep his one-man manufacture solvent. We are happy to report that since last year, things have turned decidedly for the better for this dynamic new watchmaker. The reason is the cult success of his watch the VK-30/45-01-A (or just VK 30), which he presented at the 2004 Basel Watch Fair. A considerable amount of publicity also resulted from his presentation of the watch to a large community of watch fans at The Hour Glass' Tempus event last year.

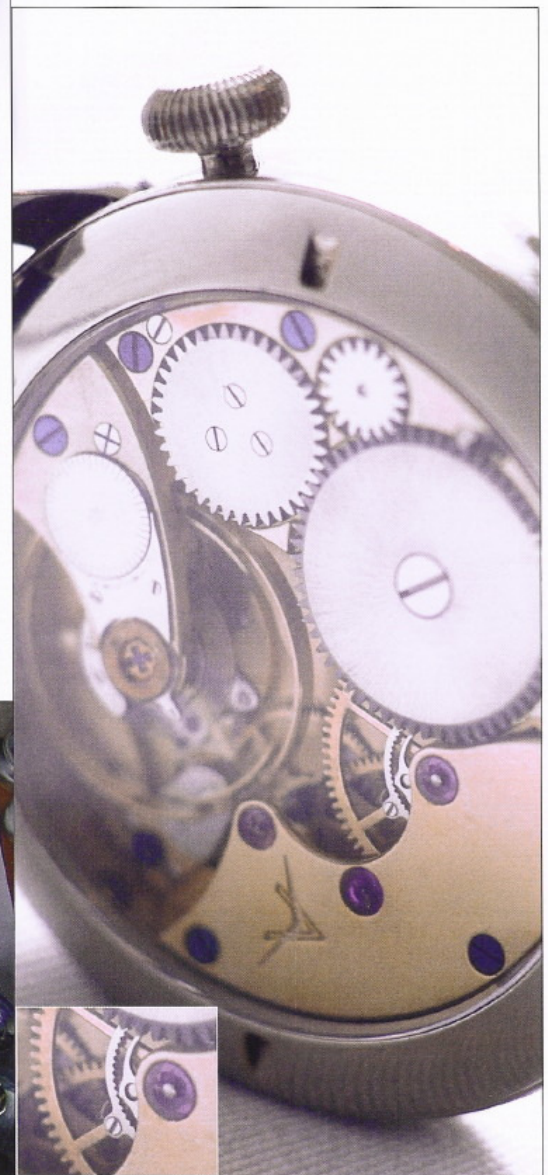
The VK-30/45-01-A

What's so unique about Vyskocil's watch? As far as we know, the VK 30 is the only timepiece with a coupling device that ensures the minute hand is in an accurate position relative to the watch's hacking seconds hand. In most watches, even if your seconds hack (stop) when you pull out the crown, you still have to place your minute hand at an approximate position relative to it. For example, if your seconds hand reads 30 seconds, then ideally you need to place your minute hand in between say, the two and three-minute indices. But as we all know, this is a fairly imprecise science.

With Vyskocil's watch, there are three time-setting positions in the crown. Pull the crown out to position one to set the minutes, pull it out to position two to set the hour, and pull it to position three to set the seconds. As you set the seconds, notice how the minute hand automatically moves to the correct position, ie. 1/4 of the way between indices to show 15 seconds.



The VK30 has one of the biggest balance wheels we've ever seen in a wristwatch.



This innovative ratchet wheel allows the minute hand to always be in the correct position relative to the seconds hand.



The varying components of Vyskocil's timepiece are all made by him!

How does Vyskocil's watch accomplish this fantastically pragmatic function? It is all thanks to a tiny ratchet wheel that has exactly 60 positions cut into it. As you move the seconds hand forward, the minute hand moves forward correspondingly, because of this ratchet wheel.

Vyskocil explains, "Conventional watches have a coupling system based on friction. But this never made sense to me. There is no precision in this, so I created something more precise."

Says Dominic Khoo, a watch fan, "It's such a brilliantly logical solution to the hand position error that it's a miracle no one has thought of it before." Apparently, others in the industry share his enthusiasm. When he presented his watch at the Basel fair, Vyskocil was visited by none other than the legendary Reinhard Meis, former technical director of A. Lange and Sohne and author of numerous books on watchmaking, who was similarly impressed.

Vyskocil painstakingly creates every part of his watch in his small workshop in Mettetal, Germany. It is interesting that although his watch is German in origin, it possesses a style that is entirely original. He tells us, "At first, I made a very German looking watch with 3/4 plate, but then I realize I had recreated a vintage A. Lange and Sohne!" So he went back to the drawing board.

One distinctive component of Vyskocil's watch is its massive screw balance (the regulating organ of the wristwatch). He chuckles and reveals, "My movement is 30mm in diameter and my balance takes up half of this measurement. I know that

this balance is not very modern. Nowadays, people like to use small balances at high frequency for better ratings. But I like large balances." Indeed, the balance is a tribute to the designs of his heroes, Abraham Louis Breguet and George Daniels.

But because it is so massive, Vyskocil had to decentralise his centre wheel (the wheel that drives the watch hands) to make space for it. The giant balance beats at 19,600 vibrations per minute. It is powered by a mainspring with a 40-hour power reserve.

Says Vyskocil, "After 40 hours, the watch's switching ring operates a lever to stop the seconds hand." This mechanism prevents the watch from running on less than optimum energy.

Watch collector Dr. Bernard Cheong, who greatly anticipates the 2005 delivery of his VK 30 watch, has this to say about Vyskocil, "Buying a watch like this is like buying one of the Wright Brothers' first airplanes. It is something that will become a milestone because of its technical innovation." ★