



The future is now

To most people, the three-hand display is still the best way of telling the time. However, a few avant-garde watchmakers have come up with some new solutions, which are interpreted through their cutting-edge designs.

Words by Steve Huyton

GENERALLY SPEAKING, mechanical watch movement technology hasn't changed much in the past hundred years or so. In fact, a lot of brands are using classical pocket watch designs as a template for new models. It's fair to say that contemporary watchmakers are experimenting with new materials, such as silicon and lightweight alloys, to make their calibres more efficient. Ultimately, what distinguishes modern timepieces from creations made by Abraham-Louis Breguet and John Arnold (in the 18th century) is the overall aesthetic. Here are five futuristic watches that perfectly illustrate this point:

MB&F HOROLOGICAL MACHINE NO. 4 THUNDERBOLT

MB&F (Maximilian Büsser & Friends) is one of the most exciting watchmakers in the industry. The company is renowned for producing a range of stylish and distinctive timepieces. One of its more radical creations is the magnificent Horological Machine No. 4 Thunderbolt. Dimensionally, the watch measures 54MM x 52MM x 24MM, which is designed to make a bold statement. What makes this timepiece so unique are the twin vertical dials displaying hour/minutes and a power reserve indication. There are several models in the range, which are constructed from sapphire, titanium and luxurious 18-carat red gold. The watch is also



Top:
MB&F Horological
Machine No. 4
Thunderbolt.

Right:
RJ Romain Jerome
Spacecraft.




delta-shaped case. Time is displayed by jumping hours and analogue minutes (via a rotating disc). There's also an absolutely sublime moonphase indication located at the centre of the dial. Beneath the elegant façade lies a highly accomplished 32-jewel mechanical hand-wound movement. The Calibre DB2144 contains 329 hand-decorated parts and oscillates at a frequency of 28,800 vibrations per hour.

URWERK UR-CC1

Watchmaker Felix Baumgartner and designer Martin Frei established Urwerk in 1995. Within a relatively short amount of time, they have created some of the most incredible timepieces on the market. Although we love all their watches, the magnificent UR-CC1 is probably our favourite. Dimensionally, the timepiece measures 42.6MM x 53MM x 18MM, which might not appeal to more conservative tastes. What makes it so special is the digital linear time display that's visible through two large sapphire crystal windows. Within the range, there are two models to choose from: gold/AlTiN (Aluminium, Titanium and Nitrate) and 18-carat white gold. At the heart of the watch is a technically brilliant self-winding movement. The UR-8.02 comprises 37-jewels, and oscillates at a frequency of 28,800 vibrations per hour (4HZ).

AZIMUTH SP-1 LANDSHIP

Singaporean watchmaker Azimuth combines contemporary design with Swiss craftsmanship. All of its ideas organically evolve from detailed technical drawings to complete timepieces. The SP-1 Landship is one of its latest creations that was originally based on a World War II tank. It's also one of the brand's largest watches, measuring a formidable 51MM x 44MM. What makes this timepiece stand out is the meticulous attention to detail and superlative level of finishing. Hours are presented vertically via an upright drum, and minutes are displayed in retrograde form through a central window (located at the front of the case). Beneath the robust exterior lies an ETA 2824-2 calibre modified to company specifications. This self-winding movement comprises 25-jewels and oscillates at a frequency of 28,800 vibrations per hour (4HZ). 

equipped with a highly sophisticated 50-jewel mechanical manual-winding movement. This calibre contains 311 individual components and oscillates at a frequency of 21,600 vibrations per hour (3HZ).

RJ ROMAIN JEROME SPACECRAFT

Within a decade, Swiss watchmaker RJ Romain Jerome has certainly made its mark in the lucrative world of horology. Primarily, the company is known for its successful range of DNA watches that incorporate elements from the Titanic and Apollo 11 space shuttle. The Spaceship is probably their most futuristic design and is definitely one of our favourites. It's also one of their largest timepieces, measuring an imposing 50MM x 44.5MM x 32.85MM. What makes this watch so visually striking is the vertical digital jumping hour display and rotating minutes (positioned on the top of the watch). Jean-Marc Wiederrecht has devised a highly complicated mechanical movement to power the watch. The RJ2000-A comprises 54 jewels, and oscillates at a frequency of 28,800 vibrations per hour (4HZ).

DE BETHUNE DREAM MACHINE 5

The name De Bethune is synonymous with the production of beautifully crafted timepieces. In 2013, the 11th Geneva Watchmaking Grand Prix awarded it the Aiguille d'Or grand prize for the heavenly DB28. The Dream Machine 5 is a phenomenal new timepiece from their latest collection. Measuring 49MM x 39MM x 11MM, this model will attract the attention of watch connoisseurs. What makes it so special is the exquisite highly polished titanium

Clockwise from top left:
Urwerk UR-CC1,
De Bethune Dream Machine 5, Azimuth SP-1 Landship.