

# Upper Hands

Farewell, flash: From Breitling to Blancpain, the world's top watchmakers are emphasizing classic designs with models made to stand the test of time *By Laurie Kahle*



**BACK IN TIME**  
The Chrono-Matic references '60s and '70s styles.

**49ERS**  
Breitling made only 500 Chrono-Matic 49 pieces in red gold.

**FOREVER**  
Rolex jazzes up its Oyster Daytona with Everose gold.

1: Chrono-Matic 49, \$22,180, by Breitling at Marshall Pierce, 312.372.2415, Razny, 847.432.5300 and Burdeen's, 800.656.0414. 2: Patravi T-Graph, \$25,900, by Carl F. Bucherer at Lester Lampert, 312.944.6888. 3: Oyster Perpetual Cosmograph Daytona, \$30,700, by Rolex at Razny 847.432.5300, James & Sons, 773.327.8800 and Sidney Garber, 312.944.5225.

Besides making the world's best timepieces, several of the top Swiss watch manufacturers have been around long enough to have witnessed revolutions, world wars and economic busts that make our current hiccup look like a Sunday stroll. "We've been making watches since the 18th century, and we plan to keep making them for centuries to come," said one company president at last January's Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie in Geneva, where elite brands presented their 2009 collections.

Judging by a number of new models, watch designers have realized that you too are investing with longevity in mind. The economic climate is conservative, and thus a time to reflect on core values in high horology: uncompromising quality, ingenuity and classic design.

None of our favorite new models embody the confluence of craftsmanship and technology more than Jaeger-LeCoultre's Master Grande Tradition collection, which combines functions as the manufacturer never has before. In addition to a tourbillon with a perpetual calendar, the limited series includes a minute repeater with a two-week power reserve and regulator time display. The Master Grande Tradition pieces also implement some of the brand's recent technical breakthroughs. The minute repeater's Calibre 947 movement, introduced in 2005, takes the novel approach of welding the gong heel to the sapphire crystal to amplify sound. Both models mark the debut of Jaeger's first silicon escapement, the result of years of development.

Heightened efficiency and accuracy also were driving forces behind A.



**RETRO GEAR**  
The Georges Dubey features a vintage movement from 1950.

**DIAL-UP**  
The Dubey's gorgeous guilloché-engraved dial.

**SEE WORTHY**  
You'll look dashing in galuchat, or stingray skin.

**ON DISPLAY**  
Eye the seconds, date and power reserve on the Vintage 1945 Off Center.

4: Georges Dubey limited edition, \$24,950, by Dubey & Schaldenbrand at Geneva Seal, 312.944.3100, Shellé Jewelers, 847.559.1155 and New York Jewelers, 312.855.4999. 5: Vintage 1945 Off Center, \$33,100, by Girard-Perregaux at Marshall Pierce, 312.372.2415 and A. Marek, 630.954.2662. 6: Fifty Fathoms Automatic Limited Edition, \$37,400, by Blancpain at Geneva Seal, 312.944.3100, Lester Lampert, 312.944.6888 and Swiss Fine Timing, 847.266.7900. 7: Richard Lange "Pour le Mérite," \$128,600, by A. Lange & Söhne at Sidney Garber, 312.944.5225. 8: Master Grande Tradition Minute Repeater, \$217,000, by Jaeger-LeCoultre, at Razny, 847.432.5300, Trabert & Hoeffler, 312.787.1654 and Marshall Pierce, 312.372.2415.

Lange & Söhne's Richard Lange "Pour le Mérite," engineered for advanced time measurement. The movement's complex chain-and-fusée transmission connects the mainspring barrel and an adjacent conical fusée with a tiny chain that wraps around the fusée during winding. The watch's mechanical intricacy is concealed underneath a pristine enamel dial complex in its own right—30 processes are required to produce each of the dial's three pieces.

Girard-Perregaux also appointed a new Vintage 1945 model with an enamel dial that positions the hour and minute display at the top, allowing space for small seconds, date and power reserve displays. The watch retains classical character with its Roman numerals on pure white enamel.

On the sporty side, Blancpain, Breitling and Rolex have introduced new

variations of iconic models. In 1953, Blancpain introduced its Fifth Fathoms diver's watch—reconceived this year in the Fifty Fathoms Automatic Limited Edition, with production capped at 50 pieces in white gold. The familiar Fifty Fathoms design has been revitalized in a shade of deep cobalt blue with luminescent numerals, hour markers and hands designed for legibility. Breitling, meanwhile, revisited its ChronoMatic series with the Chrono-Matic 49, a large-scale 49 mm version that references '60s and '70s styling with angular stick indexes and rectilinear hands.

Even Rolex has jazzed up its famous Oyster Perpetual Cosmograph Daytona with a rose gold variation made from the brand's patented alloy, Everose gold, which permanently retains its pink hue.