

A New Chapter



After creating the magnificent and technically innovative Chapter One in 2008, the new kid on the block of luxury watchmaking, Maîtres du Temps, was responsible for a large horological buzz about the upcoming surprises its next dream machine might offer. And it was at Baselworld 2009, that an expectant audience witnessed the unveiling of Chapter Two - a more restrained, but equally spectacular model, hiding technical secrets of its own.

Ken Kessler

As grandma's advice goes, you have but one opportunity to make a first impression, so Maîtres du Temps' debut piece had to be a statement of intent. Chapter One, a collaboration between Roger Dubuis, Christophe Claret and Peter Speake-Marin, featured an arresting assembly of complications, in a newly-styled case graced with a particularly novel display: rotating cylinders for moon-phase and day of the week. Its massive case, a hefty 62.6x45.9 mm, also housed a tourbillon with mono-pusher column wheel chronograph, retrograde date and retrograde GMT. With a price tag commensurate with the count of the complications, it would be a tough act to follow.

Enter Chapter Two, an entirely different beast, though unmistakably a product of the same house. Indeed, its three collaborators include two from

Chapter One, Roger Dubuis and Peter Speake-Marin, this time working with no less a luminary from the new wave of *auteur* watchmakers than Daniel Roth. It, too, employs a pair of roller displays, in a case that is, like its predecessor, a fundamentally rectangular affair, but one accented by compound curves to create a tonneau effect. Unlike Chapter One, however, and that model's target client of watch connoisseurs with a penchant for complications, massive cases and equally large price tags, Chapter Two is aimed at a wider audience by virtue of size, price and lower complexity.

The real thing

Steven Holtzman, company founder and CEO, spoke to *QP* from the West Coast of the USA, while on the road with the very first examples of Chapter Two, to show to retailers, distributors and clients. What was





Following on from the beautiful and decadent Chapter One, the Chapter Two is less complex and more wearable on a daily basis. The piece can be termed a "triple date" - that is to say that the calendar features the day, date and month and the face itself has a simplicity that puts an emphasis on telling the time.

Steven M Holtzman, founder and CEO of Maîtres du Temps.



The dream team of Master Watchmakers behind the Chapter Two (left to right): Peter Speake-Marin, Daniel Roth, Roger Dubuis.



The 18 ct red gold case holds the stupendous calibre SHC01 in-house movement. The case is big, at 52mm tall, 42mm wide, and 18mm thick but this is unsurprising given the level of complications that it houses.

seen in Basel in the spring of this year qualified as a pre-production edition, a “toy sample”, as Steven described the prototypes. In contrast, he explained, what he was holding represented, “a difference like night and day. It’s really a strong model, intended to expose the brand to a different sort of client.

“From my experience during the past two weeks - we only received the first examples in mid-July - the reception has been really strong. What most people like is the truly wearable size. Chapter One is a big watch, but Chapter Two, at 58x42 mm, can comfortably be worn by a woman, or a male client not attracted to massive watches. So the first difference between the two Chapters is that although this is still classified as ‘men’s oversize’, it is no bigger than a woman would wear.”

Price, too, plays a key role in defining Chapter Two as the company’s more populist model. While Chapter One costs in the region of \$400,000, a typical example of Chapter Two will sell for \$66,000. As Holtzman observed: “When we travel to these events, showing watches directly to interested parties, a lot of people love Chapter One. But how many people are out there in the \$400,000 category? Once you enter the \$60-70,000 retail sector, it opens up a whole new world of potential clients.”

Another way of looking at the appeal of Chapter Two is how Holtzman imagines its potential. “We held a dinner in Singapore for 70-80 people. Perhaps one or two would buy a Chapter One. On the other hand, 20 or 30 could buy a Chapter Two. This model was always intended as something to open up the market for Maîtres du Temps.”

This is not to suggest, however, that Chapter Two is anything other than a worthy example of *haute horlogerie*. It is an instantaneous “big



date' triple calendar, thanks to the innovative rollers shared with its predecessor and the company believes it to be "the world's most legible calendar mechanical wristwatch." It is certainly less complex and busy than most perpetual calendars. The central hours and minutes are indicated conventionally with diamond-cut, solid gold hands, with sub-seconds at 6 o'clock, big date at 12 o'clock and the day and month on their respective rollers.

Chapter Two's caseback contains paddle-shaped pushers, engraved with their respective functions, to adjust the day and month and conveniently, the month and day displayed on the dial are indicated on the back. Six anti-reflective sapphire crystals - three on the front and three on the caseback - enable the owner to observe both the calendar indications and details of the movement.

Small editions

Holtzman reminded *QP* that while Chapter One will be issued in a series of only 50 pieces in total, Chapter Two will be produced in 50 examples of each version, probably to include various metals, dial colours and so on. These quantities will provide the watch with "four or five years' potential" as such quantities will take that amount of time to be realised. And the task of achieving this falls to the manufacturing skills of Vaucher, the family of watch engineering firms owned by the same parent company as Parmigiani Fleurier.



Holtzman is proud to acknowledge that Chapter Two is "Vaucher's first attempt at doing everything in-house, on their own. Maîtres du Temps is the first customer who has asked them to make the movement, the complications, the dial, the case, develop the assembly, case it up - the entire process. Our purpose in doing this, having one supplier for everything, is that when there is a synergy and it's all done as one, there's a greater likelihood that it will all go smoothly. As Vaucher consolidated and bought up different manufacturers, it was an opportunity to test how good they can be as a complete manufacture.

"We're pleased with what they've done and there are advantages for Vaucher, as well: every time you start with a new client, there's ramp up time, all the little problems, the various nuances to learn, such as applying colour to a curved crystal, fashioning the movement. Once you go through that, there is an education process appropriate to working with them in the future."

Is this Holtzman's way of hinting that Vaucher will produce Chapter Three? And will Chapter Three employ a triumvirate of different designers? Will it be closer in intent to Chapter Two than to Chapter One? As an instalment of Dickens would have ended: To Be Continued. ☺

Above: Chapter Two features hours and minutes indicated by diamond-cut, solid gold hands, with seconds at 6 o'clock, date at 12 o'clock, and day and month spelled out on their respective rollers.

Left: In an unusual feature for a luxury timepiece, the back of the Chapter Two features two simple and named quick set buttons to change the day and month. This, as opposed to putting everything into the crown, makes adjusting the watch a lot simpler.

The model that started it all - 2008's Chapter One - the world's first tourbillon to combine a mono-pusher column wheel chronograph, retrograde date and retrograde GMT with moon-phase and day-of-the-week displays on independent rollers.

