

Technical Specs**Model:** CV2110.FC6181**Movement:** Calibre 17; automatic**Functions:** Elapsed and total time chronograph functions; 12-hour, 30-minute and 60-second registers**Dial:** Decimal conversion scale; fifth-of-a-second scale on the flange; luminous dots; hand-fitted hour markers**Case:** Polished steel; 39 mm diameter; convex scratch-resistant sapphire crystal**Water resistance:** 50 m (165 ft)**Price:** £1,995**Oris Chronoris**

Slightly younger than the Carrera, but certainly of its era, Oris' Chronoris (ref. 672 7564 41 54 LS; £1,255) has benefitted from a revival in 1970s taste. Put it down to *Life On Mars*, or the fact that 1970s teens now edit lifestyle magazines - either way, this oval timepiece, with orange-and-black colour scheme is so 'now' that some people might not believe it's the reissue of a vintage gem. So, while worth buying for looks alone, its horological value would be entirely lost on you. Updated with details from Oris' 'High Mech' arsenal, this automatic chronograph features stop function, a prominent minute counter at 12 o'clock, date at six o'clock, Oris' Quick Lock System to secure the big crown, a multi-piece steel case and water resistance down to 50 m. And the leather packaging even has a bracelet and strap-changing tool. Which rhymes with 'cool'.

Victorinox AirBoss Mach 6

Love at first sight: when I first clapped eyes on this future classic, I was captivated by the burgundy dial, the contrasting black bezel and its massive 44 mm case. I loved the way it oozed 'Swiss Armyness' even without seeing the badge. On the wrist, it feels right at home. But the clincher was a sub-£1,000 price for a solid automatic chronograph with the tried-and-tested Valjoux 7750 movement. Ultra-legible luminous hands and indices, date window at 4 o'clock, anti-reflective sapphire crystals front and back, water resistance to 100 m (330 ft), hefty leather strap... The AirBoss Mach 6 (ref. 25785; £975) is the poster boy for a new generation of models from Victorinox - a brand getting serious about its watches. Also available with black dial and black bezel, or white dial with steel bezel, I suppose I love the red in particular because it reminds me of Solaia.



Modern Classics: TAG Heuer Carrera



Overshadowed by both its successful descendants and the immortal Monaco, the current Carrera Automatic Chronograph is TAG Heuer's best-kept secret. If any watch defines the essence of the 'modern classic', this discreet masterpiece is as much a contender as the Submariner or Diastar. And unlike so many spurious new brands with cod motor-racing connections, the Carrera is a driver's watch genuinely conceived amidst the controlled chaos of the pits.

Ken Kessler

The Carrera was part of a series of Heuer chronographs of the 1960s, named after a famous motor race or circuit, like sister models Monza, Monaco, *et al.* The Carrera Panamericana was the sort of challenge, like the Targa Florio or Mille Miglia, that makes transport ministers shiver in their Birkenstocks: a balls-out epic drive across a rough section of Mexico, which only ran from 1950-1955 before being revived in a more organised form in 1988. No less a giant than five-times Formula 1 world champion Juan Manuel Fangio won the race in 1953. But even in that short period, the race earned - and retained - the reputation for being the most dangerous, death-defying cross-country race in the world. Any watch bearing its name would have to be one tough, practical cookie.

According to TAG Heuer's official history, rather than apocryphal legend, the moment of epiphany occurred in 1962. Jack Heuer was serving as timekeeper for the equally famous if not as gruelling Sebring 12-hour race, where he met two young and talented drivers, the celebrated Rodriguez brothers. The brothers told him about the dormant Carrera Panamericana Mexico Road Race, in which they had competed.

As Jack himself put it, "The 'Carrera' name has a good ring to it. It's dynamic, elegant, easily pronounced in all languages and charged with emotion" (as Porsche also realised, with the name gracing a model in the early 356 range, through to a model in the

current catalogue). By this point, Heuer had already established the tradition of naming watches after cars or races; Jack felt that 'Carrera' would be an ideal name for a forthcoming chronograph.

Work began on the new model in 1963, with the completed watch launched in 1964 - recognised immediately as a no-nonsense tool, perfectly in keeping with Heuer's image as a maker of serious timekeepers. Like its contemporary, the Breitling Top Time, the main aspects of the watch attested to its practicality: manual winding, two buttons, two subsidiary dials, perfect legibility, and fifth-of-a-second markings in the outer chapter ring.

Within a year, Heuer's watch had evolved into models with three dial-colour variations, a choice of chapter-ring scales (tachymeter, decimal scale or pulsometer) and a choice of strap or bracelet. In 1966, a date window was added. The biggest evolutionary change, though, took place in 1969, when the Carrera appeared with the in-house calibre 11/12 automatic movement, developed with Dubois Dépraz and Breitling. To this day, that watch formed one half of a never-ending pub brawl: which came first, the micro-rotor calibre 11, or Zenith and Movado's tenth-of-a-second El Primero?

During the ensuing years, the watch suffered the horological equivalent of a 'bad hair day', starting with the kitschy, ovoid



(Left) Early Carrera model from the 1960s. Before the advent of the calibre 11/12 automatic chrono, Heuer used classic column-wheel movements for the Carrera, including the Valjoux 72 (three registers with 30-min. counter) and Valjoux 92 (two registers with 45-min. counter, pictured here). Some rare Carreras used the non-column-wheel Landeron 189 (unusually, with one 45-min. register and no sweep seconds). (Right) The stealthy Carrera Racing from last year (£1,595), with black rubber strap and black everything else, save for the register hands, in urgent red for optimum legibility.

yellow-gold models designed for Scuderia Ferrari (but, hey, it was the Seventies), which continued as the case style for many variants until taste re-entered the picture and things went round again.

In 1996, a time when both the entire watch industry and TAG Heuer in particular were reassessing positioning and image, TAG began to move away from entry-level quartz watches aimed at Carlos Fandango wannabes. The writing was on the wall: customers were too educated and too savvy to spend serious sums on watches that lacked credibility or authenticity. And one of the clever moves used to elevate TAG Heuer's status back to that of the glory days of the 1960s was to re-launch classic models.

Re-appearing in a form that had purists swooning (probably to TAG Heuer's mild, after-the-fact dismay), the Carrera demonstrated TAG Heuer's sincerity. What it delivered was a manual-wind version with the added fillip of a dial that simply said "Heuer". Along with the three-handers released at the same time, also shorn of the "TAG" tag, these now fetch realistically higher prices in the second-hand market. Purists, after all, will be purists. Another 21st-century Carrera special edition worth tracking down is the grey-dialled 40th Anniversary model with Jack Heuer's signature engraved on the back. The man himself wears no. 001.

So successful was the re-launch that TAG Heuer made the Carrera's return a permanent one, creating a family of watches so insufferably cool that the current Tachymeter (helped a tad by Brad Pitt's mug shot) is one of the most successful models in Heuer's history. But the definitive model in the current range is the one bearing catalogue number CV2110.FC6181 and the sane price tag of £1,995.

Just look at it: the Carrera Automatic Chronograph could have been produced in any year since 1964, and will probably be the subject of a 100th anniversary model in 2064 with dial intact. Why? Because the recipe is *perfect*: just right for most wrists at 39 mm, the watch is housed in a polished steel case, the dial features luminous dots and hand-fitted hour markers, and sports a decimal conversion scale and fifth-of-a-second scale.

There are few variants beyond perhaps the sinister black dial version that come close to this model's pure class. Sure, you can buy gold, bracelets, diamonds, etc. etc., but that is to defeat the purpose of a wholly faithful descendant. As TAG Heuer puts it, "The Carrera perfectly embodies the vibrant memory of the era of 'gentlemen drivers.'" How right they are. ○