

On Target

Chopard gets it just right with the Régulateur – a technical feast and a feast for the eyes

Theodore Diehl



As one of the few remaining family-owned companies, Chopard has always marched to its own drummer. Upon deciding to pursue high-end watchmaking seriously, no one was surprised that Chopard took a comprehensive approach to movement production. In terms of visual design however, Chopard's position has been best described as the apotheosis of discreet, harmonious and attractive, but not exactly striking. Until now, that is. With the new LUC 4R Quattro Régulateur, Chopard has approached the thorny issue of design with the same vigour as its movements...and the results are stunning!

Yellow-gold version of Chopard's LUC Quattro 'Régulateur' watch – inspired by the elemental dial layouts of post-1770 'regulator' clocks (£16,570).

Technical Specs

Chopard 'LUC 4R' Quattro Régulateur
Reference: 16/1874

Movement: Hand-wound LUC calibre 1.3789;
39 jewels; 28,800 vph; Breguet overcoil balance
spring; 9-day (216-hour) power reserve

Case: 18-ct yellow gold or 18-ct white gold;
39.5 mm diameter; 11.0 mm thickness; water-
resistant to 30m; sapphire glass caseback

Functions: Hours subdial at 3 o'clock; central
minutes hand; seconds subdial at 6 o'clock;
power reserve at 12 o'clock; date display at
6 o'clock; dragging time-zone indicator
adjustable by pushpiece at 8 o'clock



The view through the caseback of the Régulateur reveals the positions of the two co-axial stacked barrels.

The distinctively more contemporary and bold look of the new Quattro Régulateur speaks volumes about Chopard's confidence in the LUC project. The company's compact size and independence gives it an intimacy with the clientele that makes it possible to gauge the success of a project such as the LUC watches to an exact degree. Clearly Chopard feels the time is now right for the LUC collection to move on to a new level.

Dialling tone

The term 'regulator' derives from the synonymous 18th- and 19th-century pendulum clocks built to the highest levels of accuracy possible using special movements and pendulums. Accuracy was quintessential to their function: as the term implies, regulators were used for 'regulating' other high-grade clocks and watches, when centralised electric timekeeping did not yet exist. When setting and timing in such a manner, minutes and seconds form the most essential units; hours are virtually superfluous. This is reflected in the style of the typical regulator's dial, with the minutes and seconds hands prominently placed and the hours relegated to a smaller subdial.

The Chopard regulator wristwatch follows the same pattern as its predecessors, but with an asymmetrical twist – an off-centered hour ring at 3 o'clock, providing certain dynamism to the dial. The space left vacant at 9 o'clock has been used for a 24-hour subdial, adorned with a sun and moon to indicate day and night. This subdial functions as a time-zone indicator, set using a small pusher placed at 8 o'clock.

All this well thought-out asymmetry is balanced by the vertically aligned power reserve and seconds dials at 12 and 6 o'clock respectively; all set against a uniform, sunray guilloché dial treatment.

Interior design

The interior of this watch – the LUC Quattro 1.98 calibre – shows the same attention to detail. The LUC collection, named in homage to Louis-Ulysse Chopard, was conceived and developed by Chopard's Vice President Karl-Friedrich Scheufele. Work on the project began in 1993 and the first LUC calibre, the 1.96 automatic, was revealed, to general acclaim, in 1996.

Building upon this success, Scheufele had the idea of creating a manual-wind version, but with a large power reserve capacity based upon four barrels. His watchmakers were dubious at first, but he persisted and came up with ideas to tickle his engineers' collective imagination. The LUC 1.98 was born and presented at Basel 2000, and is now a standard powerhouse for Chopard's collections, such as the Régulateur and undoubtedly future watches.

Spot on

The power reserve, supplied by two sets of two barrels in a co-axial 'Quattro' formation, is technically nine days, or 216 hours.



Yet, with refreshing candor, the indicator scale only shows eight days. This is no mistake; any watch with a long power-reserve period will lose accuracy during the final stages of the barrels' unwinding and Chopard have chosen to have the indicator 'err' on the side of safety – an admirable trait. Of exemplary quality, the movement is adjusted to five positions of hot and cold isochronism, COSC-certified and has even received the Poinçon de Genève. Only certain models in the Chopard line are submitted for the Geneva seal, and it will be interesting to see how these pieces will co-exist with those of the new Qualité Fleurier standard (see page 94).

Another detail is striking: the use of a Breguet overcoil, which is something that many higher-priced wristwatches on the market lack.

Sometimes called a Philips-Breguet overcoil, after the Swiss engineer who mathematically codified the perfect curvature of Breguet's hairspring design, these balance springs are hand-formed and require more care during escapement assembly. For some watch diehards, they are considered a great mark of distinction.

The watchcase – classic and typical Chopard – has a diameter of 39.5 mm and available in 18-ct yellow or white gold, with a sapphire caseback. This dimension also shows perfect taste and must be considered the golden mean for men these days, being ideally placed between the smaller 36 mm and the oversized 44 mm-plus cases on the market. A stunning watch, this is irrefutable evidence that Chopard's long-term vision is right on target. ○

The Régulateur is available in white gold (£16,990) as well as white. The white-gold variant has Roman numerals instead of Arabic on the hour indicator, in subtle acknowledgement of the case material.

Further information: Chopard UK, 22–28 Old Burlington Street, London W1X 1LB. Tel: 020 7439 3304, www.chopard.com