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PETER SPEAKE-MARIN



Thirty-seven-year-old British watchmaker Peter Speake-Marin has been working on watches since he was a teenager. But since launching his own line in 2003, he seems to spend more time in airports and less time at the workbench. The demanding travel schedule is part of his plan to quadruple his business in the next three years, and he may just do it.



"I'm basically a pessimist," says Peter Speake-Marin when we meet in Los Angeles in August. This unexpected statement begins to make sense when he adds, "In the long term, I want what I do to last." It is true that life, and especially business, can be full of disappointments, but knowing that one's work will endure can lend meaning to everyday struggles. Then Speake-Marin shows me the Quantième Perpétuel. If ever a watch was made to last, this is it.

Speake-Marin studied at London's Hackney Technical College before entering WOSTEP, the prestigious school of watchmaking in Neuchatel, Switzerland. Then it was back to London to go to work. There, a seven-year stint in Piccadilly, where he restored antique watches, would turn out to be critical to the development of his own timepieces later in his career: it exposed him to hundreds of classic old watches, which eventually inspired his Piccadilly line; it also prompted the young watchmaker to want to learn more about horological complications, which he did, returning to Switzerland to work on the development and construction of modern watches.

When Speake-Marin finally established an independent workshop in 2000, then introduced the first watches produced under his own name in 2003, it was the fulfillment of a dream. His influences were evident in his first products, but



from top—Watchmaker and entrepreneur Peter Speake-Marin; the back of the Quantième Perpétuel watch with skeletonized circular winding rotor and decorated movement exposed through an exhibition back; the front of the same watch with day, date, month, leap year and phases of the moon indicators. The watch automatically corrects for variations in the number of days from month to month and for the 366th day in a leap year.



his own style shone through as well. Speake-Marin describes the style of his watches as “contemporary design with classical elements.” The Piccadilly range—which he calls an homage to his days in restoration—is a perfect example of this. Each watch has traditional elements including a drum-style case, Louis XV crown and Roman numerals, but the foliate hands are his own design and the execution of every part is unique. “They are quality pieces made as I want to make them,” he says, emphasizing his interest “not only in design but also in execution.”

In 2004, Speake-Marin produced 100 wristwatches—all 38mm in diameter and all with relatively simple functions. In 2005, he has produced 200 pieces, and sales have increased dramatically. He has employed people to work with him in his Rolle, Switzerland, studio, called the Watch Workshop; his wife, Daniela, has joined him in the business; and he has established relationships with seven top retailers worldwide. Plans are underway to expand production to three lines by adding 35mm and 42mm cases, and he continues to develop complicated watches.

Through “organic growth,” he would like to build production to near 1,000 pieces per year within the next three or four years and build distribution to include perhaps 30 or 40 retailers. In order to make it happen, the watchmaker himself has taken on administrative, image-building and business development tasks. All of this requires quite a bit of travel. When we meet, he is in the midst of a bicoastal sales tour of the US that will last three weeks.

Speake-Marin admits that he would prefer to be at the workbench, perhaps developing a new complication—both design and execution. Nevertheless, he is genial, enthusiastic and even seems well-rested in spite of having been away from home for nearly a week. When asked about all the time he spends in airports now, he smiles and replies, “I get to read.” Hardly the outlook of a pessimist. ❖

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The Speake-Marin Vintage Tourbillon featuring an exclusive movement developed by Speake-Marin in collaboration with Harry Winston. It has 110-hour power reserve with dual power reserve indicators on the back of the watch and a one-minute tourbillon regulator.