

WRITTEN IN THE STARS

Audemars Piguet unveils a timepiece that pays tribute to one of horology's most esteemed complications.

By HO YUN KUAN



Horology and astronomy have always shared an inextricable connection. Before the former came about, the latter was the only way our ancestors could tell time – the sun measured the passing hours of each day while the moon and stars were our calendar.

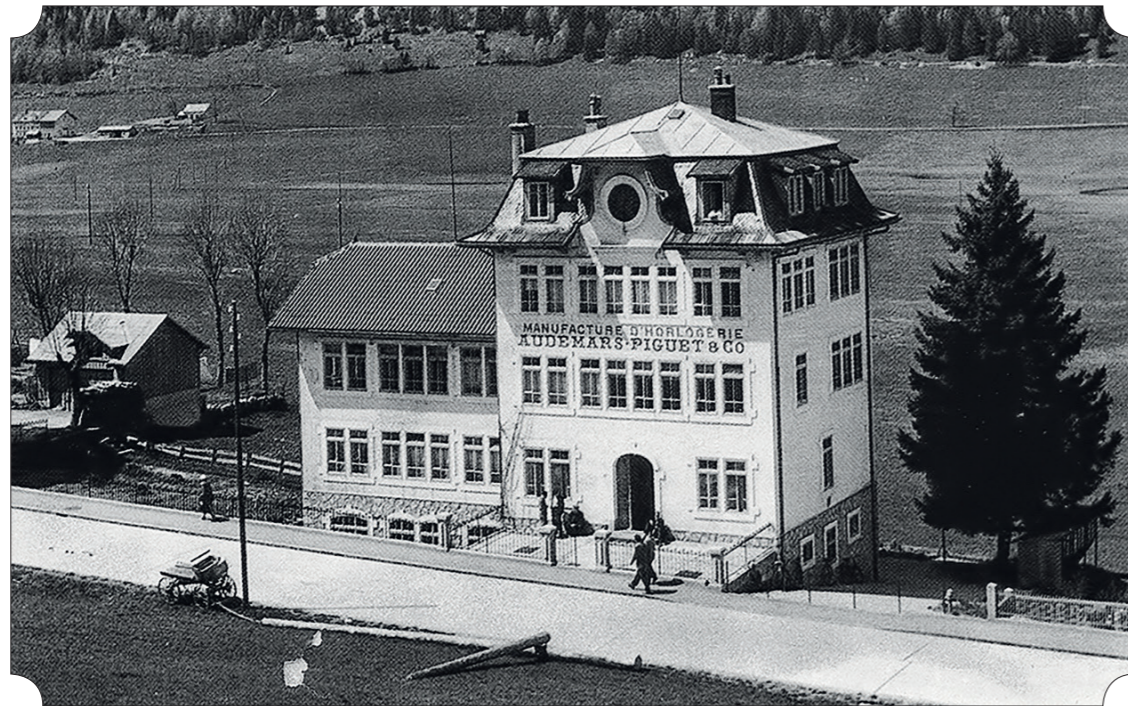
Mechanical clocks appeared in Europe in the early 13th century, but our age-old reliance on watching the skies was not forgotten. By the 16th century, watchmaking techniques had matured enough for watchmakers to incorporate astronomical complications into their creations.

Most of these early astronomical watches had what we call today simple calendar functions indicating just the day, date and month. The more complicated ones may feature moon phase displays. These timepieces could not automatically account for the leap years or the varying numbers of days in each month, so they had to be manually adjusted at the beginning of a few months throughout the year.

It is believed that perpetual calendars, the timepieces that could account for these variances, were only developed in the 1800s. Audemars Piguet was one of the few watchmakers that had the

The new Audemars Piguet 2015 Royal Oak Perpetual Calendar.

Audemars Piguet was one of the few watchmakers that had the expertise to create perpetual calendars.



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expertise to create them – in fact, its first perpetual calendar timepiece was created before the brand was even founded.

Audemars Piguet's co-founder, Jules Louis Audemars, had mastered the complication while he was still an apprentice. His creation, an 18-carat pink gold pocket watch which houses a perpetual calendar with a quarter repeating mechanism and an independent deadbeat second function, is now part of the Audemars Piguet museum collection.

The brand's capabilities grew by leaps and bounds during the



From top:
a 1907 shot of Audemars
Piguet's factory; the new
self-winding calibre 5134
is fully visible through the
sapphire crystal caseback.

20th century. In 1955, Audemars Piguet produced its first series of perpetual calendars with a leap year indication. These 36mm models had distinct two-tone dials; only nine were ever produced.

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Over the next decades, the perpetual calendar eventually made its way into every Audemars Piguet line, including the Royal Oak, Royal Oak Offshore, Jules Audemars and Tradition.

This October, the brand

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revisited history with the new Royal Oak Perpetual Calendar, a timepiece reminiscent of the first perpetual calendar that joined the iconic line in 1984. It houses the calibre 5134, which is based on the calibre 2120 that drove the brand's ultra-thin self-winding perpetual calendar launched in 1978. The increased dimension featuring a 41mm case allows the signature Grande Tapisserie dial design to be shown off to better effect. Besides the traditional perpetual calendar indications of day, date, month and leap year, the timepiece also has a moon phase indicator realistically rendered in aventurine, and a chapter ring that displays the 52 weeks of the year. The new Royal Oak Perpetual Calendar comes in pink gold or stainless steel cases with silver-toned or blue dials.

www.audemarspiguet.com



All finishing
operations for the
2015 Royal Oak
Perpetual Calendar
are performed by
hand in accordance
with the highest
standards of
haute horology.