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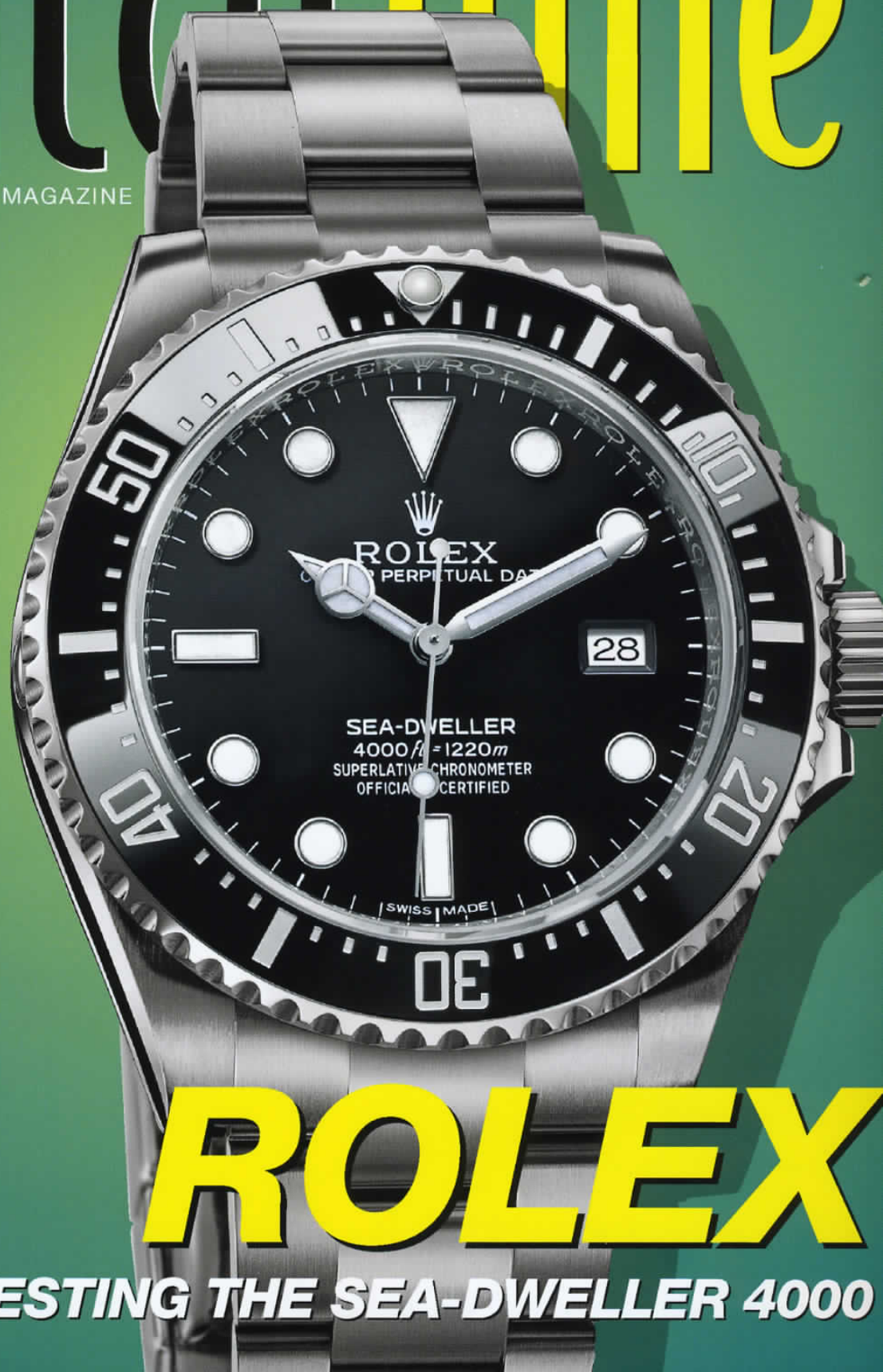
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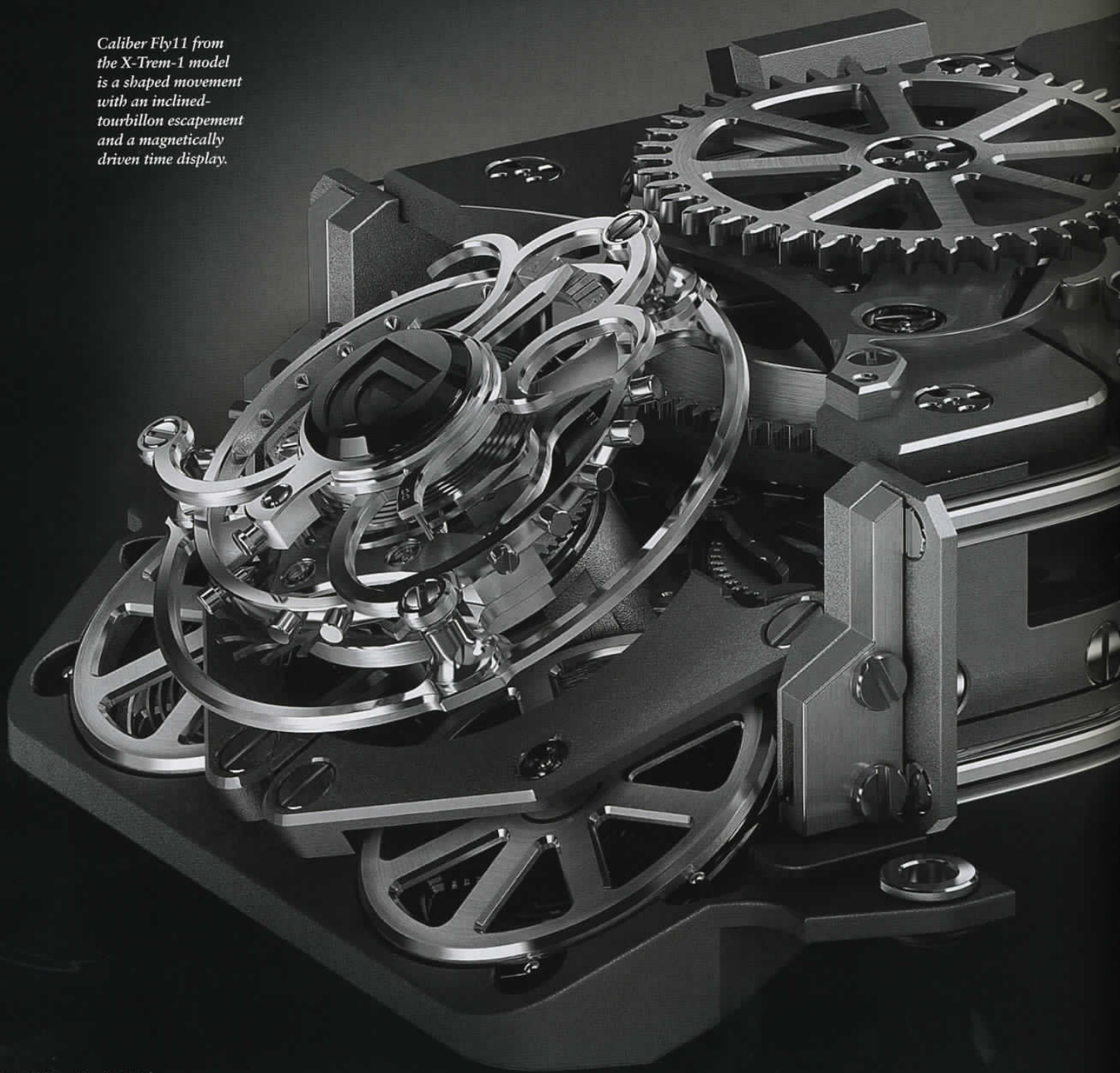
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ON THE COVER: *The Rolex Sea-Dweller 4000*

PLAYING

Caliber Fly11 from the X-Trem-1 model is a shaped movement with an inclined-tourbillon escapement and a magnetically driven time display.



THE ODDS



Christophe Claret has built a collection of watches under his own name that showcases his penchant for the playful and the stridently unconventional.

BY ALEXANDER KRUPP



Complications specialist Christophe Claret has been designing movements for more than 25 years, but it wasn't until 2009 that he created a watch collection bearing his own name. The 65 complicated movements he has designed over the years were mostly commissioned by other brands, including Ulysse Nardin, Harry Winston, Maîtres du Temps and many others. It was the financial crisis of 2009 that led Claret to create his own collection. Commissions by other companies had tapered off, and he took a chance that a Christophe Claret brand would appeal to aficionados. His hunch paid off, and today, his timepieces are sold in Europe, Asia, the U.S., Latin America and the Middle East. His own watches now account for 60 percent of his company's production.

Christophe Claret SA is based in Le Locle in the Swiss Jura watchmaking region, where Claret modernized and expanded a historic villa, Soleil d'Or, into a fully automated *manufacture*. He employs more than 100 people, including 25 watchmakers, in roughly 30 different production processes. Every component is produced in his machine shops, with the exception of jewels, balance springs, mainsprings and some balance wheels. For Christophe Claret watches, the *manufacture* produces dials, hands and cases, purchasing only the crystals and straps. Claret collaborated with a machining company to develop his own CNC and laser cutting machines. He offset the development costs by selling some of the machines to other watch companies, including Rolex and Patek Philippe.

Claret specializes in high complications, particularly chiming watches. The first watch he produced after graduating from the Geneva watchmaking school in the early 1980s was an hour and quarter repeater with automatons. In 1987, Ulysse Nardin commissioned him to develop and produce 20 minute-repeater calibers with jaquemarts. He formed Christophe Claret SA in 1989.



Christophe Claret



The Christophe Claret manufacture is on the outskirts of Le Locle in a renovated villa called Soleil d'Or.

The DualTow is a tourbillon and single-pusher chronograph with a belt-drive time display. Each start, stop and reset activates a chime. \$564,000



DUALTOW

The DualTow, unveiled at Baselworld in 2009, marked the 20th anniversary of the *manufacture*, yet it was Christophe Claret's first self-branded watch. It is a rectangular monopusher chronograph with a chime that signals each start, stop and reset. It contains the hand-wound tourbillon Caliber CC20A and takes its name from the unique hour and minutes display. Instead of using conventional hands, two belts printed with numerals indicate the time as they progress through small framed windows.

The mechanism driving this display, with nine planetary gears, can be seen through a window on the side of the case. The DualTow is a limited edition of 68 pieces in a variety of customizable case and dial combinations. Like all the watches featured here, it is still available.

ADAGIO

The Adagio, introduced a year later, combines a minute repeater with a second time zone, a small day-night window and a patented large-date display. A safety mechanism, also patented, prevents the chimes from hitting each other when they vibrate. Eight pieces of the Adagio are available in a choice of 11 different dial and case combinations.



The Adagio is a minute repeater with a second time zone, day-night window and patented large-date display. \$308,000



The 21 Blackjack plays cards, dice and roulette. \$228,000

BLACKJACK

In 2011, Claret introduced the 21 Blackjack, a miniaturized casino for the wrist. Wearers have the option of playing the card game blackjack (also called 21), a dice game or roulette, using the front, back and side of the 45 mm case. Two 1.5-mm dice, visible through a window on the side of the case, are rolled by simply shaking the watch.

To play roulette, you turn the watch over: the rotor on the back doubles as a roulette wheel. It spins with the wearer's movements, and when it stops, an arrow points to a winning number among those printed on an outer ring. A personal lucky number can be marked with an emerald on the edge of the case.

For blackjack, a pusher at 9 o'clock shuffles the cards for four spinning disks, and then deals random cards into openings in the dial. Some of these cards remain covered until the players request a card by pressing a button at 8 o'clock. The dealer's card is played by activating a pusher at 10 o'clock. There are 884,736 possible card combinations. A chime sounds every time a card is played. The 21 Blackjack is a limited edition of 21 pieces in each of eight different dial and case combinations.

BACCARA

In 2012, Claret unveiled the second piece in his Gaming collection, the Baccara. It also plays cards, dice and roulette, but instead of blackjack, it deals a game of baccarat (*baccara* in French and Italian). The goal in baccarat is to come as close as possible to nine points with two of three cards. The Baccara is available in nine different versions, each limited to nine pieces and all with either a dragon or a tiger on the dial.



The Baccara is a mini-casino, with cards, dice and baccarat games. \$223,000

A custom-built laser cutting machine, designed by Christophe Claret, has been in use for more than eight years.



X-TREM-1

The X-Trem-1, containing a caliber called Fly11, was introduced in 2012. Its name stands for Experimental, Time, Research, Engineering and Mechanism. Like the DualTow, it has an angled tourbillon escapement (it's a flying tourbillon; hence the "Fly" in the caliber's name) and an unconventional time display. The tourbillon, inclined at 30 degrees, is mounted on a titanium mainplate that is also tilted on an angle. Hours and minutes are indicated on two retrograde scales by hollow steel balls that hover inside sapphire tubes. The balls are controlled by magnets concealed under the tubes. The watch is a limited edition of eight pieces in each of seven different dial, case and sphere-color options.

X-Trem-1 is a tourbillon with a time display indicated by magnetically driven steel balls inside sapphire-glass tubes. \$308,000



SOPRANO

The Soprano, introduced in 2013, combines a tourbillon with a minute repeater. A Westminster chime, with four hammers striking four cathedral gongs, marks the quarter hours. The striking mechanism is visible on the dial, as is the tourbillon and its skeletonized bridge. The Soprano is a limited edition of eight pieces in each of three versions, including rose or white gold combined with PVD-treated titanium, and a choice of blue or red hands on the white-gold version.



The Soprano is a tourbillon and minute repeater that sounds a Westminster chime on the quarter hour. \$538,000

KANTHAROS

The Kantharos, introduced at Baselworld in 2013, is a monopusher chronograph that chimes a cathedral gong with each change of the chronograph function. Caliber MBA13 also incorporates a constant force mechanism, which reduces any variations in rate over the full 48-hour power reserve. The mechanism is visible under a sapphire crystal bridge at 6 o'clock. The watch is available in titanium, PVD-coated titanium or a choice of rose or white gold combined with PVD-coated titanium. It is not a limited edition.



Assembling a 21 Blackjack at the Claret factory



The Kantharos is a monopusher chronograph with a constant force mechanism. A chime marks each start, stop and reset of the chronograph. \$110,000-\$136,000

POKER

In early 2014, Claret issued the Poker, his third watch in the Gaming collection. This watch allows the wearer to play the poker game Texas Hold'em. It is set up for as many as three players and a dealer, with 98,304 possible card combinations (32,768 per player).

The game begins by pressing the pusher at 9 o'clock to shuffle and deal the cards. Each player sees two cards in separate windows with specially designed blinds that prevent them from seeing



The third watch from the Gaming collection, the Poker, lets up to three people and a dealer play Texas Hold'em. \$184,000



A detent escapement and constant force mechanism ensure the Maestoso keeps time at a consistent and highly accurate rate. \$214,000

The Margot plays "He loves me, he loves me not" and sounds a chime each time a petal is plucked. \$320,000



their opponents' cards. Once the players have placed their bets, the game calls for five community cards to be dealt. Three are called "flop" cards; the other two are known as the "turn" and the "river." A pusher at 10 o'clock deals the flop cards, appearing in a window at 9 o'clock. After another round of betting, the turn card appears at 3 o'clock. The last card, the river, is revealed after the final betting round. A cathedral gong is activated whenever these cards appear. The winner must have the best combination of five cards from the seven available to him.

As with all watches in the Gaming collection, the rotor on the back of the Poker serves as a roulette wheel. The watch, with automatic Caliber PCK05, is limited to 20 pieces in four versions: PVD-treated titanium combined with either white or rose gold, and PVD-treated titanium with either blue hands or red hands.

MAESTOSO

The Maestoso, introduced at Baselworld last year, prominently displays a detent escapement and a constant force mechanism on the dial, under sapphire bridges. The high-precision detent escapement was originally used on ships' chronometers, which were suspended on gimbals and therefore remained stable. Claret places it in a wristwatch, but because a

moving watch is more vulnerable to impacts, he devised a special shock absorption system.

The movement, Caliber DTC07, incorporates a cylindrical hairspring, two barrels and a hack mechanism for setting the time precisely – something rarely seen in detent escapements. The constant force mechanism ensures the precision of the watch over the entire power reserve of 80 hours. The 44-mm Maestoso is available in a limited edition of 20 pieces in each of three versions: rose gold, white gold with PVD-coated titanium and rose gold with PVD-coated titanium.

MARGOT

Claret introduced his first ladies' watch, the Margot, last year. The watch has a complication that is both complex and whimsical. It was inspired by the romantic flower-petal countdown game, "He loves me, he loves me not." The flower is plucked gradually by activating a

pusher that causes petals to disappear, triggering a chime with each pluck. The petals fall randomly – the order is different each time – and they may or may not be next to each other. The combinations change from one game to the next so the result cannot be predicted. Once the last petal has been plucked, one of five sentiments appears in a window at 4 o'clock: he loves me a little (*un peu*), very much (*beaucoup*), passionately (*passionnement*), madly (*à la folie*) or not at all (*pas du tout*). A pusher at 4 o'clock is used to restore the petals to their original positions.

Another romantic game is played on the back of the watch. When the spoked rotor stops moving, one of eight colored gemstones will point to a heart located at the 6 o'clock position. Engraved beside each gemstone is a word that represents its meaning, such as joy, affection or purity. The Margot is available in a limited edition of 20 pieces in each of four versions: either white or rose gold, with either baguette diamonds or snow-set diamonds on the bezel. ○