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## WATCHES

## The subtle intrigue of Andreas Strehler

*He may not be well known to the outside world, but Strehler is one of the industry's most respected independent watchmakers, says James Gurney*



BY JAMES GURNEY  
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It used to be considered rather bad form for a watchmaker to show anything of the mechanics underpinning the (naturally) flawless finish of the hands and dial, mastery of the art being held to lie in the ability to conceal it. The watchmaker's art should be invisible, as the great George Daniels said.

On balance, I prefer the contemporary attitude, which is for watchmakers to show more of the mechanics than not. If watches are, at least in part, conversation pieces, then it's only natural for the remontoir, the chronograph clutch or the tourbillon cage to be visible without disassembling the watch. When done well, as with [MB&F's Legacy Machine](#), Piaget's recent [Altiplano](#) or the Arnold Tourbillon, the end result is captivating. But not all horological

conversations need to be had at high volume and – as [Andreas Strehler's](#) Sauterelle proves – subtler, quieter pieces can be just as intriguing.

Comparatively unknown outside watch collecting circles, Strehler is one of the most eminent and respected of independent watchmakers. Strehler has long worked within the larger industry as a consultant and has worked with an interesting list of companies, ranging from [Harry Winston](#) (for whom he produced Opus 7) and [Maitres du Temps](#), via [H. Moser & Cie](#), to



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Andreas Strehler Sauterelle

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Chronoswiss and Maurice Lacroix. In 2001, Strehler became the youngest watchmaker to be made a member of the [AHCI](#) (Académie Horlogère des Créateurs Indépendants) and last year won the Prix Gaia, the watch industry's most respected gong.

The Sauterelle (Grasshopper) is, first of all, a well-executed and attractive tonneau watch, with a strong 1950s feel – albeit to the televisions of the period, rather than the watches. But Strehler likes a little, quiet watchmaking humour: the time dial is off-set so that worn under the shirt, the watch appears perfectly normal. Push up the cuff and the two apertures in the dial become visible. These show the edge of the balance wheel and the element that makes the Sauterelle truly special: a combination of remontoire and “jump-seconds”.

The remontoire makes sure that the power supplied to the balance remains even, whatever the state of the main spring, and involves an intermediary spring next to the escapement which is continually rewound and released. The end result is that the watch is more consistent over time and therefore easier to regulate. The jump-seconds is more for show, a token of how precise a timekeeper the watch is. When quartz watches first appeared, the distinctive one-second steps of the second hand were seen as a mark of the increased accuracy of the new technology. It was only later that opinion swung against quartz, and Rolex emphasised the smooth motion of a “sweeping” seconds hand to mark their watches as mechanical.

**ANDREAS STREHLER**

[www.astrehler.ch](http://www.astrehler.ch)

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