

Watch exhibition

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WATCH EXHIBITION

The watch group SSIH (UK) Limited, held an exhibition of its collections of Omega, Tissot, Lanco and Audemars Piguet watches in early September at the London Press Centre. All the exhibits are currently available in this country and were in the shops in time for the Christmas buying period. Watches to suit every taste and pocket were exhibited. They ranged from £8.90 for a Lanco man's watch to £3,329 for a white gold hexagonal watch made by Audemars Piguet, which has diamond set hands and a lapis lazuli dial. This exhibition seems to have been the starting signal for a massive advertising campaign by Omega in the national Press. On three occasions at least there has been a double-page spread in the Daily Telegraph for Omega's latest innovation, the "Time Computer", a solid-state quartz device accurate to within five seconds a month which lights up the time on the watch-face at the push of a button—thanks to a luminous diode display.

This is but the latest of Omega's electronic innovations. The firm has established a lead in electronic movement as the only manufacturer to produce six calibres encompassing all three types of electronic movement. These types are the tuning-fork, the quartz crystal and the solid-state movements. The tuning fork, which replaces the traditional balance wheel used in conventional watches, is set vibrating by a replaceable aspirin-sized battery which lasts for one year. Instead of the tick of a watch with a conventional movement, these watches emit a slight hum.



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The f300 collection, which sell at around £61.50, are the most popular quality watches of this kind. Their success is proved by the fact that they took 95.8 per cent of all official Swiss chronometre certificates awarded to electronic watches.

To earn the title of chronometer, each watch undergoes—and must pass—rigorous and intensive testing at the independent Swiss Institute for Official Chronometer Tests. Each chronometer carries its own individual rating certificate of accuracy.

The quartz watch uses an electronic quartz timepiece controlled by a tiny bar of quartz crystal vibrating 8,198 times a second when stimulated by an electric current from its power cell, the Omega Electroquartz model incorporates a micro-miniaturised integrated circuit. The solid-state "Time Computer" model also relies on a quartz crystal as a timepiece but its vibrations are not linked to a mechanical clockwork movement, but to a digital electronic miniaturised circuit.

Omega Electroquartz movements are used in several models, including an 18 ct. gold watch available on a crocodile strap from £898 and on an 18 ct. gold bracelet at prices from £1,443. Omega's most accurate watch, the Megaquartz 2400, unveiled last year at Basle's Trade Fair, is accurate to a second a month and is believed to be the most accurate watch in the world.

First electronic watches appeared in the 1960s. After some initial reluctance to invest in the new technology, manufacturers are racing to capture a chunk of this new and expanding market, each claiming unique advantages for their own models.

Omega believes it has now established a lead by offering watches of all three electronic types. With a growing consumer awareness of electronics and their advantages over mechanical watches, the company projects a rapidly growing demand by the end of this year and estimates that in 1975 one in every four Omega men's models sold will be with electronic movements.

The main advantage over mechanical movements is a greater accuracy and reliability. The other advantage to the consumer is that the regular servicing recommended for mechanical movements is not necessary for electronic models besides the yearly change of its battery.



Omega Time Computer

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This is particularly important in view of the growing scarcity of watch repairers and their rising charges.

Electronic watches must not be confused with electric watches, which employ a conventional hair-spring and a balance wheel as the timing mechanism but are powered by a battery instead of a main spring. Their accuracy is no more than that of a traditional mechanical watch.

Tissot, which is linked with Omega in the same industrial group, offers a wide choice of styles in a somewhat lower price-range starting from £13.75. Right at the opposite end, Audemars Piguet sell their watches from £400 to £30,000 — for the more elaborate diamond set models made to individual requirements. It is interesting to note that these watches sell particularly well in Japan, where their fine craftsmanship is highly prized in a country renowned for its success in mass production. Audemars Piguet limit their production to fewer than 7,000 watches a year. Those that are available to order from the top jewellers in the UK include the thinnest man's wristwatch in the world, selling at £690, and another with minute repeater and a perpetual calendar taking account of leap years, costing £15,000. An 18 ct. white gold diamond-set pocket watch with visible skeleton movement sells for £5,300.

NEWS FROM THE RIFLEMASTER

Dear Compatriots,

Once again it is time to wish you all a very happy and prosperous New Year.

Our Swiss Society Competitions for 1975 will be, as usual, getting away to an early start with some of the events taking place at club picnics and the Shooting competition being held during the period 22nd February to 30th March.

The Inter-Club knockout competition will follow, on the same pattern as last year, and all the events should be completed by the end of May.

I am sure you will all be looking forward to this time of good fellowship and friendly competition as much as I am.

With kind regards,

Arthur W. Muller,

Riflemaster,

Swiss Society of New Zealand.

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