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An Overview of Clocks at Baselworld 2016

Exquisite Traditional Creations with Real Value

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The present turmoil in the watch industry seems to have sucked all the oxygen out of informed discussion and it's easy to become distracted from some of horology's other worthy players, including clocks and the vast support industries in machinery and tools. One may ask the question: 'Who are the pre-eminent makers of fine, very fine, traditional mechanical clocks today?'

We can draw on the exhibitors at Baselworld for our answers. The numbers are telling: fewer than 5% of Baselworld exhibitors list clocks among their products and only a small handful of these are genuine makers of quality, high-end clocks.

We will have a closer look at four of these here, noting their slightly different comparative design emphasis, price points and markets. Their common thread is quality – as high as it is possible to get in the knowledge, science and practice of the clockmaker's art.

Like the informed buyer of mechanical watches, today's clock enthusiast seeks a deeper look into the mechanical details and to be fascinated by the microcosm of interacting clock wheels and the collaboration of engineering and aesthetic design.

Many of the materials used, the techniques involved and the tools of production have not changed materially in 200 years and we can note here that today these clocks are still largely handmade. Of course, some processes are semi-automated (eg the milling of wheel teeth). There always were tools that aided the craftsman by automation, perhaps not so accurate and sophisticated but in wide use just the same.

Whereas high-end watches are priced on the basis of what the market will pay, fine clocks are priced on the basis of hours spent patiently at the bench by skilled artisans and thus they represent superb value for money. The fact is that when the market for watches wavers, the brands can moderate their prices, but when the buyers for clocks disappear the makers are lucky even to stay in business. These are the stark realities faced by the clockmakers.

Some makers have survived for quite some time, albeit somewhat tenuously.

Sinclair Harding

In 1967 Sinclair Harding was founded in Cheltenham as a clock repair business by Mike Harding and Bill Sinclair. After only a few years, Sinclair retired from the business. Mike Harding continued until 1995 when he sold the business to Robert Bray and the company relocated to West Yorkshire. In 1999 Sinclair Harding started making a $\frac{3}{4}$ size representation of John Harrison's H1 Sea Clock – a formidable undertaking, **Figure 1**. Other specialisation milestones along the way include the acquisition of dedicated machinery and skills relevant to the quality of the clocks they produce.

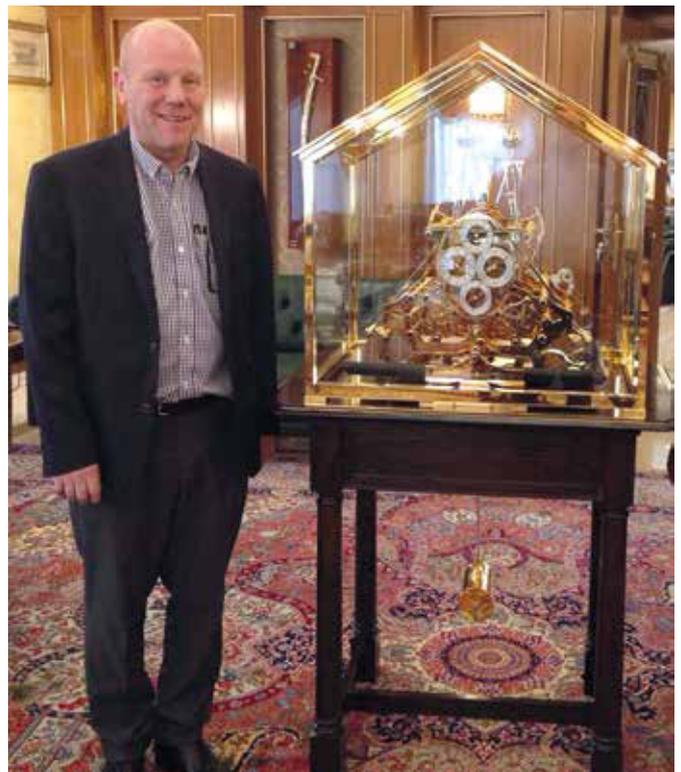


Figure 1. Robert Bray in Qatar setting up an H1 replica clock. Note that between the table legs, the balancing weight which counters the mass of the main mechanism, can be seen. The whole clock is pivoted at the base of the movement so that it emulates the slow pitch and yaw of a ship giving it verisimilitude.



Figure 2. Sebastian Naeschke at the assembly bench.

In 2014 Bray acquired the firm that had been making their fusee chains and integrated this into their clock production. This wonderful addition to Sinclair Harding must make it about the most complete company to be found in the world today making clocks.

Robert Bray is a Fellow and a Vice-President of the BHI and a member of the internationally prestigious *Académie Horlogère des Créateurs Indépendants* (AHCI).

Matthias Naeschke

Matthias Naeschke is a highly skilled clockmaker, technical designer and church musician with heart and soul at a level setting him apart even in the exclusive enclave of high clockmaking.

In 1984, in a small atelier in his private home, Matthias Naeschke started to build organ clocks. Thus he was the first organist artisan in 150 years to study the art and revive the high craft of the organ-clock maker.

Today, Matthias Naeschke and his workshop specialists are the only makers of new organ clocks in the world. Philosophically he says: 'Mechanical perfection is possible by machine but exquisite craftsmanship is the only free pathway to achieve the ultimate prerogative of creative excellence.'

Matthias Naeschke is one of the foundation members of AHCI, of which he became a member in 1986. He has now retired and handed over the reins to his clockmaker son Sebastian, who is steeped in the industry training and family values of the quality products they make, **Figure 2**. Set apart from the busy traffic and far away from the hectic bustle of the big cities, Matthias Naeschke's 'Haus Rose' workshop is situated high above the Eyach valley in the small medieval town of Haigerloch in Southern Germany.

Naeschke clock production is miniscule by commercial standards but this ensures that you are most unlikely to see two identical Naeschke clocks in the same hemisphere, **Figures 3 and 4**.

Erwin Sattler

In 1958 Erwin Sattler founded the superbly equipped Bavarian clock works that still bears his name.

The company has developed into a mature clockmaking manufacturer combining state-of-the-art technologies and centuries-old traditional craftsmanship. Most parts are now manufactured in-house in small batch series allowing creative opportunities for buyers' customisation.

For nearly 60 years, Erwin Sattler has been delivering the highest standards of quality and has been developing and making timepieces of lasting quality.

In the mid 80s his daughter, Stephanie Sattler-Rick, assumed financial control and the clockmaker Richard Müller joined the team as technical manager. In 2002 Erwin Sattler retired and handed over to Stephanie Sattler-Rick and Richard Müller as co-owners.

Today, the precision clocks of the Erwin Sattler factory, produced in small batches, are reckoned as among the best in the world: 'Our clocks have a special ability to infuse any room with an unparalleled feeling of well-being', **Figure 5 and front and rear covers**.

We should do our best to support these rare clockmaking companies, as the current global instability is not helpful to these exclusive artisans. Quiet stable markets provide the lifeblood of these centuries-old traditional mechanical arts.

Kieninger

Joseph Kieninger made the first entry in his cash book on June 1, 1912, and only a year later this Black Forest maker



Figure 3. Matthias Naeschke cal. 12 table clock NT 12, year-running, twin-barrel to a single fusee, plates of 4mm gilded brass with 5 pillars, pinions are hardened and polished, Matthias Naeschke escapement with compensating pendulum, 8 jewels, 8 ball bearings. Chapter ring of solid sterling silver with hand engraving, hand-knurled bezel, separate indication of the power reserve, blued steel hands. Cherry base with drawer for the winding key. HxWxD 63 x 42 x 32cm. Rhodium or rose gold plating are possible and bespoke variations are invited.



Figure 4. Matthias Naeschke cal. 9 with 14 days power reserve, main plates of gilded 2mm brass with 4 pillars, pinions hardened and polished, Swiss lever platform escapement with screwed balance, 14 jewels, dial hand-engraved and engine-turned and finished with gilding and granular pure silvering, blued steel Breguet hands, date indication on a separate dial. Cherry case with gilt metal inlays and stained black polished finish, faceted glasses on either side, a drawer accommodates the winding key. The dial can be set with diamonds and bespoke engravings are invited. HxWxD 24.5 x 16.5 x 11cm.

already employed 18 workers.

Of his eight children, son Wilhelm's masterpiece, constructed in 1930 at the Clockmaker School in Schwenningen, became the cornerstone for the current H-series, the lead product of the house and which is still produced today. The invention of this movement for grandfather clocks made Kieninger the specialist for movements with quarter chime.

The company got into some financial difficulties in 1990 and the Kieninger company was sold to the American company Howard Miller at the end of 1993. This family owned company from Zeeland, Michigan, is the world's biggest manufacturer of mechanical clocks, and itself is a major consumer of Kieninger's movements. All Howard Miller mechanical floor-standing clocks use quality Kieninger movements made in the Black Forest.



Figure 5. Erwin Sattler Mechanica M4 Precision pendulum clock with two-week power reserve. As handmade clocks naturally come with a hefty price tag, Sattler came up with the idea of enabling its customers to make their own precision clock using an assembly kit.

Today, Kieninger presents the full scope of its clock movement technology and a style spectrum from classic to contemporary in a worldwide collection of floor, wall and table clocks, **Figure 6**.



Figure 6. New from Kieninger is Cal. RS012 - set in an extravagant satin black clock case with piano finish, back panel in striking light ebony veneer, polished metal inlays around the case and in the back panel, three-train weight-driven movement with original German cathedral strike, maintaining power, automatic night time 'silent' between 10:00pm and 7:15am and classic silvered regulator dial, special seconds pendulum with carbon fibre rod and precision adjustment. Numbered edition. Expect to buy for about €8,000.