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KEEPING WATCH ON TIME

Evolution, Chocolate Cake, And The MCT Sequential Two. What?

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I love chocolate cake. It might just be the best dessert invention in the entire world. For years I thought that nothing could top it at the zenith of confectionery technology. I mean, how?

But then one day I was presented with a piece of chocolate cake topped with a mysterious viscous material that clung to my fork and anything else it came in contact with.

I was perturbed to say the least.

Who would ruin such a magnificent piece of deliciousness? Others urged me to give it a chance, to take the risk that so frightened me to my very core. They persisted, and I finally relented in my hesitation.

To my surprise, this new addition was not only mouthwateringly amazing; it perfectly complimented the moist crumbliness of the delicate cake.

What was this new wizardry that could transform my once-beloved indulgence into something so remarkably different and even more splendid? “Frosting,” they proclaimed! And from that moment my life would never be the same.

So this made me wonder, what happens when you try to make something amazing even better? Is there an entire universe out there more incredible than the one I currently inhabit? I decided to scour the world for ways to make the incredible even more so.

Oreos? Try dipping them in milk, simply heavenly. Or the already perfect hamburger? Add cheese. And bacon.

So food can be revolutionized, but what about other types of activities? Do you own a dog? Toss a tennis ball and be prepared for hours of fun. Do you water your lawn? Put on your swimsuit and take a jog through the spray, it will blow your mind. Sitting in a chair? Put your feet up on a stool or newfangled invention called an ottoman. Nirvana.

With an entire world of possibilities, it seems that there are places for improvement everywhere, ways to turn the marvelous into the spectacular. But surely objects that have had extensive thought behind them in engineering and manufacturing cannot be improved? That's crazy talk, right?

If you are like me, you understand that manufactured goods are at the peak of performance in every category, otherwise they would have been improved upon before being invented. That's how the human brain works.

Or not.

No, seriously, that is not how anything works. Ideas take time to develop, including plenty of time for real-world experiences to mold them into more efficient and functional systems. Evolution doesn't just happen to organisms, it happens to everything. Paper towels were once much flimsier than they are now. The automobile started out as a mechanical curiosity that would never be better than a horse.

The computer, well, the computer was proposed as a machine that governments could own to assist in complex calculations, or more accurately, to be calculators for the fields of serious scientific study. Think about that as you play Farmville or Flappy Bird . . . or read this.

Every idea, creation, system, machine, or process is subject to the mechanism of evolution and improvement. It's how things get better. No matter how much brain power is put into predicting every possible problem with an idea, the brain cannot conceivably hold all probable occurrences in its understanding.

This is because reality is much stranger than we could ever imagine. The outcome of this reality are numerous and ever increasing refinements.

We see this in products all the time, with the words "new and improved" sounding almost cliché for any product launch undertaken. As a society, it is understood that a new version of something is probably "improved," otherwise why would you have changed it in the first place?

The world of watchmaking is no different, though many may not realize why something is new and improved because the improvements are much more subtle and deal with micro adjustments, variations in operation, and refinements in scale, proportion, and wearability.

But to the watch nerd, they are much appreciated and much welcomed as our favorite pieces become even more amazing, like frosting being added to an already delicious cake.

A product of evolution

The MCT Sequential Two S200 is a great example of product evolution as it has minor adjustments and major feature changes all in one. It makes the user immediately aware of why it is different from its predecessor, and to the seasoned watch nerd it provides more tidbits of excellence should the desire for inquiry be there.

And for this watch nerd, the desire is most definitely there. So let's dig in.

First off, the major change that everyone will notice is the case shape going from a cushion to a more traditional round form. From a collector standpoint, it is a more popular case style, but that doesn't mean MCT took the easy route as this is a company that prides itself on design, finishing, and attention to even the most insignificant of details.

The case is the first example of this: the lugs are actually six individual pieces that slot into the case to create the three-dimensional lug shape. Add the fact that the main case isn't just a simple construction like most cases and the point is made even clearer.

The bezel is gone and the crystal becomes part bezel and part case. Screwed down to the mid case ring and stepped in on the bottom with a bevel on the top, the sapphire crystal is a serious part of the construction. Fitted in that step is the mid case ring that screws to the main case, sandwiching another sapphire crystal band to allow light and a view into the movement from the side.

Overall the case consists of 43 components, dwarfing the minimum requirement of two components in the simplest possible case design I can think of. The complex and creative case design is very cool, but the insides are where the real magic has been achieved.

It's all in the details

The small details in the movement are much less noticeable, but probably more important in the long run. The first major evolution is the minute hand. In the Sequential One, the minute hand rotated 270 degrees and indicated the minutes on a C-shaped bridge. That bridge would jump at the top of every hour like a retrograde hand, resetting the minute hand and pointing to a new hour.

In the Sequential Two, this has been changed, and now the minute hand functions like a normal minute hand and points to an exterior minute ring for better readability. This allows for the wearer to more quickly and accurately understand the exact time as twenty minutes past the hour will always be in the same spot on the dial instead of jumping around based on what hour it is.

It also simplifies a complicated mechanism inside. With a minute hand that has to move 270 degrees in 60 minutes instead of the full 360 degrees, the jump location is technically moving every time the C-bridge resets. With the new layout, the trigger point can be kept stationary for a more straightforward internal design.

The C-bridge still uses its open section to highlight the hours and rotates every hour, but it is no longer carrying the minute track. This makes reading the time at a glance easier.

Another micro aspect of evolution for the movement is the incorporation of what MCT calls “high efficiency” tooth profiles for the gears throughout the movement. These reduce friction losses and increase reliability while helping to stabilize accuracy.

But the true winner in the evolution from the Sequential One to the Two is the addition of an 18-karat gold micro rotor turning the Sequential Two into a much more user-friendly automatic.

There are purists who love the act of winding a watch, and there are those who love the idea of never having to wind again while still having a mechanical movement. For that second group of people there is now an MCT for them.

I personally like both manual and automatic winding, but if you are going to evolve your movement and make it into something that has more useable features, adding a micro rotor is definitely the way to go.

Keeping the movement trimmer and more manageable, a micro rotor adds style to the rear of the movement without obscuring the details. It also keeps the case from being unfit for dress wear as large watches laugh at shirt cuffs.

What hasn't evolved because it was pretty well figured out the first time is the hour mechanism. A very clever system of four modules that attach to the movement base plate, the modules consist of five triangular sections that rotate three times every twelve hours to read off all of the hours.

Each module reads hours four hours apart, which is indicated by the open section of the C-bridge in a retrograde fashion. The modules change to a new number halfway through the hour directly across from the hour currently indicated. This means each module is ready for its next appearance an hour and thirty minutes before it is needed.

Sometimes good aspects get better with small tweaks. Sometimes great aspects become fantastic with complete overhauls. And sometimes it takes a judicious hand to carefully mold and shape the next iteration lest the essence be lost. I believe that the MCT Sequential Two is a great example of watchmaking evolution. And lucky for us, we didn't have to wait twenty million years to see the results!

Oh, and I won't make you wait another minute for my breakdown as I know you were eyeing that cake we showed you at the beginning. You're welcome.

- **Wowza Factor * 9.91** For completely different reasons than my score last week, another wowza.
- **Late Night Lust Appeal * 86.89 gn » 852.099m/s²** Let's face it, you just don't want to try to escape this force. But why would you want to?!
- **M.G.R. * 71.85** Not many more movements get as geeky as this one, and I have been enamored by it since the unveiling of its predecessor.
- **Added-Functionitis * N/A** Some of the most amazing pieces that I completely nerd out about don't even qualify for this category since they are time-only. I guess I can skip the *Gotta-HAVE-That* cream, but don't think it distracts from the awesomeness.
- **Ouch Outline * 11.96 Ingesting a pound of pop rocks and cola.** It won't kill you, no. But if you want to feel some extremely uncomfortable and painful stomach swelling that will probably lead to unmentionable things, do that. And yet, for the Sequential Two? I'm down.
- **Mermaid Moment * Top of the hour, every hour!** I love animated dials, and this one is extremely high on the list for me with the module system and retrograde indication. Get me a meeting with the florist pronto.
- **Awesome Total * 550, but a strong 550.** That is the number of components in the movement and the case. Complexity level: 4x4 Master Rubik's Cube.

For more information, please visit www.MCTwatches.com.

Quick facts: Case: 44.6 mm in 18-karat red or white gold Movement: automatic Caliber MCT-S2 Functions: hours and minutes Price: \$99,000