

WATCHES AND JEWELRY

Audemars Piguet debuts trove of Royal Oak resources in anniversary push

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The Royal Oak made its debut in 1972. Image credit: Audemars Piguet

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Swiss watchmaker Audemars Piguet is cataloging the history of its iconic Royal Oak in an extensive, dedicated site.

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The new **AP Chronicles** site presents years of research and is meant as a reference source on the history of the Royal Oak. The launch coincides with the 50th anniversary of the timepiece.

"The AP Chronicles is not just a microsite, it looks like the beginning of a very detailed historical reference library for the company, the brand, the Royal Oak watch and the key people who have been instrumental in the success of this watch industry power player," said Marty Hurwitz, CEO of MVI Marketing, Austin.

"I suspect the AP Chronicles will be quite effective brand loyalists and aficionados, along with those that enjoy reading history, in particular, the history of watch engineering and design," he said. "This is extremely well-researched written content that has taken years to find, accumulate and communicate."

Mr. Hurwitz is not affiliated with Audemars Piguet, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Royal Oak roots

The Audemars Piguet heritage team began working on the project in 2019, in preparation for the Royal Oak's anniversary. The project was complicated from the outset, as much of the content that covered the birth of the watch from press clippings to books and brochures contradicted themselves and rarely cited original sources.

The team also wanted to find answers to other questions, such as why watchmaker Gerald Genta left the brand shortly after creating the Royal Oak and how did the Calibre 2121 movement originate?



The Audemars Piguet heritage team began researching the project in 2019. Image credit: Audemars Piguet

To get the full story, the heritage team relied on original archives, published and unpublished sources and numerous interviews.

As the encyclopedic effort evolved, Audemars Piguet wanted to share the relevant information in a transparent and accessible way to establish a true reference source on the Royal Oak's history.

The result is the AP Chronicles site, which is geared towards both the curious and informed collectors. The content touches on both the historic context, such as fashion, economics and the history of Swiss watchmaking, as well as the history of the watchmaker, manufacturing methods and production.

In an era when short-form content seems to be prioritized and thrive online, Audemars Piguet is embracing in-depth storytelling with AP Chronicles.

At launch, the site chronicles the first decade of the Royal Oak, starting in 1970 when Mr. Genta first thought of the watch. It includes 12 initial articles, available in English and French, with reading times ranging from one minute to 80 minutes.

Articles include an explainer on Calibre 2121, one of the key characteristics of the Royal Oak "Jumbo" watches, and an introduction of the first Royal Oak for women, which incorporates details about other women's watches at Audemars Piguet as well as gender in watchmaking in the 16th and 17th centuries.

AP Chronicles is part of the Royal Oak anniversary celebrations

AP Chronicles' magnum opus, however, is "[Birth of an Icon](#)," a 30-part long-form piece about the creation of the Royal Oak and its commercial launch in 1972. It covers the original sketches, the prototype, the patent, the first advertising campaign and early sales.

Visuals include photographs from the archives of Audemars and other watchmakers, sketches, print ads, repair sheets and more. The written content pulls from a variety of sources, including memoirs, paperwork, brochures and interviews conducted by the brand with key figures before their deaths.

Engaging storytelling

Luxury brands have increasingly turned to creative and interactive ways to share their decorated histories with consumers.

For instance, Chez Maison Valentino is the Italian fashion label's animated interpretation of its history told through the different rooms of its Roman headquarters, Palazzo Mignanelli. Various animations take users to a different story or feature about Valentino or the house's creative director, Pierpaolo Piccioli ([see story](#)).

Another most notable examples is the long-running educational series "Inside Chanel," which debuted in 2012.

In the one of the most recent chapters, the French fashion label shined a light on its most iconic fragrance. As a part of its extensive effort of educating its consumers, Chanel took audiences through the history and influence of the N 5 fragrance ([see story](#)).

AP Chronicles stands out because of its extensive research that is accessible for others to easily reference.

"The research and development of the AP Chronicles have been quite an investment on the part of Audemars Piguet," Mr. Hurwitz said. "It speaks well of their own sense of history and pride that they would make such a commitment to memorializing that history, on the web, for all to see."

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