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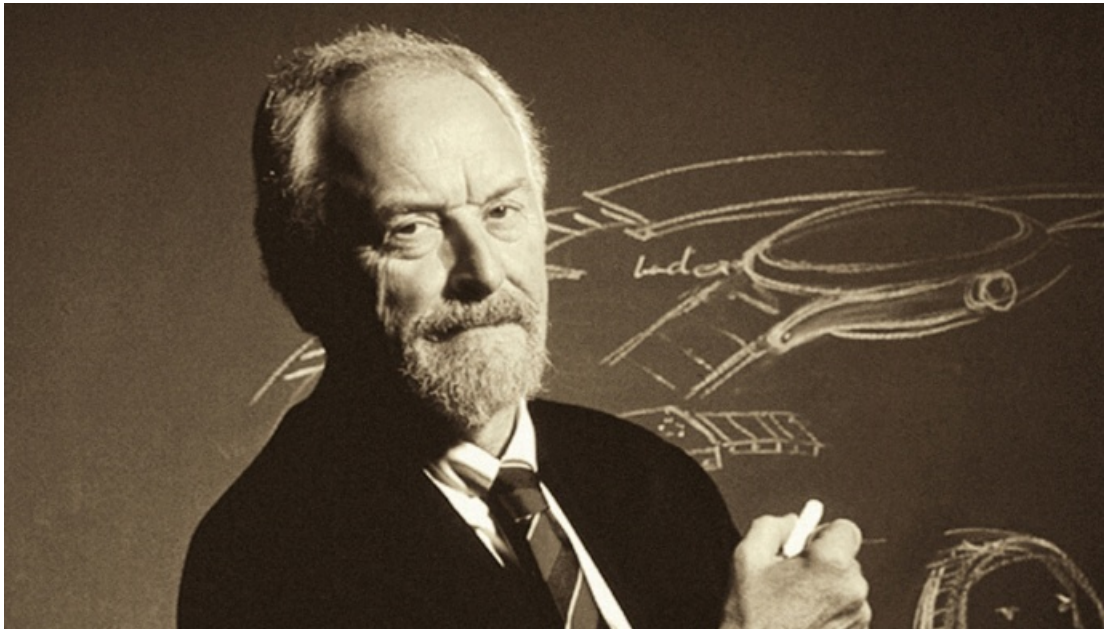
Porsche Design Chrono I – where it all began

07 January 2015 | J. Philip Rathgen

Ferdinand Alexander Porsche was not only the father of the 911, but also of the very first Porsche Design watch. When the Chrono I was first introduced in 1972, its matt black case was met with disapproval: critics called it a ‘fashion fad’. How wrong could they be?

As the Porsche Design Chrono I was being introduced in 1972, the watch world was undergoing one of its biggest changes in history: the quartz revolution. While complicated movements were still desirable, they were no longer necessary and digital displays began to flood the market. Despite being born during these times of upheaval, the design of the Chrono I would prove timeless, even if some commentators at the time thought otherwise. “The Porsche Design chronograph is only suitable for a funeral... Porsche should concentrate on producing cars,” said one British journalist. But his assessment was soon proved wrong: 50,000 examples were sold, and they were seen on the wrists of numerous racing drivers, including Clay Regazzoni, who was clearly impressed by its automotive DNA.

Focusing on the essentials



In an interview, F.A. 'Butzi' Porsche told watch expert Gisbert L. Brunner: "My idea was for the watch to match the design of the car – the 911 has a black speedometer and tachometer, in order not to blind the driver." The Chrono I soon became basic equipment for many a 911 or 914 driver, as did the famous, teardrop-shaped sunglasses that would follow soon afterwards. For the designers, the aim was always to create honest products – a concept that has been proved in modern times, as there are few watch brands today that *don't* offer a black watch. 'Watch-tuners' such as the [Bamford Watch Department](#) and Pro Hunter are regularly commissioned to apply black coatings to [Rolexes](#) and [Patek Philippes](#).

Today, the Porsche Design Chrono I is becoming increasingly collectable, despite being produced in large numbers. The Orfina-made models are becoming harder to find in good condition, as the black powder coating wears off with heavy usage. However, models from 1974 onwards that use the famous Valjoux 7750 movement stand the test of time well, and are relatively straightforward to maintain. Those looking for something a little special should look out for the Orfina Porsche Design Chronographs produced for various armies – the grey 'NATO-Chrono' or the green 'Military Mk II' are particularly sought-after.

Photos: Porsche Design

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