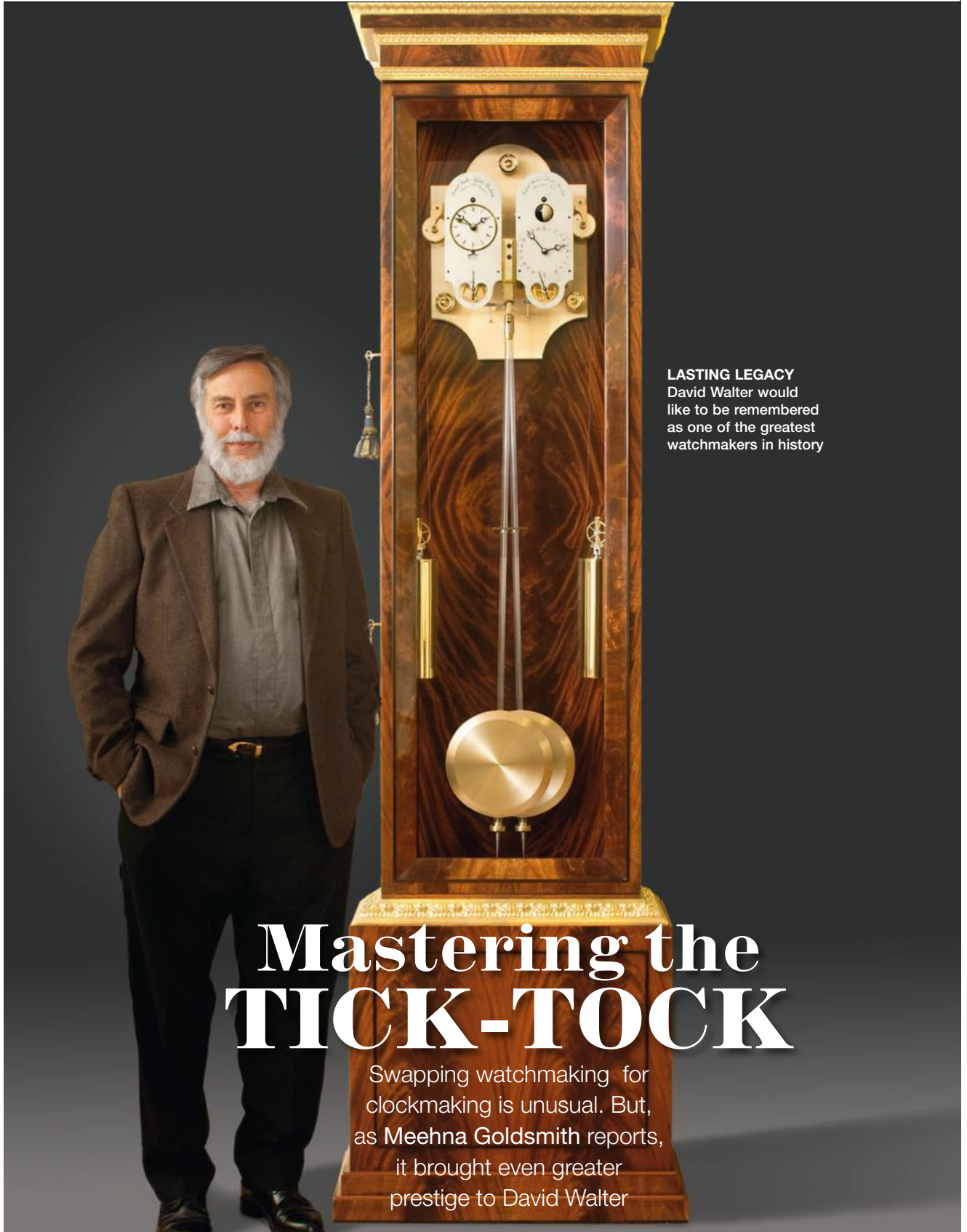


STYLE BOOK

CLOCKMAKING CIRCUS FASHION TECH TELEVISIONS MEN'S ACCESSORIES



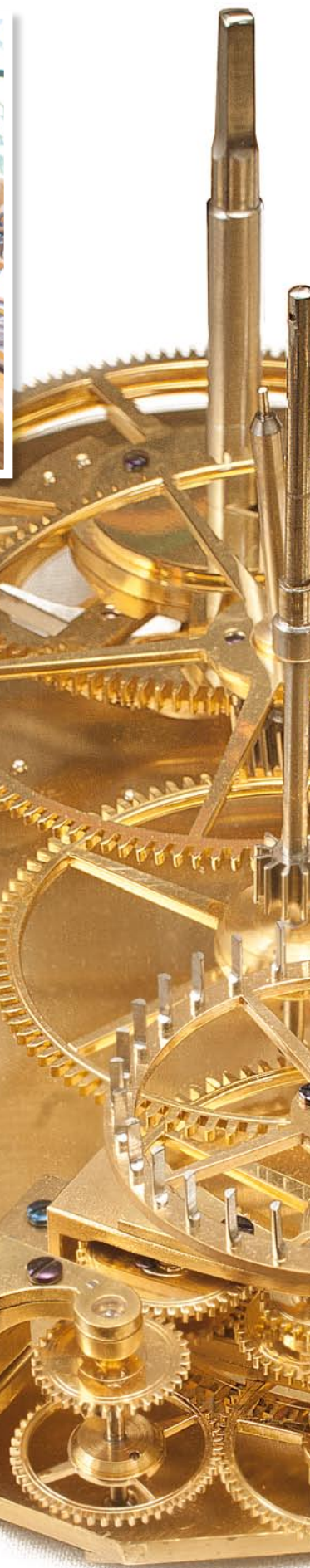
LASTING LEGACY
David Walter would like to be remembered as one of the greatest watchmakers in history

Mastering the TICK-TOCK

Swapping watchmaking for clockmaking is unusual. But, as Meehna Goldsmith reports, it brought even greater prestige to David Walter



ONE-MAN COTTAGE INDUSTRY
David Walter conceives of, designs
and creates the clocks himself



In the era of the wristwatch, most people do not usually turn their attention to clocks, thinking them old-fashioned relics of a bygone age. But as practised by David Walter, clockmaking becomes a modern marvel of sophisticated mechanics combined with true artisan techniques. Although Walter trained as a watchmaker and is qualified to work on the most complex of those mechanisms, including perpetual calendars and tourbillons, he prefers the majesty of clocks.

Walter, with his Father Christmas-like resemblance, hails from Australia, perhaps a rather unlikely habitat to produce a master horologist. Then again, perhaps being an outsider has freed him from the constraints of the Swiss mode of production that can take years to see a development realised.

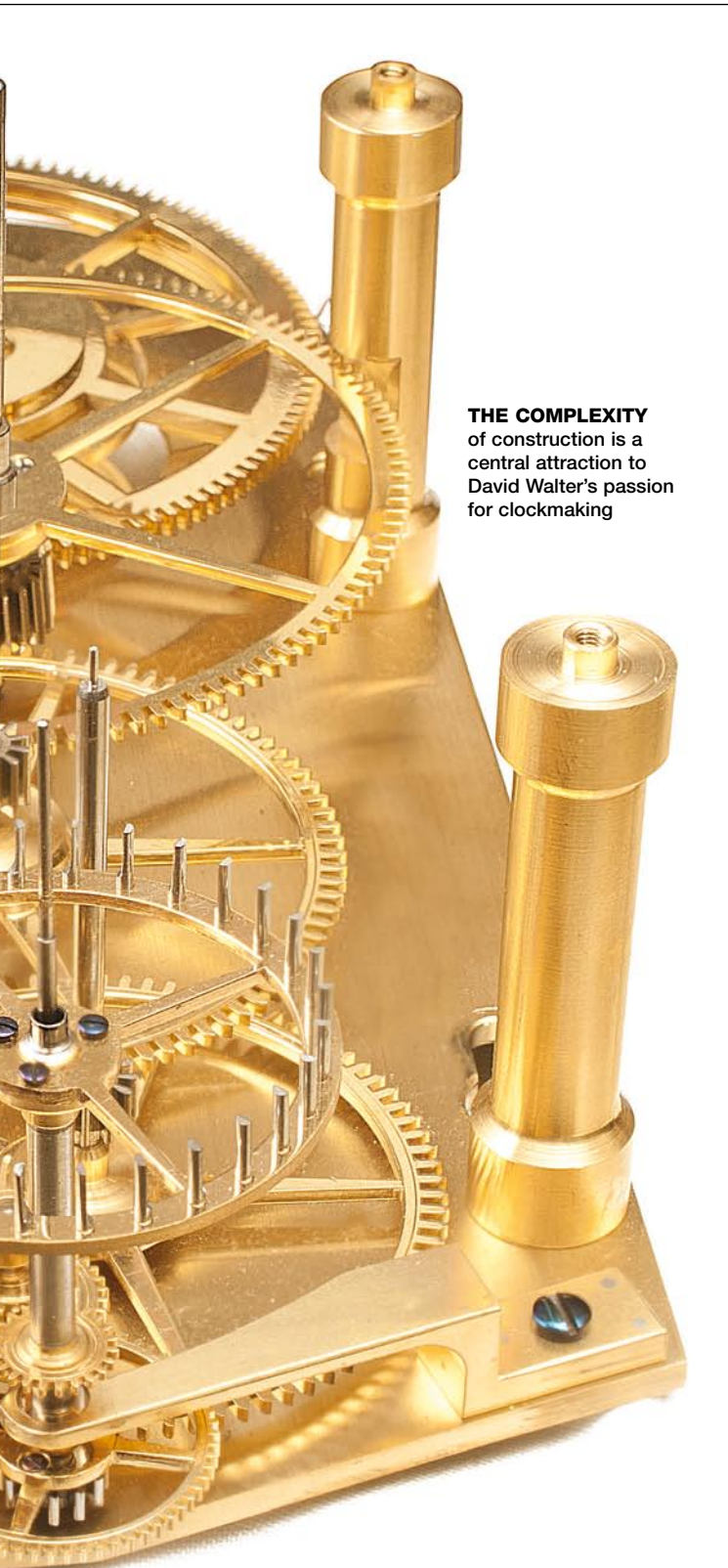
One could say that Walter eschews the rules, preferring a more proactive approach that proves the concept in the execution. When an idea for a clock occurs to him, Walter sketches out the plan and begins the crafting process. He completes all the work himself from his workshop in Santa Barbara, California, where he now calls home.

A surefire way to galvanise Walter and put a gleam in his eye is to tell him that something can not be done. Which is how he came to devise the (D)W5 precision pendulum clock, an emulation of the clock by esteemed British horologist and engineer Dr Philip Woodward.

Most recently, Walter unveiled the Double Pendulum clock. He found inspiration from Abraham-Louis Breguet, who made just two of the famed twin-movement, twin-pendulum regulators, which were acquired by King George IV of England and King Louis XVIII of France.

Walter's version hosts a breathtaking amount of complications, such as mean and apparent solar time, along with sidereal time, date and phases of the moon. With this latest piece in his oeuvre, Walter has created a stunning representation of our place in both space and time. ●

**“THE CLOCK OPENED
MY EYES TO A WHOLE
NEW WORLD OF
PRECISION HOROLOGY,
AND I WAS HOOKED”**



THE COMPLEXITY of construction is a central attraction to David Walter's passion for clockmaking



Australia is not the most renowned country in the world for producing world-class horologists. How did you become interested in clockmaking?

I took an alarm clock apart when I was 12 to see how it worked. After many months, I managed to assemble it once again, but it didn't wake anybody up on time. I learned the hard way what not to do. Several years later, when I started my apprenticeship, I quickly realised that I had been lucky not to lose any parts!

Where did you do your training?

I completed a six-year apprenticeship with a local watchmaker located in central Perth. Once graduated, I travelled to London, Britain, where I worked with Garrards, the crown jewellers. I restored and serviced many watches belonging to the royal family, including Queen Elizabeth, Prince Charles, Princess Anne and the Duke of Edinburgh. In furthering my skills, I transferred to the Omega Watch Company in Vienna. While there, I specialised in chronographs and chronometers.

Why did you decide to pursue clocks when watches are so much more popular?

I have to admit, I was a bit of a snob and didn't much care for clocks. One day, a client arrived with a very unusual wall clock he wanted restored. It was a Viennese skeleton with calendar and a 5-minute remontoire, which just took my breath away. That clock opened my eyes to a whole new world of precision horology, and I was hooked.

In 2006, you completed the (D)W5 precision pendulum clock, an emulation of the W5 by eminent British engineer and horologist Dr Philip Woodward. What motivated you to build Dr Woodward's clock, and how is your rendition different from the original?

I was commissioned to build a W5 in my own style and as a skeleton clock. I felt the entire mechanism should be visible because the operation of (D)W5 is so intriguing and gratifying to watch. Plus, some 20 years had elapsed since Philip Woodward completed his W5, and despite numerous attempts, no one had been successful in completing one. I do love a challenge!

Most recently you finished a double pendulum clock inspired by Breguet. Why did you decide to make this particular clock?

From the time I first saw a photograph of this clock in 1978 in the book *The Art of Breguet* by George Daniels, I nourished an urge to re-create this famous piece, especially as it hadn't been done in almost 200 years. I studied the few available photographs of the Breguet No. 3761 Double Pendulum clock and set to work. I added new complications in the form of a very accurate spherical moon and true sidereal time indicated on the right-hand dial. During the process, ➤



CALIBRATING TIME

Walter making fine adjustments to the clock's working (below) and the finished design (left)



“QUITE HONESTLY, I’D LIKE TO BE REMEMBERED AS THE GREATEST CLOCKMAKER SINCE A.L. BREGUET”

I realised the suspension used by Breguet was far from ideal, so I invented a new one to take better advantage of the resonance effect of the two pendulums swinging in anti-phase. With this improvement, I have the clock accurate to a few seconds per month.

Some might argue that your clocks are simply derivatives of great masters.

There wouldn't be any fun in making slave-like copies, would there? Certainly, the great masters have given me inspiration; however, I strive to use traditional high-class workmanship and add mechanical improvements to raise the bar on timekeeping.

Which clockmakers, either modern or historical, do you admire?

For modern clockmakers: Derek Pratt for his water clock; Anthony Randall for his carriage clock with triple axis tourbillon; and George Daniels for his Breguet Three Wheel clock and Long Case regulator with a Grasshopper escapement. For historic makers: Brandl of Wien [Vienna] circa 1800, made very fine and delicate year-running wall regulators in which the trains are like watch wheels; of course, A.L. Breguet, who created so many new mechanical designs and executed them in a most exquisite manner with pleasing proportions and finish to all parts; and W.A. Shortt, who designed the Shortt Free pendulum clock that inspired W5 and (D)W5.

Where do you source the wheels, trains and other complex parts for your clocks?

Nobody manufactures the parts I use in my clocks, and if they did, I wouldn't trust them to conform to my standards. I make everything in my workshop, including wheels, pinions, escapements, dials, screws, hands and levers.

I also cut and grind my own sapphire, which I used for the escapement in the Double Pendulum Clock.

What advantages does a clock have over a watch?

A clock is a very personal choice, perhaps even more personal than a watch because it will live in the same house with the owner. One of the charms of the handmade clock is it can be built to personal order and taste. Moreover, a clock's mechanics can be seen and appreciated without the use of a loupe. One can sit in a chair and enjoy the clock, its pendulum quietly beating time and giving a soul to room.

How would you most like to be remembered for your work in the world of horology?

As one who set new standards for contemporary horology, aimed for and achieved the highest goals, never stepped back from a horological challenge, and was extremely creative in applying advancements. Quite honestly, I'd like to be remembered as the greatest clockmaker since A.L. Breguet. ●



WATCHWORKS

LANDMARK WORKS IN THE CAREER OF DAVID WALTER

- **2010:** Double Pendulum clock (Private collection)
- **2006:** (D)W5 Skeletonized Free Pendulum clock (Private collection)
- **1996:** Great Wheel clock (D Hurst collection)
- **1993:** Perpetual wall regulator, (Private collection)
- **1983:** Skeletonized Wall Regulator (Private collection)