



# *Antimagnetic* Attraction

*The updated version of the 1950s' Rolex Milgauss is already a hit. Is this re-engineered classic, with its improved protection against magnetism, worth the wait?*

BY JENS KOCH

PHOTOS BY NIK SCHÖLZEL

**M**agnetic fields are invisible and do not greatly affect the human body. Maybe that's why we don't think about them very much, even though our high-tech world is full of them, generated by all sorts of devices, from motors to loudspeakers. Unlike the people who wear them, however, mechanical watches are extremely susceptible to magnetic fields. When parts of a watch's movement become magnetized, its rate accuracy is disturbed, causing frustration for its owner.

Rolex addressed this problem in the 1950s with the introduction of its Oyster Perpetual Milgauss model. The name comes from the French *mille Gauss*, referring to the watch's protection from magnetic fields up to 1,000 gauss (named after physicist Karl Friedrich Gauss, a gauss is a unit for measuring the strength of a magnetic field). This level of magnetism, which corresponds to 0.1 Tesla or 80,000 vph, is 100 times higher than that of a typical horseshoe magnet. It would take levels such as those found in an MRI scanner to affect the watch's functioning. Rolex devoted considerable time and effort in the development of the recent reissue of the Milgauss, introduced at the Baselworld watch fair last year. Its inner case, made of ferromagnetic material, shields the movement from magnetic fields and consists of only two parts: a container and another cover tightly screwed to it. The container encloses the movement laterally and on the dial side, while the back seals the movement side. To ensure that the movement would be shielded as much as possible, the designers allowed for only a bare minimum of openings in the dial and case. This is why there is no aperture for a date display, for example. There are only the necessary small openings for the winding stem and for the axles that anchor the hands. There are also two tiny holes for the screws that hold the dial. Most other watches with magnetic protection have an inner case with three parts, with the parts layered on top of one another rather than threaded together.

Rolex didn't stop there; its engineers were determined to make additional modifications to prevent even minute amounts of magnetism from leaking into the movement. The result of this

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*For the complete article please look for the WatchTime August 2008 issue, now available at newsstands and the bookstores.*

