

URWERK

text by YEO SUAN FUTT Simplicity has a powerful hold on the human intellect. In science, for instance, elegance and simplicity are virtually synonymous — witness the basic principle in logic known as Occam's Razor, which reminds us that it's usually the simplest explanation that's the likeliest to be true. But there's a world of difference between elegant simplicity, which requires insight, and merely being simplistic, which doesn't, and it's as true of art as it is of science.

URWERK's Felix Baumgartner and Martin Frei, who created the groundbreaking UR103, chose to tell time by the most complicated and difficult method they could imagine. Instead of a three-hand movement, why not go for a quartet of rotating satellites driven by a cross arm against a linear (but curved) minute scale, with a control panel on the back? It



would be like a fairground carousel. It would be a blast. But URWERK's timepieces are not an exercise in complexity for its own sake. Rather, they're beautifully harmonious expressions of a particular vision of time — the means may be complicated, but the result is a work of mechanical art that's one of the design world's rare examples of truly elegant simplicity.

UR103T 'SHINING T'

This horological fantasy became reality and debuted to dropped jaws when the UR103 made its debut at the A.H.C.I. stand at BaselWorld 2003. Since then, collectors have never quite gotten enough; but seven years and multiple editions on, the creators have decided to move on: 2010 will be the last year of production for the mind-expanding UR103, to be concluded with the UR103T "Mexican Fireleg" and "Shining T" models.

The former, in black and luminescent orange, is equal measures exotic and toxic, as flamboyant as it is aggressive; limited to 60 pieces. The Shining T is a calmer ensemble, with triple bridges in black ARCAP P40, limited to 33 pieces. At least the world is still producing pandas. ★

UR103T 'MEXICAN FIRELEG'