



The vintage IWC 'Romana' is a £5,000 technical marvel. Want!

The IWC Romana Perpetual Calendar, reference 2050, broke slimness records when it was released in 1994

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Over the years, the identity of a watch brand evolves.

Modern [IWC](#) watches are not known for being shrinking violets. The aviator Spitfire and Big Pilot lines are, well, big. The Ingenieur and Aquatimer collection are exactly as chunky as tool watches ought to be. Even the [Portugieser](#) and the dressier Da Vinci and Portofino still have a satisfying amount of wrist presence. It may be a surprise, then, to learn that at one time IWC held the record for the thinnest perpetual calendar in the world.

The perpetual calendar complication has always been synonymous with Patek Philippe but, in 1985, IWC shook up the established order with the launch of the Da Vinci ref 3750. This perpetual calendar boasted a chronograph and, for the first time, a four-digit year display. So far, so impressive. But what made the watch really stand out was what it did not have. The correcting pushers for adjusting the day, date, month and moon phase – which were used as standard by all other watchmakers, including Patek – were completely absent. The genius of former technical director Kurt Klaus was to design a perpetual calendar module that could be set entirely by using the winding crown. His aim? To produce the most user-friendly perpetual calendar in the world.



For the rest of the 1980s, IWC's Da Vinci dominated the perpetual calendar market. In 1994, the brand swapped the 7750 base chronograph movement for Jaeger-LeCoultre's ultra-thin 849 and created the Romana perpetual calendar ref 2050. At the time, its 3.15mm thickness made it the slimmest ever produced. There were compromises to be made, of course: the reduced height meant the loss of two of the year digits and, more significantly, the automatic winding. The Romana had to be wound daily, although, if it was left unworn, Klaus' easy setting system made corrections quite straightforward. Maybe the hand-winding was the Romana's Achilles' heel, but as the trend for larger watches developed at the end of the 1990s, the ref 2050 was left behind and in 2001 it was discontinued.

With a constant battle for slimmest records being fought between Audemars Piguet, [Bulgari](#) and [Piaget](#), it would seem that thin is back in, so now may be the time to rediscover the Romana and the incredible value it represents. Back in 2012, you could buy a platinum ref 2050 for £5,000 at auction, and only three years ago a gold one would only set you back £4,500 – a price that was achieved again in 2020. Surely this is a bargain for such a wafer-

thin, easy-to-use, technical marvel. And if you have to wind and wear it daily... frankly, so be it.

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