

NOMA'S LITTLE CHEFS » DANISH CUISINE GETS A ZEST OF NEW FLAVOURS

INDIA Robb Report

AUGUST 2014 FOR THE LUXURY LIFESTYLE™

ELITE MACHINES 2014

SUPER LUXURY TOYS

OUTSTANDING AUTOS FROM RALPH LAUREN'S COLLECTION & MORE



1996 McLaren F1 LM



INSIDE ALEXANDER MCQUEEN | CHOPARD | FENDI | IWC | MONTEGRAPPA | STEINWAY LYNGDORF

The INDEPENDENTS

IN THE FACE OF BIG BRANDS WITH CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS, A HANDFUL OF INDEPENDENT WATCHMAKERS CONTINUE TO DO WHAT THEY'RE BEST AT—CREATING EXQUISITE MASTERPIECES THAT COULD DEFINE THE FUTURE OF HOROLOGY.

BY SAROSH MODY

I“IF MECHANICAL WATCHMAKING is actually an art, and I strongly believe it is, then would you prefer buying a piece of art from an anonymous brand or from the artist who created it?” asks Maximilian Büsser, the Geneva-based watch manufacturer. “Most of today’s great historical brands were created by an amazing, innovative artist. Two hundred years later, those brands continue to build on the original genius,” he opines.

Back in 2005, Büsser created the world’s first horological concept brand, MB&F—Maximilian Büsser & Friends—developing radical horological concepts in collaboration with industry peers—and friends—who bring with them far-reaching technicalities and creativity. “With MB&F and a few independent creators, the client does not buy from a brand but actually speaks first-hand to the original creator,” Büsser states. In the world of horology today, there is much ambiguity about the word ‘exclusive’. Brands producing a few thousand pieces a year, pitch in a few hundred plus pieces in the name of limited editions, to create exclusivity. It may hold true for some brands but if you’re seeking watches that are not marketed as ‘exclusive’ but are truly so, it’s time you turn your focus on the rare gems, i.e. the new masters of fine watchmaking—the ‘Independents’. ▶



MB&F

Unlike the earlier 'horological machines' introduced by Büsser and his team, MB&F's 2014 debutant, the Legacy Machine 101, fondly known as the LM101, is a classically sized 40 mm wristwatch. The immense suspended balance wheel has a hypnotic effect, oscillating over the two pristine white subdials that are just above the finely engraved top plate. "We created the LM101 after the Legacy Machine 1 & 2, but it is in fact a prequel," says Büsser. "The idea was to take the Legacy concept and strip it down to its bare essentials, creating a piece as elegant and simple as possible. It's more difficult to simplify than to add complications." LM101 has another very special feature, one that cannot be seen: It houses the very first movement developed entirely in-house by MB&F. Award-winning independent watchmaker Kari Voutilainen was also involved in the technical and production management of the watch.

DE BETHUNE

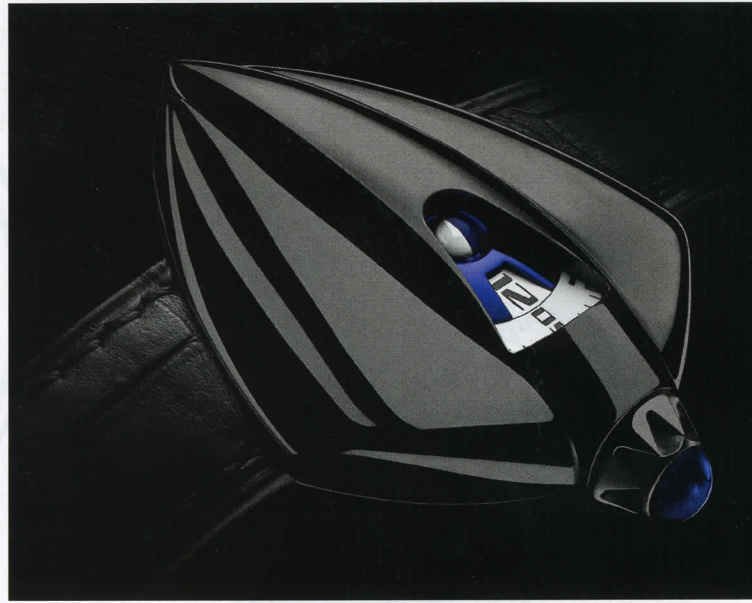
Dennis Flageollet and David Zanetta, founders of the Swiss watchmaking company, De Bethune, approach the world of watchmaking as a form of art. Their quest for fine craftsmanship has pushed them to the point where aesthetic and technical aspects meet and merge, where form marries function in the pursuit of perfection. Their Dream Watch 5.2 is a case in point. It has escaped the confines of conventional scales and proportions, and its shape, colour and material showcases the constant and intensive research that has gone into it. Its unusual deltoid design and the coat of blackened zirconium bear testament to this fact. A self-winding calibre DB2144 housed within its contemporary-design case is a typical De Bethune representation and has a small, tow-tone sphere that indicates the moon-phases, made out of flame-blue steel and palladium. The aperture-type jumping hours conjoined with a

rotating-disc analogue minutes display gives the watch an aesthetic edge like no other watch in the market. On being asked who makes the cut for De Bethune watches, Flageollet says, “De Bethune’s clients are aesthetes. The ability to appreciate and recognise perfect balance has no border”.

VOUTILAINEN

A Finnish master watchmaker’s search for perfection made him cross borders and arrive at the scenic Swiss region, Val-de-Travers, to finally carve a niche for himself in the world of horology. Kari Voutilainen established his own business as an independent artist watchmaker in the village of Môtiers, Switzerland in 2002. Ask him about what sets his work apart from other commercial luxury watch brands, Kari says, “Real luxury is rare, very difficult to obtain, so less is more”.

“In my workshop, a customer can talk with the creator and ideate together,” says Kari, who has mentored many students at the prestigious WOSTEP School of Watchmaking in Neuchâtel. He has collaborated with one of Japan’s leading contemporary lacquer artist, Kitamura Tatsuo (working under the art name Unryuan), to create a *piece unique*, the Hisui watch. He has brought to life the lacquer art by using special materials like gold dust, gold leaf, Turbo marmoratus i.e. the green snail or the great green turban shell, and the abalone shell.



“MOST OF TODAY’S GREAT HISTORICAL BRANDS WERE CREATED BY AN AMAZING, INNOVATIVE ARTIST. TWO HUNDRED YEARS LATER, THOSE BRANDS CONTINUE TO BUILD ON THE ORIGINAL GENIUS.”

The techniques used in the lacquering of the dial and bridges take more than a thousand hours of work to complete. “We make every component of our watches in-house, including hands and dials,” explains Kari.

GRÖNEFELD

Netherlands-based brothers Tim and Bart Grönefeld had been working anonymously, behind-the-scenes for prestigious Swiss watchmaking brands since 1992, until they presented their first watch bearing their own name, the Grönefeld Tourbillon Minute Repeater—GTM-06 in 2008. “Since Netherlands did not have a watch industry, we decided to create our own company,” states Bart. “It gave us an opportunity to be with our families and rise from ‘behind-the-scenes’ to showcase our art to the world.”

At Baselworld 2014, Grönefeld introduced the Parallax, one of the finest tourbillon watches seen this year. Parallax is defined as the apparent change in the position of an object when the observer changes his own position. The Parallax derives its name from the precision of the readability of the central second’s hand. To minimise the possibility of error due to the parallax when viewing the second’s hand from any angle, the hand is exception-

Opposite page:
MB&F’s Legacy
Machine 101 features
the first in-house
movement.
This page: De
Bethune’s Dream
Watch 5.2 (top) and
Grönefeld’s Parallax
(left) were
introduced at
Baselworld 2014.





Above: Maestoso (left) by Christophe Claret is a first-of-its-kind wristwatch with a traditional detent escapement. Speake Marin's Velsheda (right) is named after a British J-Class yacht.

ally close to the outer chapter ring with the second's indexes. "Having worked on many tourbillons for different brands, what we could not understand is why they didn't have a mechanism to set the time to the precise second," says Bart. He further elaborates, "To read the second is difficult as they often have a very small seconds hand on top of the tourbillon cage or none at all." "This is why we invented a special mechanism to set the watch to the precise second and maintain a large central second's hand." In a neat addition, the one-armed balance wheel bridge runs parallel to the central second's hand.

Grönefeld's clientele quite matches the entrepreneurial spirit of the brothers. "Many of our clients are watch connoisseurs who appreciate the finer things of life," says Tim and adds, "Many of them are self-made entrepreneurs, much like us, who understand what it takes to build a brand. They often started out collecting big brand watches and have moved on to collecting independent brands."

CHRISTOPHE CLARET

France-born Christophe Claret is the man who revolutionised the concept of 'independent' watch-

makers. Right after graduating from the Geneva Watchmaking School, he set up his own workshop.

"A large majority of famous brands are a part of groups or companies with several shareholders, while I am independent and the only shareholder of my business," says Switzerland-based Claret. For decades, he went on to produce movements for some of Switzerland's most prominent watch brands and is still responsible for contributing technically to some of the best complicated watches commissioned by these brands.

His latest timepiece—Maestoso—showcased at Baselworld 2014—is one of the few creations to be equipped with a cylindrical balance spring. Claret remains the first-of-his-kind to equip a wristwatch with a traditional detent escapement, a mechanism usually designed to run in a perfectly stabilised position. Claret's ingenious design and execution enables the mechanism to operate in all positions that wearing a wristwatch entails. "The Maestoso project was conceived eight years ago. It was very important for me to create a movement with an escapement which could be an alternative to a tourbillon," Claret reveals. "This timepiece boasts of no fewer than three patents and was formulated entirely at Manufacture Claret."