

GIRARD-PERREGAUX BLEND INNOVATION AND HERITAGE

IN FEBRUARY THIS YEAR GIRARD-PERREGAUX INVITED WATCH PRESS FROM AROUND THE WORLD TO THE DESIGN MUSEUM IN LONDON FOR A PREVIEW OF SOME OF THE NEW LINES THAT WERE TO BE LAUNCHED AT THE SIHH EXHIBITION IN GENEVA IN APRIL. IT SEEMS THAT 2008 WILL BE A VINTAGE YEAR FOR THE FAMILY-OWNED COMPANY THAT IS BASED IN LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS.

By John Goodall

Some of the new products have strong links with the company's past. The evolution of Girard-Perregaux has always been a blend of shapes, materials and function in the quest for perfection. In the early 19th century, Jean-François Boute, who was behind the venture that became Girard-Perregaux, was a genius who created ultra-thin watches and excelled in designing very refined watches. Some of his time-pieces were sought-after "designer watches" which were disguised as such items as a miniature musical instrument, a butterfly or even a book. Some were even in the form of perfume dispensers. In the mid 19th century, Constant Girard incorporated a tourbillon into a movement with three parallel bridges that were arrow-shaped. This

aligned the barrel, train wheel and tourbillon on the same axis. It was the forerunner of the famous "Three Golden Bridges" design which has become one of the most respected features of Girard-Perregaux's collection in recent times.

SEA HAWK PRO 1000M



AN HISTORIC PRECEDENT

Girard-Perregaux chose London's Design Museum as the symbolic place where it first revealed its most important creations for 2008. The first new model that was revealed was a Bi-Axial Tourbillon. Luigi Macaluso, president of the company since 1992, surprised many people when he revealed that this complex version of a tourbillon was first used by Constant Girard as early as 1867 in the pocket watch that won him a distinction at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in that year. This even preceded the tourbillon with three golden bridges which won him a gold medal.

The Bi-Axial Tourbillon that has been launched by the company this year follows on directly from this heritage, but in the form of a wristwatch. It combines two concentric cages that enable the regulating mechanism to make multi-dimensional rotations. The internal cage carries the balance,

balance spring and escapement and completes one turn on its axis every 15 seconds. The external cage completes one revolution every one minute and 15 seconds. The two cages contain more than 110 components, but weigh just 0.80 grams. A full revolution of this very complex mechanism is completed in 3 minutes and 45 seconds. This serves a dual function: it enables excellent precision to be achieved, while providing an intriguing visual display, an aerial ballet. It can be admired through the dial and through the transparent case-back.

Gold, steel and titanium were selected as the materials for the cages in order to provide perfect balance and the best performance. Two co-axial barrels store the energy to power this watch and provide a constant flow of energy and a power reserve of 72-hours. Only 33 of these watches



will be released and they will have a case diameter of 45mm and a case-back secured by six screws and fitted with a sapphire crystal. They are water resistant to 30 metres. The movement is a 15 1/2 ligne Girard-Perregaux GPE0201 manually wound calibre. The variable inertia balance is fitted with gold adjustment screws.

The design of a new watch called the Vintage 1945 won much praise at the Design Museum launch. Its off-centre hour and minute display leaves space for the small seconds, date and power reserve indicators in the lower part of the dial. Its original elegance helps it to stand out from the crowd. It features Roman numerals, blued steel "leaf-shaped" hands and a grand-feu enamel dial, which is entirely hand-made. The Vintage 1945 is fitted with Girard-Perregaux's in-house GP01900 self-winding movement which can be admired through the sapphire case-back. The curved white gold case is 35 x 37mm and is fitted with an alligator strap and a deployant buckle.



VINTAGE 1945

FASHION AND LUXURY TIME

World time watches are popular at the moment and Girard-Perregaux's ww.tc range has been particularly successful. This year, the company has added the ww.tc 24 Hour Shopping, which features a new interpretation of the theme. Instead of naming only capital cities on the rotating inner bezel that indicates time zones, the 24 Hour Shopping features the names of places that are famous for their fashion and luxury boutiques, such as Faubourg Saint-Honoré, Ginza, Bond Street, Rodeo Drive and Madison Avenue.

Another new version of the ww.tc is the Financial, which includes a chronograph in its 43mm titanium case. This indicates not only world times with day and night indications, but also the opening hours of the world's four major stock markets, New York, London, Hong Kong and Tokyo. Its stylish rubber strap emphasises the technical and sporty nature of this watch.

When it comes to serious sports watches, Girard-Perregaux is not left behind.

This year it has introduced the Sea Hawk Pro 1,000 metres. This is equipped G-P's self-winding GP033R0 movement in its 44mm case that has been developed, produced and tested by the manufacture. It has a unidirectional rotating bezel that can be used to calculate dive times and it is fitted with a helium valve that helps to decompress the watch after deep dives. It endures a series of tests that subject it to a force in excess of 1,500kg

in order to earn its water resistance guarantee to the strict ISO 6425 standard.

The dial indices and hands are Superluminova-coated so that the hours, minutes and power reserve are clearly visible in low light conditions. The sub-dials at 11 and 6 o'clock respectively show seconds and power reserve. The date is shown between 1 and 2 on the dial. The moulded rubber bezel matches the black dial and rubber strap.



WATCH UNIVERSE

MONTBLANC IS MAKING ITS OWN MOVEMENTS

MONTBLANC IS A RELATIVE NEWCOMER TO THE WATCH INDUSTRY: IT ONLY SOLD ITS FIRST WATCH JUST OVER 10 YEARS AGO, BUT IT IS VERY EXPERIENCED IN DESIGNING, PRODUCING AND SELLING LUXURY GOODS AND IT HAS USED ALL THIS EXPERIENCE TO BUILD ITS REPUTATION AS A WATCHMAKER, TOO. IN JUST 10 YEARS THE WATCH DIVISION OF THE COMPANY HAS COME A LONG WAY AND THIS YEAR IT HAS REVEALED ITS FIRST IN-HOUSE MOVEMENT.

By John Goodall



PIANIST LANG LANG WITH
LUTZ BETHGE

Lutz Bethge, Montblanc's International CEO, presented the story of the new in-house Rieussec movement to journalists at a press conference at London's Albion Gallery earlier this year. This was followed by a lunch for invited guests, together with a special performance by Lang Lang, the pianist who has been voted as the "hottest artist on the planet" by the New York Times. Lang Lang is one of Montblanc's ambassadors and this year's chairman of the Montblanc Cultural Foundation. Katherine Jenkins, the Welsh mezzo-soprano, is another of the company's ambassadors and was also present at Lang Lang's London performance.

Last autumn, Montblanc unveiled the first watches produced by Minerva, the company it took over in the village of Villeret with a view to ensuring that traditional watchmaking skills are not lost. Minerva has long been respected by serious watch lovers and so it is no surprise that all of this year's production of Montblanc Villeret 1858 watches has already sold out.

As we reported in an earlier issue of 00/24 Magazine, production of Villeret watches will never be more than a few hundred each year. These very exclusive timepieces have already helped to secure for Montblanc a place at the table reserved for that exclusive band of manufacturers of haute horlogerie with the resources to call themselves a manufacture, meaning that they have the ability to design and make movements in-house.

A COMPANY TO WATCH

The creation of Montblanc's own in-house movement, an entirely separate venture from the Villeret operation, is a very significant development and one that certainly makes Montblanc a company to watch. Although the company is a part of the Richemont Group, which includes companies such as Jaeger-LeCoultre, IWC, A. Lange & Söhne and Cartier, this move suggests that Montblanc intends to move forward as an independent watch house and to treasure its independence.

It is building its reputation on the quality of its watches, both in terms of design and quality. On the dials of the first timepieces that contain the new in-house chronograph movement, it is using the name of Nicolas Rieussec, together with the Montblanc name. Rieussec was the man who in 1821 created the first true "time writer", or chronograph. His special watch featured rotating dials and an ink marker attached to the fixed index to record the duration of an event by placing, or writing, an ink mark on the dial. Because of its use of ink, this timepiece was appropriately known as the Time Writer and gave the chronograph its name: "chronos" for time and "graphein" the Greek verb meaning "to write".



REVOLVING DIALS

Since Montblanc is involved with watches as well as writing instruments, it was natural for the company to choose a chronograph, or time writer, as the first movement to be produced in-house. Rieussec's technique of using two rotating discs to track the chronograph time provided the inspiration for Montblanc's new movement which also has rotating discs for the chronograph minutes and seconds. Unlike Rieussec's innovative movement, Montblanc's new movement uses pointers instead of marking the dial with ink. The Montblanc calibre MB R100 is a manually wound movement controlled by a classical column wheel with a vertical, almost wear-free disc clutch. As a result, the chronograph function can remain permanently switched on.

This exciting new chronograph calibre is unusual in having just one pusher at 8 o'clock on the case to operate the chronograph functions. The first press starts the seconds disc and the second press stops the time measurement, which can then be read from the seconds disc and the 30-minute counter. A third press resets the two discs to zero and prepares the watch for the next time measurement.

This watch, which probably has a longer name than any other timepiece, is called the Montblanc Star Nicolas Rieussec Monopusher Chronograph (Montblanc has obtained the rights to use the name Nicolas Rieussec.) This manufacture movement with twin barrels has been developed and produced by Montblanc in Le Locle and

not by its Villeret subsidiary. It forms a key part of the company's strategy as it develops its watch business. It marks another significant step forward in the short history of Montblanc watches and is being produced in limited editions: 25 in 950 platinum, 75 in 18ct white or yellow gold and 125 chronographs in 18ct red gold. With its unique rotating chronograph dials the Rieussec Monopusher Chronograph is destined to become a collector's item.



MAURICE LACROIX SPONSOR REAL TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Maurice Lacroix is sponsoring the Real Tennis National League for the third year and in addition it will be a sponsor for the Pros' singles championship to be held at the Burrows club. In April, the company provided the prizes at the club finals held at Queens Club, in London.

The original form of the Real Tennis game played all over Europe some 700 years ago was immensely popular with Kings and Nobles, particularly in Tudor Times and King Henry VIII was a great enthusiast. It was appropriate, therefore, that Prince Edward, who is a keen player, attended the event and presented the prizes, together with Mark Sutcliffe, managing director of Maurice Lacroix UK Ltd. This year's winner of the singles tournament was Rob Fahey, the seven-times world champion. He also won the doubles match with his partner.



HRH PRINCE EDWARD, ROB FAHEY AND MARK SUTCLIFFE

HIGH PERFORMANCE PORSCHE IN LONDON

In February this year the patience of British fans of Porsche Design watches was rewarded when the first Indicator watch destined for the UK was unveiled at a special event held at Jura Watches in London's Burlington Gardens. This watch, with its ground-breaking chronograph technology, was first unveiled at Baselworld in 2004, but because production has been very limited, supplies have only just reached the UK.

The revolutionary Indicator is the world's first self-winding chronograph with a mechanical digital display of the stopwatch time. Legibility was the highest priority for Porsche Design when the company developed this special watch is claimed to have the most complex wristwatch movement produced in limited series. It comprises approximately 800 components and needs four springs to provide a reliable power source for all its functions.

The styling of the Indicator was consciously modelled on the high performance Porsche Carrera GT sports car, following the company's mantra that "Form follows function". It sells for £75,000.

The party at Jura Watches in February also provided the UK launch-

pad for Porsche Design's Worldtimer P'6750, which was first shown at Baselworld in 2007. Its world time mechanism was created by Eterna – which also belongs to the Porsche stable. It makes possible the display of two different time zones simultaneously and independently, by means of windows at 9 and 3 o'clock on the dial. The cities that indicate the time zones are shown as three-letter codes and an explanation of these codes is engraved on the case-back. Once set correctly, the time in any of the 24 time zones can be displayed. It is possible to switch between world times simply by pressing a button.

The automatic movement is an ETA calibre Valgranges A 07 111 with an additional module developed by Eterna. The case is 45mm in diameter and 16.8mm thick and is available in matt-finished titanium or black PVD-coated titanium. It is water resistant to 100m. The scratch-resistant sapphire crystal is cambered and the titanium case-back is attached by six screws. The black natural caoutchouc (rubber) strap is fitted with a folding clasp. The price is £5,995.



BASELWORLD 2008:

JUST AS LONG AS IT'S BLACK!



If anything became clear during the very heavily visited BaselWorld show in April, it was that very large watches are still in vogue (see the article at the beginning of this magazine) and that all colours are popular, just so long as they're black. Black cases, black dials and black straps – and if they're not black, then the chances are they are white this year – steel, platinum, white gold or titanium. Yellow gold is out of favour, but rose gold has increased in popularity. Ceramic material is being used more than ever for bezels and bracelets as well as for cases. Rubber straps (black or white) are very popular, but straps made from ray skin seem to have gone out of fashion. Perhaps the most significant trend is the rapid advance of ladies' watches with beautiful mechanical movements. They feature in more and more manufacturers' collections and demand from jewellers is rising dramatically.

As far as functionality is concerned, there is clearly no end in sight to the popularity of chronographs. GMT watches (which display the time in two time zones), world time watches (which display capital cities and matching time zones) and watches with a power reserve indicator were also well represented in almost all collections this year. Round watches are all the rage now, followed by those with a tonneau shape. Now, most cases feature a sapphire crystal back so that the mechanical movement can be seen in all its glory.

