

Cones

Rotor



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If Yves Saint Laurent is considered the high priest of haute couture, then high-end watchmaker Maximilian Busser easily deserves the title "high priest of haute horology".

Once the youngest ever (31) managing director of the uber-luxury brand Harry Winston Rare Timepieces, Busser went his own way with the start-up MB&F (Maximilian Busser & Friends) before he turned 40, and continues to revel in playing on the boundaries of horology.

Within the profession, he is known as something of an eccentric genius, but he hardly looks like one. Clad in a staid black-and-white suit, Busser could be mistaken for one of the businessmen who are a dirham a dozen at the Emirates Tower coffee lounge. But instead of talking numbers with *tabloid*, the conversation takes a hedonistic tilt and is soon dominated by talk of creating watches that resemble spaceships, or unleashing cartoon-centric fantasies. In short, what makes Busser tick is his exclusive limited edition watches, priced from Dh200,000.

"Ninety-eight per cent of the people in this world will never understand what I do. They often give me this 'what the hell is this guy doing' look. But from where I stand, I create watches that satiate my creativity. They are utopian in their concept and the people who wear them don't conform to any style or fashion diktat," says Busser.

ROYALTY

His creations often wind up on the wrists of members of the UAE royal family.

"I am told many members of the royal family love my creations. They seem to understand the concept behind them. Though I don't want to name them, I think they wear [my watches] well. And quite honestly, anyone who feels an intense need to belong would never sport one of these," says Busser, pointing to the mammoth dial with battleaxe movements on his wrist. He has not had much luck with celebrity endorsements.

WATCH THIS SPACE

HAVING ALREADY PRODUCED WATCHES THAT ARE INSPIRED BY STAR WARS SPACESHIPS, THERE IS NO GUESSING WHAT HOROLOGIST MAXIMILIAN BUSSER WILL COME UP WITH NEXT

"Honestly, I don't think a celebrity would ever wear one of my creations. The problem with them [stars] is that they expect everything for free. But I am not complaining. If I were hit by a bus tomorrow, then I would die happy," he says. A picture of contentment, Busser

says that his life was not as rosy in 2005, when he was heading up the Harry Winston Rare Timepieces company.

"I had spent eight years of my life creating pieces for Harry Winston. I knew I had an incredible job, an incredible pay packet... but somehow I

felt like a Formula One racing driver who had done one season too many. I realised I wasn't motivated by money or power," says Busser.

And from this frustration arose his company, MB&F, which brings together similar minds who share a vision of creating radical watches.

"I put my life's savings - \$630,000 [Dh2.31 million] - in as the initial capital and surrounded myself with the best watchmakers in the field. They were like the unsung heroes whose names never appeared on the brands. But I promised them recognition and unlimited freedom," says Busser.

And three years down the line, the company is producing watches that are inspired by Japanese manga battleaxes, *Star Wars* spaceships and *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* submarines.

"When you look at one of our horological creations, you often wonder whether it's a watch or not. Engines powered by 650 watts, kinetic sculptures featuring 200-year-old horology... You question whether a watch should look like this. But that's what drives us."

• MB&F watches are available at Ahmed Seddiqi & Sons, Burjuman Centre



Sidewinder