

MAX BÜSSER



Max Büsser, founder and owner of MB&F (Max Büsser & Friends) is continuing to push the boundaries of watchmaking with his Horological Machines.

Having originated the Opus concept at Harry Winston, in which the famed jeweler collaborated with an independent

watchmaker each year to produce a limited edition watch, Büsser is now on his second Horological Machine, called HM2. "Our business model is high risk—every year doing a new movement or module," he admits. "If we have a technical glitch, it can be a huge problem. Every watch we come out with has to bring the same revenue as the others, so we balance our risk. The HM1 is over \$160,000, while the HM2 is \$62,000, but we are going to produce several times more."

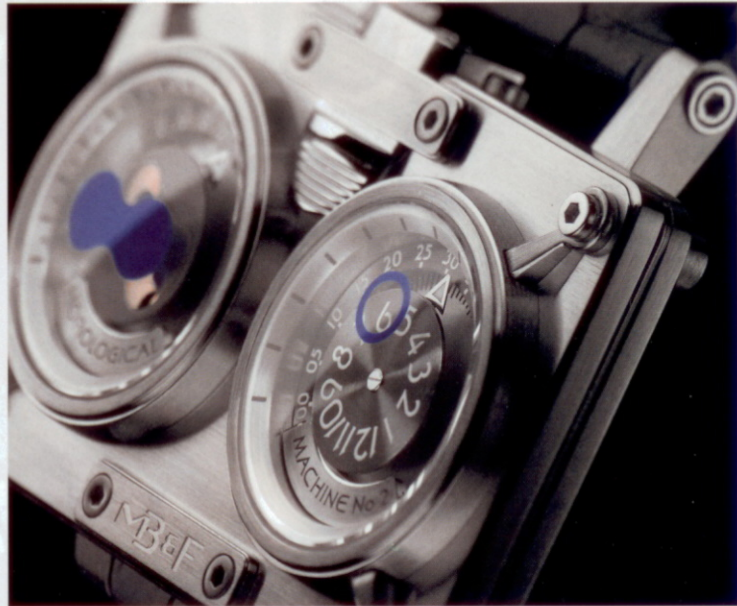
With Horological Machine No. 1, Büsser managed to deliver 30 pieces last year, out of a planned series of 100 pieces over three years. The first eight pieces of the HM2 have already been delivered, and Büsser will be making an additional 100 to 120 HM2 watches this year. "For the HM2, we will be using 500 movements over the course of the product life," Büsser details. "The movement is less complex. HM2 is a modular system, working on a Girard-Perregaux automatic base. We built the functions and the aesthetics around the base automatic movement, a north and south hemisphere moon phase with concentric retrograde date, and we have a jumping hour and retrograde minutes."

Büsser compares the hard work of his first year to his experience fulfilling his mandatory military service in Switzerland. "When you do the

army service, there is one week of really hard work, then it gets easier," he says. "With this brand, I think we have gotten through the first crucial delivery year. Creating the products is the exhilarating and fun part, while delivering the product is the hard part. I am particularly happy that we were able to keep our word with delivery of the HM2."

To give himself more time to create, Büsser has taken on a minority partner, Serge Kriknoff, to manage the operation work (he worked for Büsser as his first production director at Harry Winston). "This will enable me to pay more attention to the clients, the communication and the creation," Büsser says. "Being alone has its advantages, but it can be pretty lonely. It's really great to have someone with whom I can play psychological ping pong in the office."

One of the joys for Büsser is the opportunity to get to know the customers of MB&F. "They are e-mailing me from the brand website and inviting me to get together with them," he says, amazement in his voice. "When I went around the world, I met a bunch of my customers. There are three sorts of clients: the



majority of them are important collectors who are looking for different watches; then there is the real movement collector, who knows everything about movement technology; and finally, the polarized opposite, the customer who doesn't know anything about horology but falls in love with the watch."

Büsser is now deciding when to introduce HM3, either at the end of 2008 or at the beginning of 2009. "We have the prototype ready now, and we are working on pre-production series," Büsser details. "I am having a lot of fun. I am not even tired, which is amazing. My favorite part is being able to do anything I want creatively. We just get an idea and ask if it's crazy enough. If it is, we make it." ❖

Interview by Keith W. Strandberg, international editor. For more about MB&F, telephone 310.470.1388 or visit www.mbandf.com.



clockwise from top left—The MB&F Horological Machine No. 1, the first watch introduced by Büsser; the MB&F Horological Machine No. 2; Büsser holding the movement that powers the second watch; the collaborators of MB&F.