

With its monumental central balance; superlatively finished movement; completely independent dual time zones; unique vertical power reserve indicator and elegant annular case, Legacy Machine No.1 (LM1) is a tribute to the great innovators of traditional watchmaking, as well as being an authentic three-dimensional MB&F Machine.



The Future is Vintage

On paper it's hard to see what all the fuss is about. A not particularly complicated round watch with a second time zone and a power reserve indicator. Yet, MB&F's Legacy Machine No.1 is one of the most talked about timepieces of the year and for many was the hit of SalonQP.

Ian Skellern



LM1's 'friends' Karri Voutilainen and Jean-François Mojon (pictured either side of Max Büsser). Mojon met the considerable challenge of developing the calibre for LM1 from a blank sheet, while Voutilainen took responsibility for the aesthetic design and fine-finishing. The movement of LM1 bears the names of both its creators, and is the first calibre other than Voutilainen's own to bear his name.

What do you do when you have created an extremely successful niche brand largely on the basis of astounding the watch-loving world each year with ever-wilder Horological Machines and your passionate fan-base is eagerly anticipating that your next *chef-d'œuvre* will be even more extreme than the last? In the case of Maximilian Büsser, who has made MB&F a byword for expect-the-unexpected, he surprised everyone by not giving us what we thought we wanted, i.e. another futuristic piece of animated wrist sculpture, but what you would think we already had more than enough of thank you very much: An elegant round watch called Legacy Machine No.1 (LM1).

There was a very real risk that coming out with a relatively traditional (relatively traditional for MB&F that is) round watch would alienate many of MB&F's loyal disciples – and I don't use that term loosely. In fact, Büsser's closest colleagues actually tried to convince him not to do it as he explains: "When I showed the preliminary sketches for LM1 to my partner Serge Krinkoff and designer Eric Giroud, their reactions were mixed to say the least. They didn't understand what a round watch had to do with MB&F."

However, LM1 pulled off the seemingly impossible in both surprising and delighting MB&F's existing supporters and opening up a vastly larger universe of potential clients with more traditional tastes, i.e. those who are ready to strap something a little different onto their wrists but not quite up to it looking like a space station or twin-turbine attack aircraft just yet.



The time traveller's watch

Büsser is a big fan of old pocket watches, both for their nicely proportioned aesthetical qualities and the fact that practically all of the horological complications and indications we see on wristwatches today were conceived and realised during the period 1780-1850 – all without computers and often without electricity. With the new Legacy Machine line Büsser plans to pay homage to the watchmakers and the watches of that golden age of horology based on what he thinks MB&F would have created if it had existed 100 years ago, i.e. Legacy Machines are the imagined avant-garde timepieces of yesteryear.

To realise his dream of a massive suspended balance and vertical power reserve, Büsser enlisted the aide of Jean-François Mojon (Best Watchmaker 2010 Grand Prix de Genève, Harry Winston Opus 10) and his team at Chronode to develop the movement. He then convinced Kari Voutilainen (Best Men's Watch 2007 Grand Prix de Genève) to take responsibility for the historical validity of the dial aesthetics and movement forms and finishes.

While LM1 is round, inspired by history and pays homage to the large slowly oscillating balances found in high-end pocket watches, it still had to be very three-dimensional to warrant the MB&F moniker. To that end

In homage to the best 19th-century pocket watches, LM1 features an oscillating (2.5Hz), large diameter balance with traditional Breguet overcoil suspended from majestic twin arches, in full view, but without apparent connection to the movement.

the balance is not just simply visible from the dial side, but suspended from majestically curved arches, hovering over the twin dials like a pulsating UFO. Not surprisingly for an escapement seemingly detached completely from the movement, the regulator – including the traditional 2.5Hz beat rate balance wheel – was developed from scratch.

The three-dimensionality of the dial is reinforced by a vertical power reserve indicator – a world first – driven by an ultra-flat ceramic differential. This enables the height of the indicator to rise above the dial rather than adding to the thickness of the movement. The vertical curve of the power reserve indicator matches that of the sapphire crystal and complements the curve of the arches supporting the balance.

Dial side

Underneath the visually dominating balance wheel are two white dials, each able to display their own time – that means both hours and minutes – completely independently of each other, even though they are both regulated by the same escapement. That's another world first. Naturally, being an MB&F Machine, these sub-dials couldn't simply sit in, or even on, the top of the movement, but are actually raised above it. The dials are domed, circled by a gold band and covered with tensioned white lacquer. Büsser didn't want screw heads debasing the purity of the dials so a special fixation had to be developed to hold them invisibly but securely in place. In a departure from tradition, the hands are actually blued gold rather than heat-blued steel, because Fielder, the company supplying MB&F's hands, only works with precious metals and in this instance Büsser chose loyalty over historical accuracy.

The Future is Vintage



Complementing the three-dimensionality of the balance floating in space, the dual domed white dials with their bright blue gold hands float above the top of the movement.

The crown on the right bearing a neat MB&F battle-axe motif both winds the movement and sets the time on the right-hand dial, while the crown at 8 o'clock engraved with a line map of the world independently sets the time on the left hand dial.

Gazing down through the sapphire crystal bubble onto the anything-but-traditional-looking dial, it's easy to imagine standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Captain Nemo on the bridge of the *Nautilus* looking out on the fabled city of Atlantis. But it is also just as easy to imagine standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Captain Kirk on the bridge of the *Enterprise* looking down onto the Mars Base Alpha. Part of the magic of LM1 is how it manages to look both vintage and futuristic at the same time.

The right balance

And the dial side is only half the story. Turning the watch over reveals why Kari Voutilainen was such an essential partner in the project. Except for the lack of a balance, the movement could easily be a superlative example of 19th-century watchmaking. The attention to detail is simply sublime; and not just in the mirror polished screw heads, Geneva waves you could surf and large jewels set in gold chatons, but also in the pocket watch sized gaps between the bridges and between the bridges and case. As Voutilainen explains: "The difficulty in designing a pleasing bridge layout for LM1 wasn't so much in making it look traditional, like it could have come out of an auction catalogue, but in making it look interesting without an animated balance wheel."

While Voutilainen specified, and is responsible for, the types of finish and decoration, the actual hand-finishing is the work of Jacques-Adrien Rochat. Not a name many would recognise, but the fact he also finishes minute repeaters for Patek Philippe and that Voutilainen is proud to have his name engraved on the movement with Mojon's provides a testament to his skill.

The reason LM1 is likely to be a game changer for MB&F is that Büsser has always stated his desire to keep MB&F small and fun. Until now, its radical Horological Machines, though intellectually widely appreciated, have a fairly limited pool of people willing to buy and wear them. If LM1 is a portent of what's to come, the Legacy Machines will exponentially expand MB&F's potential client base, thus significantly increasing demand and putting pressure on MB&F to increase production. However, this is something Büsser is well aware of and is one of the reasons MB&F will alternate each year in bringing out a new Horological Machine with a new Legacy Machine.

As long as Büsser manages to balance the allure of MB&F as a niche horological renegade with the pressures of increased demand created by the popular and relatively mainstream timepiece that is Legacy Machine No.1, I expect the future to burn ever brighter for MB&F.

Further information: www.mbandf.com