

Busser and friends – a name to watch

With an impressive timepieces pedigree behind him, Maximilian Busser is now taking on the watchmaking world uncompromisingly, as **Erza S.T.** reports.

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Four-and-a-half years ago, people heard about Maximilian Busser as someone making a name for himself in the horology industry. He had worked successfully at rare timepiece manufacturer Jaeger-LeCoultre (JLC) and had brought Harry Winston (HW) back from the dead.

However, ultimate satisfaction still eluded him: He missed the whole start-up process and creating something from scratch.

“My life has been all about meeting incredible people,” says Maximilian. This includes JLC managing director Henry-John Belmont, who gave Busser his start in the world of timepieces.

After four successful years there, Busser went on to head the Harry Winston watch division. “I had the freedom to do what I wanted with the brand but the company was on the verge of bankruptcy.

I was working 14 to 16 hours a day, wondering how our creditors would be paid.

“After six years of hard work we managed to put HW back on the world’s luxury watch map, which made me the happiest person there. However, despite the company growing I still felt empty somehow.”



MB&F
mastermind
Maximilian
Busser





MB&F



LOYAL FOLLOWING

The passing away of Busser's father proved to be a turning point for him. He decided, in 2003, to go it alone so that he would be very much his own boss. By 2005 he had resigned from HW and started up his own company, Maximilian Busser and Friends (MB&F), using his life savings of 700,000 Swiss francs to develop the company's first timepiece.

Busser travelled the world to assess the market for his product. He was fortunate that six retailers had enough faith to pay him an advance for a product that would only see the light of day two years later.

The MB&F name is a reflection of the extent of the collaboration

that goes into making the company's products. Independent craftspeople, largely unrecognised before, appear on the MB&F website and catalogue.

Busser is brimming with vitality and vision. When *The Peak* meets him at his Geneva office he is keen to stress his company's independence. "We can create whatever we believe in," he says. "We don't care about commercial pressures, yet have an extremely

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Only 66 examples of Horological Machine No. 2 have been produced, priced at \$88,000 each.



The Starcruiser version of Horological Machine No. 3 features raised cones in line with the wearer’s arm.



faithful and passionate client base.

“I believe we must put guts into what we do. It’s not about money, and never will be. It’s about waking up in the morning and enjoying myself. That’s priceless,” he says.

MB&F now has a cult following among mechanical watch connoisseurs from around the world, especially in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Busser says his clients are very self-assured people, who care little about the opinions of others. What’s more, he adds, they have turned out to be his best salespeople.

The company has deliberately remained small, turning out no more than 200 pieces a year. His clients do not buy his pieces as investments in the conventional sense, appreciating them more for the intrinsic craftsmanship and creativity they exude.

“Most watches bought as investments take 30 to 40 years to show any significant rise in value,” Busser says. “Indeed, many may depreciate within the first 10 years or so. I’ve never claimed my products are investments. We’ve been going for less than five years. We’ll know in 20 if they’re an investment or not.”

He likens his products to “mechanical art” or sculpture: “Our watches do more than just tell the time. They are amazingly intricate machines that, coincidentally, tell the time as well. People that don’t understand this distinction shouldn’t really be buying our

watches.”

MB&F seems to have a rosy future ahead of it. “If I look back,” Busser reflects, “I think I can say that at JLC I learned the craft and developed a passion for real horology. At HW, I discovered the person I really am. Driving the company for seven years revealed to me what mettle I was made of.

“Both experiences definitely helped carve out the MB&F story.”

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