

THE ALCHEMISTS

IN CONVERSATION WITH STEVEN HOLTZMAN AND ROGER DUBUIS BY EMILIE YABUT-RAZON



Founder Steven Holtzman is bringing independent master watchmakers together to create innovative pieces for Maitres du Temps

Transforming random ideas into tangible objects worthy of praise requires a certain kind of chemistry, one that Maitres du Temps founder Steven Holtzman and experienced watchmaker Roger Dubuis have. What could an American luxury watch distributor and a retired Swiss horologist possibly offer the complex world of high complications? It turns out, a lot.

A new member of Geneva's watchmaking elite, Maitres du Temps is the brainchild of Holtzman, who worked around the concept of bringing together the most talented master watchmakers to develop exclusive timepieces.

The brand officially launched its first watch, Chapter One, at the SIHH in April. The piece showcases a fascinating mix of complications, including a mono-pusher chronograph, tourbillon, and unique rolling bar indicators for the moon phase and day of the week.

Dubuis' influence is obvious in the design of Chapter One's tourbillon cage and, based on his watchmaking talent, possibly many more intricacies within the movement. With years of experience from Longines and Patek Philippe under his belt, Dubuis is best recognized for co-founding SOGEM SA, the company that went on to become the manufacturer named after him.

Along with Dubuis, Holtzman brought the expertise of two other renowned watchmakers, Christophe Claret and Peter Speake-Marin.

Famous for his contributions to the creation of the Harry Winston Opus 4 and Jean Dunand's Tourbillon Orbital, Claret is one of the great masters of major complications. He has earned a reputation for using non-traditional techniques, mostly from industries other than watchmaking.

Adding to the magical recipe is Speake-Marin, an expert in restoration and previously a complications specialist at Renaud & Papi. In 2000, he established The Watch Workshop, an independent manufactory where he could design and build his own timepieces.

And finally, the glue that holds these watchmakers together is Holtzman. An entrepreneur who began his career more

than 25 years ago, he created Helvetia Time Corporation (HTC) in 1997 mainly to sell and distribute high-end independent watch brands in the US. His company was instrumental in initiating the release of brands such as Jean Dunand in North and Central America.

Three independent watchmakers and a distinguished watch distributor bringing their ideas and talent to the fore. Is collaboration a trend for the industry? REV★LUTION took the opportunity to catch up with Holtzman and Dubuis at Chapter One's launch in Hong Kong.

COULD YOU TELL US HOW THIS PARTNERSHIP WAS FORMED?

SH: The concept of working with masters came about after we had an idea of doing something with rolling bars. We went to Mr Dubuis and asked him for ideas on how to incorporate rolling bars into a watch. His suggestions led us to Peter, who was able to bridge the gap and bring it all together. We then went to Christophe for manufacturing, because he had the capacity and could come up with the right solutions in terms of production and materials.

So one person leading to another was how the project evolved. From Chapter One and on to Chapter Two, problems and solutions created links, taking us from watchmaker to watchmaker. There are certain areas where you can see each person's expertise. Everyone took an area of their specialization and fused it on to this timepiece, putting their personal touch. With Chapters One and Two, Mr Dubuis designed the rotors, and they have a nostalgic feel. Peter was a contemporary touch, while Christophe was a bit futuristic with his use of material.

WAS THERE A SPECIFIC DESIGN INSPIRATION FOR THE CHAPTER ONE?

RD: Certainly, yes. There is an idea behind the design, and that is to get very professional individuals together to realize a very special project. This is what I appreciate because it makes the end product different from anything else previously conceived.



Roger Dubuis is known for his passion and talent in watchmaking, a craftsman in whom tradition runs deep