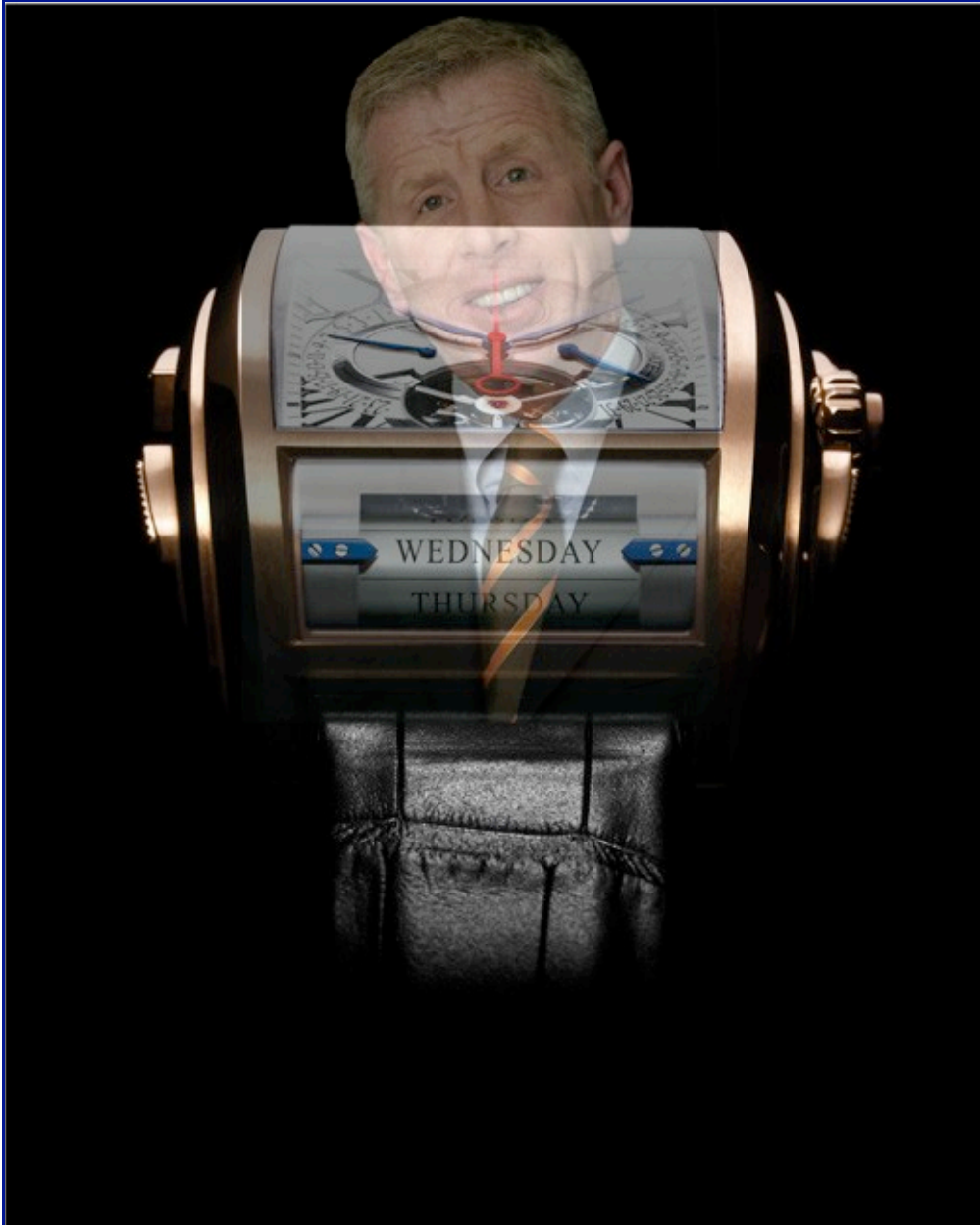


Interview at Steven Holtzman of Maitres du Temps: The Culture of Watch is preserved!

2 Febbraio 2009 by contaminuti



Life flows fast, obviously, time too. But there's a big difference between what becomes in a while, past, and what can become behind our back, a little page of history. We have to stand and to observe who measures the time through passion: *"as a face painted by one thousand of painters gives out one thousand of different paints, this is what happens in the world of watches; it's pure art"*. But style could sometimes be so unique that methods are upset. **Steven Holtzman**, the man that founded **Maitres du Temps**, got the intuition, the touch, the melody which no one has ever minded before: to join together three of the cleverest watchmakers, **Christophe Claret**, **Roger Dubuis**, **Peter Speake-Marin**, to add a family tree to his watch in a way that nobody can boast of having today. Robert has already talk about **Chapter One** [in this post](#).

Web is like thoughts: you don't have limits! So I succeed in contacting Mr. Holtzman and ask him for an exclusive interview for [blog-orologi.com](#), to try to get out the concepts that are behind Maitres du Temps. He quickly and personally answer me, because belongs only to him HIS big passion for timepieces, that drove him through this project, after nearly thirty years spent at the apex of the *Haute Horlogerie* management field, ended in 2006 with the role of president at Roger Dubuis USA. Here below answering to my questions:

contaminuti - Mr. Holtzman, you're in the watch business since many years... What is the most important reason that drove you to found, NOW, Maîtres du Temps in the middle of an era where "except watches", everything seems to go counterclockwise?

Steven Holtzman - It is difficult for me to think of doing anything else. Watches have been in my blood my whole life. From the time I was very young I have had a passion and appreciation for timepieces. As a child, I was amazed with my first mechanical watch. That fascination has stayed with me my entire life. In addition, as I was growing up, my family was in the watch industry. My father owned an old American watch company, Gruen, which was initially founded in the early 1900s. For me, watches are very much a mirror of our being. They always seem to move forward; they get older and more seasoned. Mechanical watches have their own heartbeat; they can also be a reflection of our lifestyle.

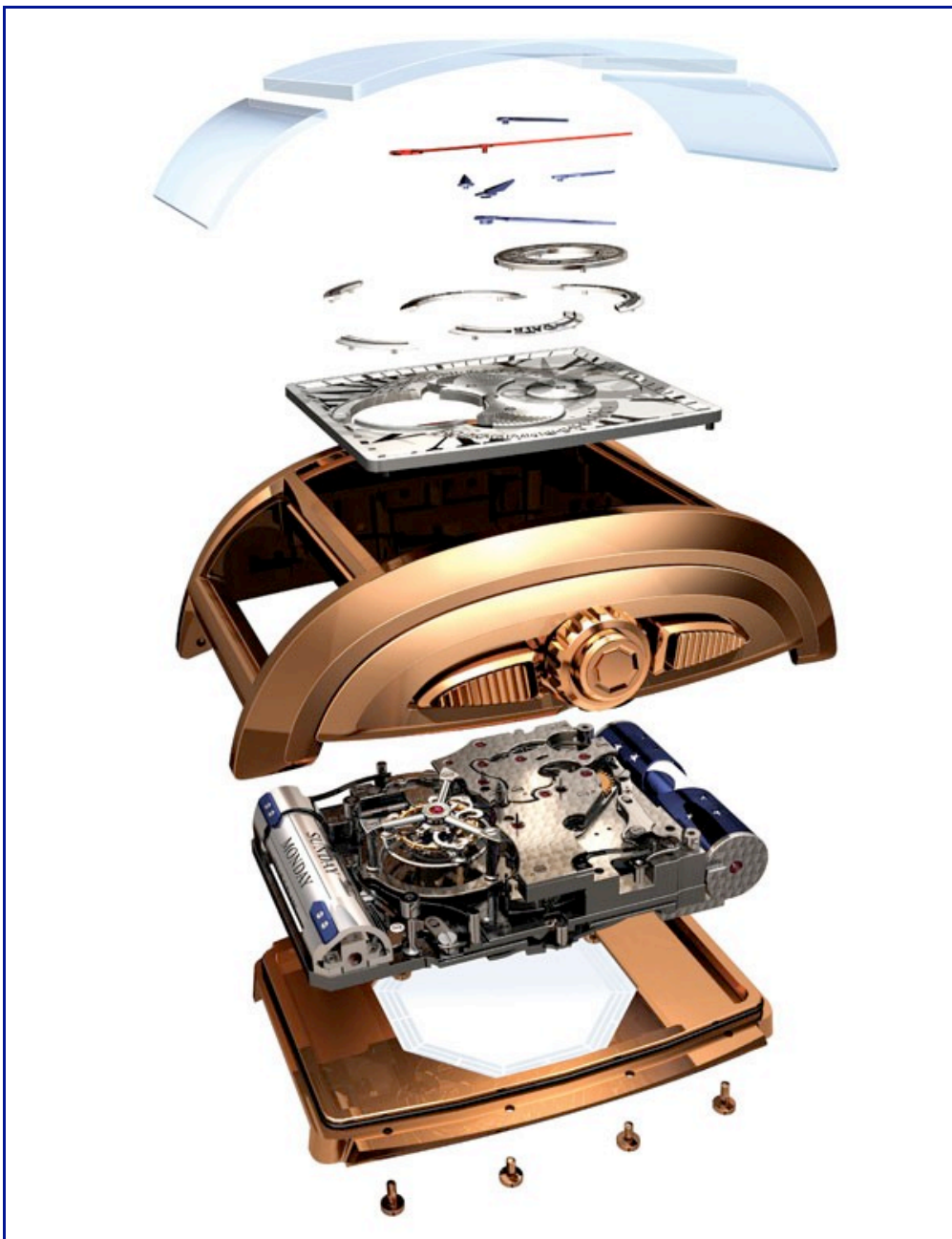


cm - Do you think that horology culture is enough developed and spreaded? "Culture" in this case doesn't mean TO POSSESS an Haute Horlogie timepiece...

S.H. - Today more than ever, there seem to be many students of horological culture. It is one of the more exciting movements that allows new developments like that of Maîtres du Temps to be appreciated. The fact that we have blogs, television channels, and more and more watch publications helping us all to spread the knowledge, understanding, and language of the watch culture has been paramount.

Culture is something that needs to be acquired, nurtured, and organically grown. In order to feed the development of culture, in this case education, it is necessary that we all become more aware of the incredible amount of information that is available to us. As we continue to learn more, read more, and crave more about watch culture, it is not simply a matter of possessing a watch-it's more about understanding what it is we want and why we want it.

In the European markets, there appears to be a more advanced culture for timepieces. This community has lived with an appreciation for and philosophy of horology for some time. To draw an analogy, as we have seen, there are many great wines available to us today throughout the world. At one time, there was only French wine that was considered the best, but we all know that in Italy or California or Spain or Australia, there is great potential for quality grapes and some fantastic wines that are now considered at par or even better than some of the French favorites. As we have found in the wine industry, there seems to be more awareness and appreciation for the culture, the philosophy, and understanding of the whole process. This is the case with watches; the awareness has grown to such a great level. Again, this gives us all an opportunity to experience the appreciation.



cm - Join together Mr. Christophe Claret, Mr. Roger Dubuis and Mr. Speake-Marin, you have linked together three of top of the top horologists on the earth, maybe in the galaxy... Was this anyway a good idea in your mind because, even if they didn't agree together, any of them could add a different complication to a Maitres du Temps watch?

S.H. - The concept of Maîtres du Temps was to work on collaborations, Chapter One with Mr. Christophe Claret, Mr. Roger Dubuis, and Mr. Peter Speake-Marin; Chapter Two with Mr. Daniel Roth, Mr. Roger Dubuis, and Mr. Peter Speake-Marin, and so on. We have in various stages of development multiple collaborations with some the greatest watchmakers of our time. It is an honor and privilege to be a part of the process. My role has been to be the connector; each watchmaker has the skill set to come up with solutions. The difficult part of this process and collaboration is to pick and choose which solution to utilize. In theory, all of them could make sense, but only one can be chosen. Certain parts of the watch, such as the development of the tourbillon cage in Chapter One, can be a combination of three watchmakers' ideas. Other parts of the watch, such as developing ways to move the rolling barrels and driving power to the outer corner of the case, did come from just one watchmaker. The concept of horology and watchmaking in many cases can be interpreted differently by different watchmakers. For example, if a watch needs to be serviced, three different watchmakers may have three different ways of serving that same watch. Each of the techniques used could be a practical solution with slight differences. And that result could lead to watches that all work; however, each watch could have been repaired and assembled slightly differently by each watchmaker. Like the person with a heartbeat and a soul, no two watches can be exactly the same; there are always slight differences. This is what helps us to establish our appreciation and foundation for culture.

cm - Which is most important and why in Chapter One? Tradition, innovation or reinterpretation?

S.H. - This is a very difficult question; all three must be taken into consideration and hopefully have been present in *Maîtres du Temps*. This reminds me of a story I once heard about Federal Express. The heads of different departments were sitting around a table, and one of them exclaimed that his job was the most important as he was the person who was in charge of all of the drivers that delivered the packages to the homes and offices. Another department head quickly explained that her department was most important because she was in charge of the phone operators who took the orders for all the packages to be picked up. And then, the head of the airplane pilots made the same claim because without them, the company could not fly the packages from one city to another. The story goes on and on with each of the departments, until it was finally agreed that each departmental role was equally important to the company's success. As such, this analogy can be supposed of tradition, innovation, and reinterpretation. With Chapter One, it was very important to be able to have a brand that was grounded and had respect for tradition. One of Mr. Dubuis' key directives was to anchor the style and philosophy of the brand with the great traditions of the Swiss watch industry. Mr. Claret's contribution was his innovative factory, and his ability to execute and assemble watches and components is unparalleled. Mr. Speake-Marin is an up-and-comer in independent watchmaking (AHCI), and he has given us all kinds of solutions, ideas, and ways to reinterpret the process. By combining the three watchmakers and respecting the three important aspects of the process, we hope to balance equally the tradition, innovation, and reinterpretation.



cm - *Maîtres du Temps* was founded to get in comparison and of course to get in competition with hundred of years experienced manufacturers. Is it possible to write a page in the history of horology from now?

S.H. - As Mr. Philippe Dufore has said, "Every time a craftsman or watchmaker retires, the page in the history book of horology is finished." In the movie *Time Concepts*, Mr. Dufore goes on to explain the importance of craftsmanship and tradition. *Maîtres du Temps* has taken as its philosophy *Masters and Their Craft-A Lifelong Pursuit of Excellence*. This is always engraved somewhere on our timepieces. It is the philosophy behind the brand; it is what we hope will allow us to write our page in the history of horology. Our goal is to anchor ourselves and align ourselves with some of the greatest independent watchmakers of our time. The intent is to create classic watches that not only will be appreciated today but for many years to come. Obviously in this case, time will tell.

cm - Say something to all the Italian *connoisseurs* that surf on blog-orologi.com

S.H. - It is a great honor to be able to address blog-orologi.com. It is my belief that the Italian market is one of the two most important markets in the world. Watch brands either make it in Italy or fail in the world.

Steven Holtzman
CEO *Maîtres du Temps*

As we could learn by Mr. Holtzman's words, I conclude with: "*Passion it's like love: it's difficult to pretend*"

it..”

This post will be insert, near many others collected by Maitres du Temps, in the [Articles](#) area.

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