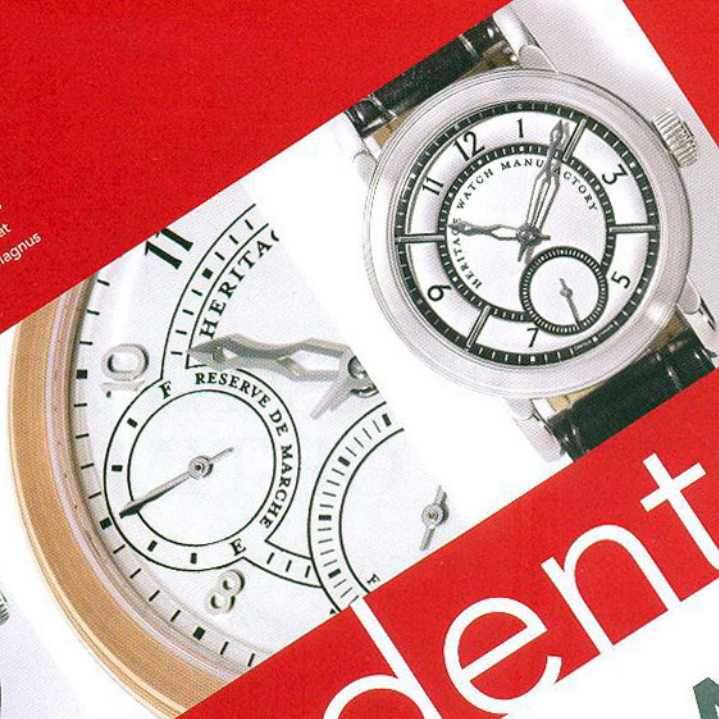


Heritage Watch Manufactory was formed in Neuchâtel in 2010 and boasts the big names of Karsten Frasdorf as its watchmaker and Eric Giroud as its designer. Two models were presented at this year's GTE – the Magnus and the Tensus.



Independent on Show

The third edition of London-based watch show SalonQP will include, for the first time, a number of independent exhibitors in their own dedicated gallery. We take a closer look at them and ask how they are doing in this uncertain economy. **Elizabeth Doerr**

This year's Geneva Time Exhibition, held in Switzerland in January, exuded an aura of creativity, much of which was due to the participation of a great number of independents – a group of watchmakers and designers never short on creativity. And the 2011 edition of SalonQP is poised to become equally as interesting – the new venue, Saatchi Gallery, has attracted the attention of more independent companies than ever before, including a number that debuted just last year at GTE and Baselworld.



In a total break from MB&F's futuristic Horological Machines, the company has just launched its classic, round Legacy Machine No. 1 (LM1) in rose or white gold. With its monumental central balance; beautifully finished movement; completely independent dual time zones; unique vertical power reserve indicator and elegant annular case, LM1 is a tribute to the great innovators of traditional watchmaking and, above all, an authentic three-dimensional MB&F Machine.



Big winners

Two of last year's most talked about independents will be showing in SalonQP's Independents' Gallery: Ressence and Heritage Watch Manufactory. These brands respectively took home second and third place at the GTE Superwatch award, a big honour for two newcomers. Benoît Mintiens, an industrial designer living in Antwerp, Belgium, was honored for his ingenuity: his Platform Watch very simply and very astutely conveys the time in a manner that is so different from everything else out there that it is almost impossible to believe that it is based on a standard automatic movement. This, of course has been modified with a module that was designed and developed by Mintiens himself, which needed three years to perfect.

Mintiens' young brand is called Ressence; in his native tongue this artificial word is the shortened form of '*renaissance de l'essentiel*', which translates from the French as the 'renaissance of the essential'. And this phrase perfectly describes the Platform Watch. The dial's patented display system features a revolving module that spins it around its own axis. This dial is read almost as if it were a regulator, the main hand points out the minutes

while the subdials indicate the hours, seconds and whether it is day or night (using 'a' and 'p', which stand for 'am' and 'pm'). All the displays remain on one level, 'orbiting' around the dial so that the central sweep hand continuously displays the current minute. Mintiens describes what the eye sees as it gazes at the Platform Watch: "Graphically, time seems to be displayed on the outer skin of the watch."

Heritage Watch Manufactory, as featured in QP49, is the brainchild of German master watchmaker Karsten Fraessdorf. Now at home in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, the young brand places emphasis on technical delicacies clothed in classicism. The main launches thus far have been the Magnus and the Tensus models – the latter boasts true constant force inside the movement.

"[Our brand] focuses on the power of innovation, technical performance, and mechanical ingenuity," explains Christian Gütermann, member of the board and co-founder. "It is these elements that differentiate us from many other brands and make our instruments unique."



Maîtres du Temps' Chapter One Round was developed by a collaboration of world-renowned master watchmakers, Christophe Claret and Peter Speake-Marin. An incredibly complex timepiece crafted from 678 components, it features a world-first combination of complications: tourbillon, monopusher chronograph, retrograde date, retrograde GMT and two rolling bars indicating the day of the week and phase of the moon.

Independents on



Spirit is the new timepiece from Speake-Marin, which exudes a casual military style while delivering an inspirational rallying cry through its caseback engraved motto 'Fight, Love and Persevere'.

A new chapter

The next chapter of MB&F was introduced in October. Having already released Horological Machines 1, 2, 3 and 4 over the past four years, the much-anticipated fifth machine was released upon the opening of Max Büsser's first Geneva boutique. The Legacy Machine 1 is a very different machine to the previous science-fiction-like Horological Machines and simultaneously kicks off a new line at MB&F. LM1 stems from the second way that Büsser's imagination could project a three-dimensional machine using inspiration from what he calls the "golden age of watchmaking – a beautiful time that made people proud of art".

Büsser began sketching this Machine in 2007 before the recession began, but was uncertain as to whether it would fit in with the tastes of the clientele his small company was fast establishing. Firmly deciding to push forward, his first act was to obtain the services of Jean-François Mojon, whose fledgling company Chronode had at that

point only independently worked on the MCT project. Kari Voutilainen soon joined Büsser's "friends," and between the three of them they have created a timepiece housed in a round case like no other.

The central focus on the front of the 44mm white or red gold case is, of course, the 14mm balance wheel languidly beating at the vintage frequency of 18,000vph. It is suspended over the two time displays (each of which has its own crown and can be independently adjusted) by a wildly technical looking, but very finely finished, two-pronged balance-cock. Offsetting this at the bottom of the dial is the world's first vertical power reserve indicator, which is driven by an ultra-flat differential with ceramic bearings allowing for a slimmer complication and a more robust and longer-wearing mechanism. The futuristic look of these two elements shouldn't fool the astute observer, the design and finishing of the movement is purely inspired by the 19th century, right down to the highly polished gold chatons. One of the only concessions to the modern age is the high-tech, domed sapphire crystal, the curve of which allows for scratch-resistant covering of the three-dimensionality of the interesting dial.

Maîtres du Temps was founded by Steven Holtzman, formerly a US distributor of luxury brands such as Roger Dubuis and Fortis. Holtzman had the unique idea of bringing together teams of the world's most talented independent watchmakers to develop exclusive, technically exciting timepieces. Chapter One combined the talents of Peter Speake-Marin and Christophe Claret, while Chapter Two saw Roger Dubuis, Daniel Roth and Speake-Marin working together.

Chapter Three is due out at Baselworld 2012 and combines the talents of Andreas Strehler and Voutilainen. The latter watchmaker is a favourite among collectors and enthusiasts in the realm of independent watchmaking thanks to his excellent eye for classic authenticity, innovative technical tricks and flawless finishing. Strehler has remained mainly outside the limelight – with one exception being his excursion into the world of Harry Winston's Opus project with the Number 7 – and concentrates most of his energy on movement design for others. Anticipating a new project, the likes of which, we're told, has never been seen, is a collector's dream.

Show

A unique, specially commissioned Roger Smith tourbillon wristwatch in red gold case with silver engine turned dial with hand engraved numerals and lettering, fitted with calendar and power reserve indicator.



A big question in many collectors' minds, though, is how this young company has fared since the recession came down just as it was hitting its stride. Chapter Three was delayed by a year, which many chalked up to the economic situation of the markets.

"We delayed Chapter Three not because of economic reasons entirely," Holtzman explained, "but due to the challenges of developing both the complication and base movement. We started it in 2008 and have been working on our own in-house calibre with Voutilainen and Strehler for almost three years. Getting the product to market is absolutely key for the independents."

Chapters One and Two utilise a Vaucher base calibre; the next Chapter is destined to have its own freshly developed base. "Independents think outside the box and in this fast-moving industry it is always wise to promote products that are different and not available in every store. So many brands in the market have a homogeneous look. If you are in Dubai or Tokyo the boutique from brand X, Y or Z delivers the same consistent message. With independents, you can see a different watch in Hong Kong than in New York, Zermatt, or Paris. To keep things fresh, I think the truly interesting retailers should strive to break from the pack and show something totally different," said Holtzman.



John Saac watches appeal to the 'new generation' of watch buyers - elliptical dials, soft curves, big numerals and strong colours make the pieces instantly recognisable. There are four lines to the collection: One, Icon (left), the sporty Rough Sea and the Grand Prix chronograph, as well as Jumping Hour (far left) and Quantième limited editions, exclusive to Harrods in the UK (featuring movements developed in collaboration with Dubois Déprat).



Brand-new British watch company, Schofield, has launched two versions of its Signalman. Using modern and advanced materials, finishes and engineering techniques, the Signalman is water resistant to 500m and resistant to everyday magnetic fields. Powered by the automatic Soprod 9335, the watch features a GMT display.

Established names

De Bethune will also be present in the Independents Gallery, showing its technical introduction of the year: the DB28. Having had the pleasure of wearing this watch for a week earlier this year, I can attest to its fascinating aura, reliable technology and flawless ergonomics. In fact, while there is so much to talk about in a technical sense, I am going to choose to describe what the company calls its floating lugs: this element adds to the high-tech look of the timepiece while extending its comfort. These patented, spring-loaded elements are attached at mid-case and entirely movable to ensure a snug fit regardless of the wearer's position. In fact, the combination of the floating lugs and the 43mm titanium case made for one of the most comfortable watches I've ever had the pleasure to wear. The DB28 is available in both a tourbillon and a regular-escapement version.

Englishman, master watchmaker and crowd favourite Speake-Marin will also be on hand at SalonQP to present a brand-new timepiece called Spirit. This military-styled watch is destined to become the young brand's entry-level piece and will be offered at a relatively affordable price point. Extended information was not available at press time, but Speake-Marin was able to tell us this much, "[This watch] has a special meaning attached to it and is quite important to me on a personal level."

Roger Smith will also be at the show to present the serial edition of his fabulous collaboration with the late George Daniels, the Co-axial Anniversary Edition. These independent giants will be exhibiting on the main floor of SalonQP as they represent a major attraction to the home English crowd of enthusiasts.

Independent companies

Nomos returns to SalonQP after having debuted there last year. The Glashütte manufactory with the reasonably priced products will have not only its colourful ladies' Tetra models in tow, but also a special edition Zürich model limited to 50 pieces called Hello Hannes. This model was created in honour of Swiss industrial designer Hannes Wettstein, who also designed the case of this Nomos model before his untimely passing in 2008.

Glycine is another brand that will be found in the Independents' Gallery of SalonQP. This Swiss company was founded in 1900 as Piccola & Joffrette, La Glycine in Biel, Switzerland. It was taken over by Eugène Meylan in 1913, who simplified the name to Glycine Watch, sold to Hans Brechbühler in 1984 and has been in the hands of Altus Uhren Holding since April 2011. It has always been known for large watches, pilots' watches and, historically, ladies' watches. Airman 7, which was introduced in the 1950s was as big as a pocket watch with a case diameter of 53mm. Now in its 24th generation, this model continues to be one of the company's mainstays.

Local newcomer Schofield Watch Company will be showing its new GMT timepieces called Signalman, which will be available for pre-ordering. John Isaac Genève, a brand that launched in May 2011 and is already stocked by Harrods, Le Bon Marche, Village and Colette, will be present to talk about 'tradition remixed'. March LA.B, a brand celebrating the "neo-gentleman's spirit" is the final new arrival to the mechanical watch scene at SalonQP. Although March LA.B's collection is largely quartz-powered, the approachable prices of them – and the mechanical models found in the collection – deserve a closer look.



As a pioneer of watches for pilots and frequent travellers, Glycine's signature model is the legendary Airman. Since 1953 the brand has developed an unbroken chain of aviation watches, ranging from successively more complex world timers to unique collectors items. Since the 1950s, Glycine has also acquired a solid reputation for its heavy-duty, diving watches with oversized diameters, striking lines and indispensable quality features.



For Nomos Glashütte, design is equally as important as the movement powering the pieces such as the Zürich Weltzeit world timer. Timeless, yet of their time, these manufacture watches from the famous watchmaking mecca near Dresden, demonstrate the finest in Glashütte watchmaking art.

Independents on
Show

How are they doing?

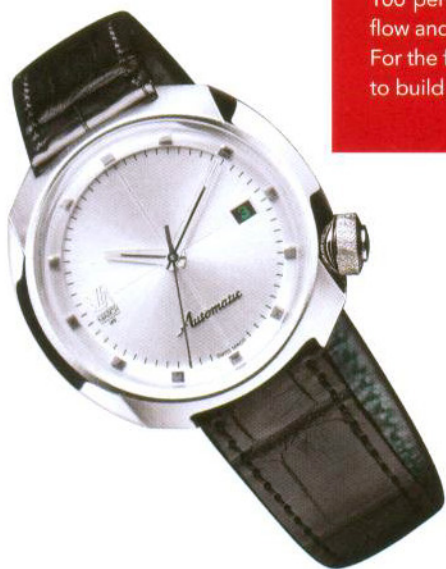
Wonderful watches aside, independents are young companies and single artists who have traditionally had the hardest time economically staying afloat. However, in this quasi-post-recession economy, many of SalonQP's independent exhibitors can report being in great shape.

Speake-Marin reports having had a wonderful year: "No smoke and mirrors, we have just had the best year we have ever had in figures and numbers and we have a very solid follow-up for next year."

Heritage Watch Manufactory's Gütermann explains that, "the resonance from, and interest in, our timepieces has been exceptionally positive up to now". This must certainly be the case, for the small company is already developing two further complicated models to be launched at the 2012 fairs.

Ressence's Mintiens communicates having scaled the hurdles that all new brands have to leap and having successfully delivered the lion's share of his first series. And MB&F's Büsser, as usual, tells it like it is: "Most large brands are milking the Chinese cow, while the small players cannot enter that market (there are no good multi-brand retailers) and are dying, but our wish not to grow our company is paying off very well: 100 per cent sell-out every year for the past three years. This gives us stable cash flow and the possibility to reinvest the entirety of our revenue into our crazy projects. For the first time since our beginnings six years ago, I have a pretty clear perspective to build on – less uncertainty encourages much more daring creativity..."

March LAB is a Swiss-made, luxury timepiece brand with headquarters in Los Angeles, California and Biarritz, France. Striking a balance between modern LA style and French heritage, the brand's designs embody complementary aesthetics and assert the philosophy that less is more.



With the Ressence Platform Watch, time is displayed by a flush-mounted, revolving dial that embodies all the graphic elements in one plane under a 3D sapphire glass. The display system features a revolving module driven by a modified automatic Swiss calibre.

