

# OSCILLON



**Geneva, SIHH 2017**

## **Time and Passion**

Old watchmaking techniques continue to be preserved, as initiated by Greubel Forsey and Philippe Dufour in their project 'La Naissance d'une montre' ('The birth of a watch'). The Oscillon brand introduces its project 'L'Instant de vérité' ('The moment of truth') under the auspices of the Time Aeon Foundation and the sponsorship of Felix Baumgartner.

### **The concept**

The first question asked was whether a watch could, as in the past, be made by hand using a collection of watchmakers' machines from bygone times. Part of the concept involves rediscovering erstwhile working methods and savoir-faire. From the outset it was clear that a serious amount of time was needed.

New ground would have to be broken if their expertise of yore was to be coaxed out of the old machines. Understanding the machines and rediscovering how to work with them takes time and patience.

Computers are of no help, and only the watchmaker's guiding hand determines the result. Each adjusting screw has its place and represents the difference between success and failure. Like a conductor, the watchmaker monitors the entries and timing of this orchestra of levers, set screws and cutting tools.

Finally, all the parts are completed by the watchmaker's hand. Edges are broken and polished, surfaces are embellished with cuts, and the functioning of levers and springs adjusted with the finest strokes of a file. Anyone seeing all these wonderful machines assembled in the same room can only guess what fantastic results the right hands can conjure up given enough time.

## L'Instant de vérité



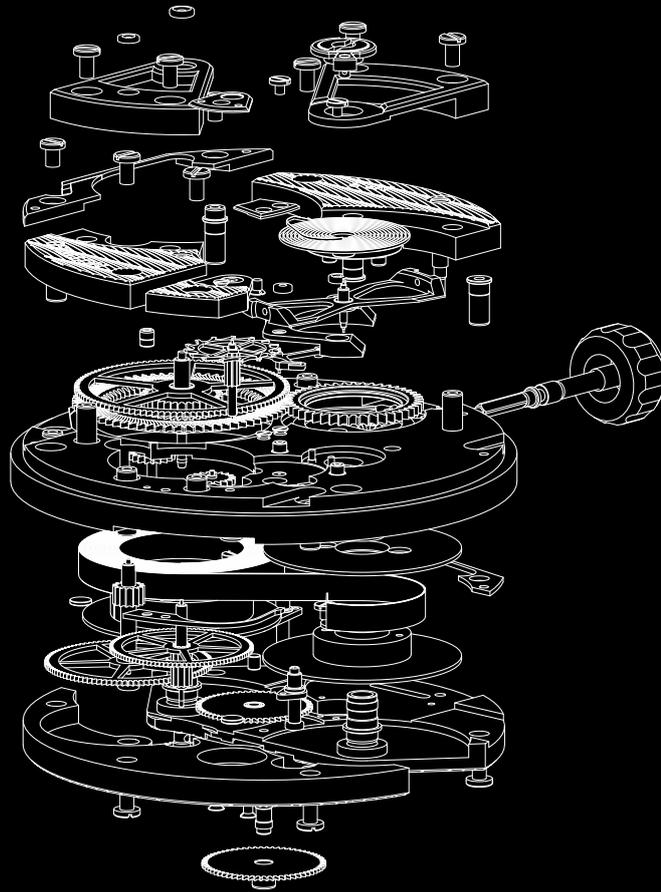
The result of all this work rests in a round rose gold case with a diameter of 40 mm. Hours, minutes, seconds and the power reserve are displayed on the silver dial with its tapestry pattern. The back shows the finely decorated work beneath the glass bottom. A 14 mm figure-of-eight balance spring with a Breguet spiral spring silently oscillates with a frequency of 18,000 A/h and gives the beat. All other parts – big or small, brass or steel, polished or ground – follow this beat.

The model's name, L'Instant de vérité, suggests that with each and every component there comes a moment when a stroke of the file, a movement of the hand, decides between perfection and mediocrity. Anyone not daring to make this last stroke has already made up his mind. The components produced on modern, computer-controlled machines are indistinguishable one from another, like serried ranks of soldiers. Unlike with a hand-crafted component, shaped by its maker's imprint.

From each screw to the hour hand, all the parts emerge on hand-guided machinery and are completed with time-consuming manual work. Always keeping in mind that every component has a designated task to fulfil.

'Winding the watch up for the first time ends what began with milling the wheels and pinions. The balance wheel performs its first oscillation and the hands begin to trace their circles as if wanting to give back the time invested. This is the moment of truth towards which we have been working.'

## Innovation



Besides time-consuming production at the watchmaker's pulse rate, the model is also distinguished by an innovative mainspring. A roller spring provides a constant torque, ensuring the watch's accuracy. Constant torque was one of the first requirements in maritime chronometers, representing as they did the difference between life and death on the high seas. Similar to the fusée-and-chain transmission with maritime chronometers, the roller spring also requires the spring to be wound back after the watch has been arrested. To ensure that power transmission is not interrupted during the winding process, the spring is wound via a differential gear system.

What works on a large scale does not necessarily have to work on a small scale. A combination of theoretical considerations and practical tests resulted in the correct dimensions of the integrated spring and the differential gear.

Two stop levers block the spring when fully wound and after the spring has been arrested. At the same time one of these levers senses the remaining power reserve, showing it via a hand.

## The passion



**Founded by two young watchmakers at the southern foot of the Jura near Aarau, Oscillon is about uncompromising craftsmanship. Dominique Buser and Cyrano Devanthey have known each other since learning how to make and repair watches at the watchmaking school in Solothurn. After studying together they went their own ways.**

Dominique Buser returned to the watchmaking school after studying physics at ETH in Zurich and working as a designer with Urwerk. He teaches the prospective watchmakers of today on a part-time basis, imparting the knowledge he has accumulated over the past few years.

Cyrano Devanthey ran the workshop at Omega in which tourbillons are made before he also joined Urwerk. Reunited by work, they realised they shared the same passion for old watchmaking machinery. Both had in earlier years amassed a significant collection of old machines and devices. The idea took hold, with the help of these technical treasures, of making a watch in the same way as when they first saw the light of day.

A glance round the workshop shows precisely the basis on which Oscillon operates. At Oscillon, all watches are made from scratch without computer-operated machines, the most important commodities being time and passion.

## The future

The Time Aeon Foundation and Urwerk are paving the way for a successor project to 'L'Instant de vérité', combining the innovative transmission with a tourbillon. In former years the construction of a tourbillon was regarded as the biggest challenge in watchmaking. The more modern the machinery became, the easier it was to manufacture a tourbillon. This is still a challenge on the old hand-guided machines now found in the Oscillon workshop.

'We would not wish to limit our watches so all we need is the time required for their manufacture,' said Dominique Buser and Cyrano Devanthey, adding: 'The term "Le garde-temps" is extremely fitting. The watch's hands keep the current time and the watch as a whole stands for the preservation of the countless hours of manufacture.'

The initial sketches and drawings for this exciting project represent the second chapter in the story of the Time Aeon Foundation. There are no short cuts and plenty of setbacks, but each failure counts as experience gained. We wish to pass on the savoir-faire acquired during long hours to the experts of tomorrow via watchmaking schools and the Time Aeon Foundation since this knowledge is no longer imparted in schools. This is to ensure that centuries of craftsmanship will not be lost.

## Technical information

|                   |  |
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| <b>Case</b>       | Rose gold 750<br>Diameter: 40 mm<br>Glass bottom   |
| <b>Movement</b>   | Manual winding<br>Roller spring drive<br>Height: 8.30 mm<br>Diameter: 32.60 mm<br>Power reserve: 68 hours<br>Spiral spring: Breguet terminal curve |
| <b>Display</b>    | Minutes and hours<br>Small second at 9 o'clock<br>Power reserve at 3 o'clock   |
| <b>Dial</b>       | Silver<br>Tapestry pattern   |
| <b>Production</b> | Hand-made  |



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