

Driven by passion

The men behind your watch

Everyone knows the names of Swiss watchmakers Rolex, Patek Philippe and Omega. As the high watchmaking center of the world, however, Switzerland has a wide variety of boutique brands that make very limited numbers of timepieces, all with a special character and design. Here are some of Swiss Made's favorite small, independent brands:

by Keith W. Strandberg



Antoine Prezioso

Master watchmaker and brand owner Antoine Prezioso is a student of the history of watchmaking and he'll be the first to concede that he's not trying to repeat history, he's trying to use it to advance today's watchmaking. Responsible for his own brand, Prezioso does a little bit of everything: regular line watches, limited editions, piece unique and restorations.

Unlike many other manufacturers, who wait for orders before starting production, Prezioso makes the watches then begins to talk to buyers. "I make the piece unique before the orders – it's like an artist making a painting – it's his creation and he hopes that people like it and buy it," he says. "The watches depend on the moment of creation, then I wait for the people who appreciate my art."

www.antoineprezioso.com



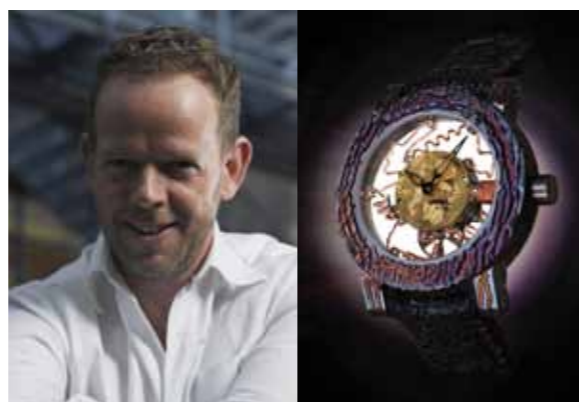
Artya

Run by Yvan Arpa, who conceived the Titanic DNA watch and the Black Belt watch, Artya is bringing piece unique to the masses by offering one-of-a-kind timepieces for prices that are equal to most established brands' entry level.

The first series of egalitarian unique pieces were all struck by lightning, which deformed the cases, making each one different.

"Created by artists, crafted by the watchmakers, our one-of-a-kind artistic creations are each distinctly made, none can be duplicated or replaced," says Arpa. "Difference, not conformity, is the hallmark of this maverick collection. Imagination running wild leads the artist and the watchmaker has no choice but to follow."

www.luxuryartpieces.com



Cabestan

Cabestan focuses on emotions, knowing that at the level of watchmaking at which they are operating, it is less about telling time than about "satisfying the human need for bold originality," according to master watchmaker Jean-Francois Ruchonnet.

Cabestan features a sensational vertical movement made in their own manufacture in the Vallee de Joux where Switzerland's top watchmakers carefully produce each piece by hand.

"The Cabestan Winch Tourbillon Vertical is best known for its amazing design centered around the vertical movement," says Cabestan's Timothy Bovard. "But what is less well known is that this timepiece is one of the most accurate in the world. That is why many collectors consider it an extraordinary piece of fine mechanical art."

www.cabestan.ch



Christophe Claret

The hills surrounding Le Locle, Switzerland, in the heart of the Jura Mountains, has been home to some of the most famous watchmakers the world has ever seen. One of the most prolific and successful has to be the Christophe Claret workshops. It is here, in this state of the art facility, that some of watchmaking's most beautiful and complicated movements have been created – all from the mind of Christophe Claret.

Claret labored for years in the relative shadows, making incredible complications for well-known brands. With his own Dual Tow and the just introduced Adagio, Claret is now showcasing his company's phenomenal abilities and making something new and interesting for the industry.

www.claret.ch



Hautlence

Company COO and co-founder Guillaume Tetu conceived Hautlence as an alternative to mainstream brands. The name Hautlence is an anagram of Neuchâtel, one of the centers of watchmaking in Switzerland. Hautlence focuses on the highest quality in watchmaking and materials, while using interesting movements with levers and locomotive-like connections, redefining how time is read on a watch.

“Hautlence is associated with various images and concepts,” Tetu explains. “We are a partnership between the brand and the exclusive Swiss builders in charge of manufacturing each and every timepiece. As an independent brand owned and operated by its founders and partners, we work extra hard to distinguish ourselves from the rest.”

www.hautlence.com



Osirec

Osirec was founded by the brothers Pascal and Thierry Peter Savineau, who shared a love of Egypt and watchmaking with their father. When their father passed away, the brothers decided to start a watch company that combined these two passions as a way to honor their father. The result is a Swiss mechanical watch with unique Egyptian designs.

Osirec has a regular collection of reasonably priced watches but also plans to do limited editions featuring complicated movements and noble materials.

www.osirec.com



Jean Dunand

Jean Dunand is the brainchild of Thierry Oulevay and Christophe Claret. Combining the Art Deco style of artist Jean Dunand and the incredible complications of Claret, the brand captures a unique mix of art and high watchmaking.

The Tourbillon Orbital of Jean Dunand is one of the industry's great watches – simply round with a movement that rotates the dial, so it is constantly changing. Jean Dunand also offers the Grand Complication, the Shabaka and the Palace – each watch is powered by a brand new movement, so there is typically several years between introductions.

www.jeandunand.com



Frederic Jouvenot

Based in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Frederic Jouvenot is a young watchmaker that has made a name for himself with interesting movements and cool designs. One of the coolest is the Helios, which, instead of using hands or disks, during the day, uses golden “sunbeams” to tell the time on the dial. These sunbeams are revealed by the movement and go to black at nighttime.

www.fjouvenot.com



Thomas Prescher

Thomas Prescher is a throwback to the days when Swiss watchmakers did everything under one roof. From his small workshop in Twann, Switzerland, Prescher does just about every step involved with the production of his handmade, very complicated watches, then he sells to people all around the world.

“We have worked to bring craftsmanship to the highest level,” Prescher says. “Our watches are handcrafted timekeepers, but they have also reached the higher spheres of composed art.”

www.prescher.ch

Urwerk

Urwerk is a fascinating company and a true-to-life example of a dream coming true. Founded by Felix Baumgartner and Martin Frei, Urwerk stood watchmaking on its ear with unique time displays and complications that include telescoping hands, owner time regulation and more.

“We combine new mechanisms, new complications, new indications of time, with a concept which has never been seen before in an expensive watch,” Baumgartner details. “When we presented the 103 watch in 2003, it looked totally different from a traditional watch, in terms of the design, the mechanics and even the name of the brand. It was a total provocation. “Our watches give a new feeling of conceiving time,” he continues. “When we create a new product, it always has to have the concept, the design of the watch and there has to be a challenge for us. We don't want to repeat something that has already been done, ever.”

Urwerk started like a garage band starts – in the spare time of the founders, doing new watches on a shoestring budget, barely making ends meet. Now, however, Baumgartner and his partner, Martin Frei, are making it work. “Our watches are unique because each has been conceived as an original work,” Baumgartner details. “This is what makes them valuable and rare. Above all, we want to explore beyond the traditional horizons of watchmaking.”

www.urwerk.com

