

De Bethune single button maxichrono



Watches and Trends at the Baselworld and SIHH Fairs 2006

The Baselworld jewellery and luxury watch fair, along with Geneva's SIHH show held around the same time, is the highlight of many a watch lover's year, and this year's event was no different. With so many manufactures constantly upping their game and revealing new watches on a regular basis, it comes as no surprise that the horological world's latest offerings are diverse, innovative, and in some cases, brilliant.

This year, there was a raft of new chronographs:

- **Roger Dubuis** has released a new, automatic winding split-seconds chronograph with a platinum micro-rotor. Its rattrapante movement is just the latest in a very ambitious product push from this highly interesting and ambitious manufacture.
- **Ebel**, too, has added to its extensive range, launching its Ebellissimo Chronograph model. Looking distinctively Ebel, this watch uses both a proven automatic movement, or a new, proprietary automatic movement that uses an innovative system of dials, and is available exclusively in platinum and pink gold only.
- **Patek Philippe** brought out their new ref. 5960 model, a very contemporarily styled chronograph watch that is generating a lot of buzz for the company. The fly-back chronograph function is paired to an unusual multi-coloured and layered display, eschewing the traditional multi-dial chronograph look, and there is even a calendar function to make this a very practical proposition. But, it is the distinctive and handsome styling that really sets it apart from the other watches in the range.
- **De Bethune** showed a new mono-pusher chronograph with no less than three column wheels, and five hands sprouting from a centre pinion. While not necessarily the easiest watch to read, it is an original creation, with a layered dial corresponding to each of the five different centrally located hands.
- **Hublot's** popular Big Bang line of sporty chronographs has been extended with the release of its startling limited-edition Bigger Bang watch, the world's first tourbillon column wheel chronograph. It features a directly coupled "flying" tourbillon mechanism, as well as a skeleton-style dial through which all the moving parts are visible.

There were a number of manufactures previewing new escapements at the show. The escapement refers to the main time-keeping mechanism of a watch, which controls the pace at which the hands are turned. Breguet, Patek Philippe, Audemars Piguet, and Chopard all showed new escapements, which is good news for purists who like to see their favourite companies constantly developing new mechanicals for their ever-growing array of watches.

Audemars Piguet's exciting new lube-less escapement with two hairsprings that has been six years in the making will be launched in their new, highly-exclusive Millenary series Cabinet No. 5 watch, and is notable for its shock protection, higher accuracy, and of course, its non-dependence on lubricating oils that will make it easier and thereby less expensive to overhaul on a regular basis.

Most notably, innovators De Bethune have invented their own escapement technology, with a silicium balance wheel and platinum weights, to free themselves from having to use the spiral springs from the Swatch-owned Nivarox company that every other manufacture out there are compelled to use. At Basel, De Bethune revealed further-developed versions of their independently made, "triple-parachute" escapements, again to emphasize their complete independence.

Not to be outdone, Jaeger LeCoultre, Girard-Perregaux, as well as Breguet and Roger Dubuis have launched two or more in-house base calibres each, to prove how innovative and tireless they have been over the past year. Indeed, Roger Dubuis showed up with no less than six new calibres, an industry first.



The annual Baselworld and SIHH fairs are definitely the springboards for many a fantastic watch, and this year did not disappoint. While in previous years the tourbillon featured heavily in most manufacture's repertoires, this year's models are geared towards technical innovation, as well as continuing the trend towards distinctive, sporty chronographs that have been flourishing over the past few months. Looking forward, this year's offerings are set to continue the growth trend of the luxury watch market with excellent, accessible, and extremely desirable timepieces. **SI**



Contributed by Goldarths Review. Dominic Khoo is the Editor-in-Chief of online luxury magazine Goldarths.com. Having written for watch publications regionally and in the US, Dominic is passionate about all things hand-made. A budding photographer, he had his first exhibition in December and manages Asia's Top Magician Sherman Malachi.