



## HAUTLENCE, MECHANICAL ENTREPRENEURS

Renaud de Retz and Guillaume Tetu, the two founders of Hautlence, are emblematic of a new 'race' of watch entrepreneurs, coming not from the workbenches, but from the ranks of the large luxury groups. Although it all started with a bet ("why don't we make our own brand?" the friends asked themselves one evening), their intimate understanding of the techniques of marketing has allowed them to establish the foundations of a true brand, and not just a flash in the pan.

Since they themselves are not master watchmakers, they decided to concentrate not on the creation of extraordinary complications, but rather to offer mechanical watch buffs a new way of telling time. Acting prudently, their first model, presented in 2005, allied a certain classicism of the case with a totally new way to display the time. Surfing the wave of enthusiasm for the mechanical, they emphasized the elements of transmission (such as a sort of connecting rod), creating at the same time a very poetic mechanical setting. Well received, this initial piece permitted them to build the foundations of a commercial network worthy of the name, and to continue their adventure along the same track.

The latest model, the HLS 04 and 06, goes a bit further than the original. From a visual standpoint, it is very modern, and features a contemporary case combining scratch-resistant black steel and white gold, a rubber bracelet, a three-dimensional dial with a jumping hand on a 'smoked' disc, seconds displayed on a small satined disc, and a retrograde second hand on a connecting rod. This is a splendid yet playful small mechanical device that augurs well for the future of Hautlence, a brand that won the bet to create a name, an identity and a niche like no other.

## ROMAIN GAUTHIER, CNC AND HAUTE HORLOGERIE

The road travelled by Romain Gauthier is also atypical, and testifies to his own particular way of making watches. Born in 1975, Romain Gauthier is, by training, a builder of precision machine tools, and a CNC programmer and operator. In 1999, while he worked for a major watch manufacturer, he began to dream of creating his own watch, and, why not?, his own movement.

Extremely patient and methodical, aware that, in addition to his technical competencies, he had to acquire business acumen, he enrolled in business school to obtain an MBA (which he did in 2002, with a final thesis devoted to none other than the 'business plan' of his future enterprise).

In secret, he worked on the design of his own movement, with two main characteristics: a winding crown under the case that can be activated without removing the watch, and a dial off-centred towards the top. Three years followed, three years of calculations, three years of designs. Finally, came the fabrication of all the component parts, made on a CNC machine loaned to him by a friend. At the final stages, a watchmaker came to assemble the parts and give life to the movement. Today, after all these years of labour, with friendly advice from Philippe Dufour, Romain Gauthier can finally unveil his timepieces. And beautiful they are.

His first collection, Prestige, is composed of round watches, 41 mm in diameter, made in rose or white gold, or platinum, with hand *guilloché* gold dials, sapphire crystal, and sapphire case back. The manual winding movement features a power reserve of 60 hours, 28,800 vibrations per hour, and an ingenious horizontal winding crown that, placed delicately under the case, can be activated by the wearer. With very lovely architecture and perfect finishing, this movement comprises a balance with four inertia screws and an adjustment indicator. The unique gears have been directly made from a solid piece of metal rather than stamped. Each watch is individually hand assembled and signed by the attending watchmaker. There can be no doubt, this brand has started well on its long journey.

