

europa star

WATCH AFICIONADO

Special Web & iPad Edition

USA & CANADA VOL. 48 N°05 OCT./NOV. 2012



+ *Europa Star Watch Aficionado is brought to you direct from the heart of the Swiss watchmaking industry*

Free and direct access via www.europastar.com/watch-aficionado





HAUTLENCE BROADENS ITS RANGE WHILE STAYING TRUE TO ITSELF

› Keith W. Strandberg

With the new Avant Garde HLRS, just introduced in October 2012, Hautlence has broadened its range, while at the same time remained true to its mission. The brand has found a way to reduce its entry price without sacrificing what has made it special, an impressive feat indeed.

“The reason we created this HLRS collection is that we wanted to introduce a more accessible product,” Guillaume Tetu, CEO of Hautlence, says. “We have redesigned the case so that it is easier and less costly to assemble, so we can reach the public price

of CHF 30,000, while still using our in-house movement. I like the fact that even in this more accessible range, Hautlence still has the same DNA, with the unique architecture, design and time display, and this is the first of our watches that can compete with regular brands, but benefits from using our in-house movement and our in-house knowledge, which makes it special. The HLRS is really unique on the market.”

When Hautlence first came onto the scene, eight years ago, the brand made quite a stir with its unique design and style, one of the first of the independents to shake up the way time was read. The first collection, the HL, was very well received by collectors, and over the next few years, Hautlence

THE HAUTLENCE OWNER’S CLUB

From the beginning, Tetu has been keen on establishing a relationship with Hautlence’s clients, the people who actually purchased the watches. The Hautlence Owner’s Club is the manifestation of this desire, and it has been working out quite well -- according to Tetu, he has regular contact with between 70 and 80 Hautlence owners, and whenever he travels, he endeavors to meet up with some club members in whatever city he finds himself in.

“I met with two customers in Mexico City who had purchased Hautlence watches, and they love them and they bought the new models,” Tetu details. “Listening to the end consumer is really important for me. We speak first about our passion for watches, but we also talk about other things, about our approach to living and more. This is the goal of the Owner’s Club, to have direct and regular contact and involve them in the development of new product, asking what they think, sometimes they talk about what they would like to see in Hautlence watches. It really helps me understand our customers.”

continued to refine the HL, introducing new models. Then, the brand introduced a round watch, the HL5, followed by the HLC for women. And, in 2011, the high end of Hautlence was solidified with the HL 2.0, a stunning watch with another unique take on telling the time.

“For Hautlence, it’s a question of maturation,” Tetu explains. “We are now eight years old, and we have developed four calibers. We want to have a pyramid of product in production which is clearer about positioning, one with different price points, which helps retailers. The first pieces were great for collectors, and with the

HLRS collection, we are introducing more accessible products. We have really high priced watches, like the HL 2.0, but we also have a bigger range, to reach different markets.”

Recently, Hautlence welcomed watch industry legend and former CEO of Audemars Piguet Georges-Henri Meylan onto the board as a principal shareholder. This move solidifies Hautlence’s direction and intention to be a major player, to go beyond being just a niche brand making a few hundred pieces a year, and step up into the big leagues, making upwards of one thousand pieces a year.

“Mr. Meylan has worked with us to reposition the brand to have a more accessible price, and to continue to develop new products in the masterpieces and high watchmaking,” Tetu notes. “With his network and contacts, we are now reopening retailers like Seddiqi & Sons in the Middle East and Westime in the USA. I am learning from him that the product is one of the most important things in a brand, but it’s not enough. We need the marketing and investment to get the awareness in the markets. We are moving from a niche brand to a real brand.”

Founded in Neuchâtel, Hautlence (the name is an anagram of Neuchâtel) recently moved

to La Chaux-de-Fonds to be closer to its suppliers, to be more in control of the production process.

The HLRS

The HLRS collection plays with the DNA of the brand, using the jumping hour for which Hautlence has become known, but using two multilayered dials to add depth and transparency to the time display. The dial’s upper face features a transfer logo, as well as luminescent minutes and indexes, while its lower face includes a semi-opaque area and a metal coating made from highly polished rhodium or rose gold. Underneath, a base dial in silvered

HLRS 01



HLRS 02



opaline or honeycomb adds to the effect, and the time is read off of the jumping hours, the retrograde minutes and the subsidiary seconds, using the brand's signature connecting rod system.

A new case, combining steel and titanium allows the HLRS collection to be lighter yet still durable, and the watch projects a strong statement. The HLRS comes in three variations:

AVANT-GARDE - HLRS 01 - Rose gold

Titanium and steel case, bezel and bumpers covered by black DLC, 18-carat 4N rose gold crown and screws, silvered opaline base dial. Black rubber strap, folding buckle.

AVANT-GARDE - HLRS 02 - Blue

Titanium and steel case, polished steel bezel, silvered opaline base dial. Black rubber strap, folding buckle.

AVANT-GARDE - HLRS 03 - Orange Honeycomb

Titanium and steel case, bezel and bumpers covered by black DLC, honeycomb base dial. Black rubber strap, folding buckle.

The future for Hautlence

The storm clouds are gone, the sky is clear and the future is bright for Hautlence. "We want to have 30 points of sale around the world, and continue to develop our product line, which is now planned for the next five years," Tetu says. "We have to apply the plan that we have decided upon. I am really confident and excited and I feel that the future looks very good for Hautlence. The first step has been fantastic and we will launch new products around Basel, as well, to continue the story. And, for us, the US is a very important market."

Hautlence is an important independent brand in the watch industry, and one worth watching closely. ■

For more information about **Hautlence** click on **Brand Index** at www.europastar.com/watch-aficionado

HLRS 03

