

Chain of Command

Infused with the essence of its master watchmaker namesake, **Ferdinand Berthoud** crafts contemporary timepieces with 18th-century flourish

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It's incredibly hard to overstate the complexity of a Ferdinand Berthoud timepiece. It is, however, easy to explain why. Vincent Lapaire, General Manager at the watchmaker, confesses that when undertaking the craftsmanship of a watch, "We make our own lives very complicated to make exquisite timekeepers."

Berthoud (the man) was a watchmaking pioneer and serves as the creative muse for this 'new old' brand – "a revamp of an antique name," as Lapaire defines it. A scientist and a member of both French and British Royal Academies, so important was Ferdinand that – during the turbulent French revolution – the navy protected him, and he retained a workshop in the Louvre and his government pension.

As for his work, "He produced 50 marine chronometers, was always making a new watch, and not a single one was a repetition. Berthoud was at the forefront of the modern technology of his time," urges Lapaire.

Until two years ago (with the formation of this Chopard-backed brand) Berthoud was a forgotten man of history, outside of museum circles and private collections. No longer.

"Every element of our watches has a historic background. It's an homage: for example the bolts we use to fix the elements are exactly the bolts used by

Berthoud on his movements. Design cues derive from the antique.

He was audacious; it allows us to be."

The recently unveiled FB 1.3 is the latest 'audacity', in platinum with ceramic lugs – a fresh interpretation of the flagship FB 1, which launched two years ago in both white and rose gold.

Explains Lapaire, "The watch design is totally inspired by two marine chronometers made by Berthoud. The marine chronometer No. 6 kept in our private collection inspires the shape of the watch insofar as the water resistant container, the octagonal shape, the elements representing the gimbal device, the hublot port holes for water resistance and the fusée and chain movement – which was the only way to produce a marine chronometer in his time. For the first time we added a tourbillon because back then Breguet – a student of Berthoud – held its patent."

The platinum release of the timepiece actually speaks to the prestige of Dubai's annual Watch Week, hosted in DIFC last month and where our conversation with Lapaire transpired.

It was face-to-face exchanges with clients at the 2016 edition of the event that the platinum FB 1.3 came to fruition. He reveals, "The FB 1.3 is a direct result of us presenting the first two models last year in Dubai. We met collectors who said, 'I don't wear gold.

