

Some Like It Haute

Part II



Montblanc's Star Nicolas Rieussec Monopusher Chronograph (the company appears to love a mouthful of a name) actually announces two brand-new chronograph movements, the MB R100 handwound calibre and the MB R200 automatic. And Lutz Bethge, CEO of Montblanc International, can barely control himself.

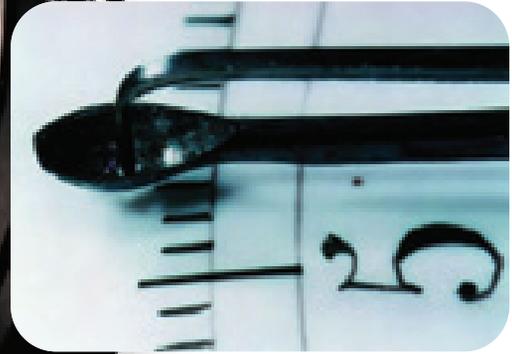
Ken Kessler



Montblanc Star Nicolas Rieussec
Monopusher Chronograph.



The handwound Calibre MB R100



Nicolas Rieussec is credited with the invention of the chronograph mechanism in 1821, these early models work by depositing droplets of ink on the dial.

...it's a beauty, with a fresh take on chronograph aesthetics

'We're very proud of the fact that this first movement of our own further justifies our claim to be a provider of traditional European craftsmanship in the mechanical watch sector. And it means we've set up a further milestone in the success story of Montblanc watch manufacture.' In other words, purchasing and overseeing Minerva was not Montblanc's shortcut to *manufacture* prestige. It's merely a part of it.

Ink spots

Montblanc has named the Star Nicolas Rieussec Monopusher in honour of the watchmaker who invented the chronograph in 1821. Rieussec's chronograph was a wooden case containing a clock

movement that drove two rotating dials on the lid. In keeping with the true definition of 'chronograph', which implies writing down a record of time keeping, above the dials was a fixed index that deposited a drop of ink on the rotating dials whenever a button was pushed. (And wouldn't we just love to see *that* miniaturised into a wristwatch case?)

Rieussec's solution made it possible to record the exact times put up by individual horses at racing events, in case you ever need to think of something that the 'Sport of Kings' contributed to mankind beyond a gambling disorder. Thus the term 'chronograph' was formed from the Greek: 'chronos' for 'time' and 'graphein' for 'write'.

Here's where Montblanc gets cute, and you've gotta love the marketing maven who came up

with this observation: 'It seems only logical that the first watch movement to be developed by Montblanc, which has established itself as the world's leading manufacturer of top-quality writing instruments, should be one that "writes time". The principle of the rotating dials was the inspiration for the design of the new Montblanc chronograph and gives the watch its unmistakable appearance.' And it's a beauty, with a fresh take on chronograph aesthetics.

The case measures 43 mm in diameter, and is described as 'cold-moulded and painstakingly finished by hand.' A convex sapphire glass with an antireflective coating on both sides covers the dial, with a sapphire glass back cover enabling owners to examine the highly decorated movement and the power reserve display.

At the front, Montblanc's MB R100 hand-wound calibre has displays for time of day, date and a chronograph functions, the movement combines the much-revered column wheel operation with a modern vertical plate clutch. The chronograph operates via a pushbutton on the side of the case at 8 o'clock, rather than through the crown as with other monopushers, or with the pusher above or below the crown.

Back to the present

Time of day is displayed in an off-centre dial occupying two thirds of the real estate, with a 1-to-31 scale for the date within the hour circle. The latter is indicated by a charming hand that looks like someone took a blade to a classic 'Breguet' moon-shaped hand. The movement has two barrels, providing a generous a 72-hour power reserve; as mentioned above, this is shown on a display at the back of the movement, visible through the sapphire glass cover. Which gives you an excuse to examine the movement frequently.

For those who simply can't be bothered to wind it, the watch is also offered with its own automatic movement, using the MB R200 calibre. Like the Collection Villeret 1858 models, the Montblanc Star Nicolas Rieussec Monopusher Chronograph is available only in limited numbers: 25 watches in platinum 950, 75 in 18K white gold and 75 in

18K yellow gold, along with 125 watches in 18 K rose gold.

Between the two collections, this year Montblanc is offering less than 700 watches to a highly select group of well-heeled connoisseurs and enthusiasts. It remains to be seen if Montblanc has the karma to overcome the market's prejudice and become accepted as the first *haute horlogerie manufacture* in history whose roots were established outside of the watch-making industry. But one thing's for certain: the authenticity, quality and sheer veracity of the watches alone should guarantee it. ☺



Montblanc CEO, Lutz Bethge



The automatic Calibre MB R200