



Eberhard's 120 Big Ones

Eberhard & Co are one of those old old brands who seem to sit simmering away in the background, while others noisily chase the spotlight, only to explode when everyone's least expecting, with show-stopping watches like the iconic Chrono 4 or the massive Traverstolo. It is easy to be beguiled by this appearance of nonchalance and yet a quick glance through the mighty tome of a catalogue is enough to betray a brand fully alert and focused on today's market.

David Stone

The current collection leaps effortlessly from a range of oversized chronographs, in the well-established Tazio Nuvolari collection, to the iconic Chrono 4 Temerario, with its tonneau case and instantly recognisable row of vertical counters. Their Bienne HQ is a veritable hotbed of creativity and invention; a *modus operadi* that has sustain throughout the brand's entire history, most notably with the development of an early automatic chronograph. And yet it is only relatively recently that Eberhard have begun to get the recognition they deserve - outside Milan, that is.

With the exception of a handful of fervent distributors, Eberhard have remained a largely obscure brand for UK retailers, much to the chagrin of those better informed

collectors. A surprising fact given the stalwart Swiss watchmaker has a truly illustrious past, one punctuated with innovation after innovation. This inexplicable disregard - be it the result of a lethargic market or a modest PR approach - was given a thorough and much needed shaking up during the course of 2007, an occasion marking 120 years of uninterrupted horological distinction.



120 years of uninterrupted horological distinction



Roll camera: 120 Years in 120 Seconds

It was an initiative designed especially for young 'Independent' and 'Future' directors and was set up with the help of Italian production company, Alto Verbano. The project, 120 Years in 120 Seconds, invited contestants from around the globe to produce a short film to reflect the passing of time, hence the title. From this rather loosely defined starting point, participants were allowed free reign to explore their own ideas and sensibilities.

The invitation generated variety of interpretations and styles, ranging from pastiches of 20th Century history to the nostalgic reflections of a dignified old chap as he considers his pocket watch. These were then separated into two categories. 'Independent' for those directors actively seeking a way into the filmmaking industry, while 'Future' comprised of students working towards their qualifications.

The films were then whittled down to a final 15 before coming up against the critical eyes of a five-person jury. The Italian director, Davide Maldi, won first place in the Independent category with his film noir, *Pasprefut*. The enigmatic heroine wanders the streets as an elegant flaneur, while historic film footage appears as displaced imagery on the side of buildings or reflected in the mirrors of passing cars. And then *Telefono Pubblico* by Marcos Villasenor, won the second group with his high-octane chase, involving a mysterious phone call and a race against time.

Chronographe 120eme Anniversaire. Unveiled at Rome's Castel Saint'Angelo, October 2007. Uses the Calibre 13, based on the Valjoux ETA 7750. Available in red gold, steel and platinum

Further information: www.eberhard-co-watches.ch

Producing a new watch to mark such an important milestone was to be expected and, given that it was Eberhard, nothing less than a complex chronograph was always on the cards. To maintain the suspense, however, Eberhard began the year by organising a film festival targeted at budding young directors. The results are available via the website.

Birthday Present

Filmmaking aside, the horological highpoint for Eberhard's 120th anniversary took the shape of the Chronographe 120eme Anniversaire. Unveiled in October 2007 at Rome's Castel Sant'Angelo, the wristwatch features a specially designed Calibre (based on the Valjoux ETA 7750), inside a slightly coned-shaped case of either platinum, rose gold or steel. The face resembles the 'Extra Fort' in terms of 3 - 6 - 9 counter

layout, while also incorporating the date at 8 o'clock. Stylistically the design is considerably more modern and sporty, with a jaunty banner announcing the anniversary occasion.

The watch, produced in limited editions, stands as another example of a brand very difficult to pin down. And the Chronographe 120 Anniversaire particularly seems to be wrestling with its own identity. Is it a retro restyling or a contemporary contender? This ambiguity is not necessarily a bad thing. The steel and platinum version, with either bracelet or black leather strap, certainly feel youthful and sleek, while the gold case with brown leather strap, allows for a subtler, more traditional suavity. Altogether an attractive addition to the collection and a useful reminder not to loose sight of what Eberhard can do when your back is turned.