

Top Honours

Ferdinand Berthoud is not a brand many would have heard of. Its president **Karl-Friedrich Scheufele** tells **Karishma Tulsidas** why it should be on every watch collector's radar



LIKE A DIRECTOR BAGGING the Best Picture accolade at the Academy Awards for his maiden venture, Karl-Friedrich Scheufele was understandably honoured and emotional

upon receiving the Aiguille d'Or award for the Chronomètre Ferdinand Berthoud FB 1 timepiece in 2016. Commercial implications aside, winning top honours at the Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève proved to Scheufele that he and his team had successfully respected and translated Ferdinand Berthoud's legacy.



Now, if you had not heard of the name Ferdinand Berthoud prior to the award (or even this article, for that matter), it is tenable: he was a master watch and clockmaker in the 18th century who pursued a relentless quest for precision with the engineering of marine chronometers, crucial timekeeping devices that aided marine navigation. The last time the name Berthoud appeared on a dial was in 1876, and his legacy remained untapped until the noughties, when Scheufele bought over the brand.

Says the soft-spoken co-president of Chopard, "I was very passionate about the project, and I told the [previous owners of the brand] I would be doing this in a sustainable way and retain his philosophy. Moreover, we had a manufacture at our disposal."

MATTER OF PRIDE

Karl-Friedrich Scheufele (above) discovered 18th-century watchmaker Ferdinand Berthoud when he was adding timepieces to his grandfather's collection, and wanted to pad the chronometry section; the award-winning Chronomètre Ferdinand Berthoud FB 1 timepiece (opposite page) with portholes that afford a view of the movement



The manufacture in question is the Chopard Manufacture in Fleurier, a vertically integrated enterprise where the brand produces from scratch watches for its most premium line, LUC. “We could not have achieved this level of work otherwise,” he says of the FB 1.

The timepiece is a contemporary interpretation of Berthoud’s legacy. The research and development team at Ferdinand Berthoud pored over more than 4,000 pages of literature written by the watchmaker himself to derive the design codes and technical inspiration for the piece. It helped, too, that Scheufele had acquired several Berthoud pocket watches that enabled the team to understand first-hand the horologist’s distinctive technical and aesthetic vocabulary.

The movement has been constructed in the manner of a marine chronometer, with a cylindrical structure reminiscent of the gimbal mount that housed these nautical devices. Elements such as a fusee and chain transmission ensure that a consistent supply of power is transmitted to the mainspring. The architecture features pillars made of titanium—a new material that would have undoubtedly fascinated the horologist to the French navy—connecting the top and bottom plates.

Furthering the nautical theme, the octagonal case comes with four sapphire “portholes” affording the viewer an insight into the watch. With an haute horlogerie finishing, the FB 1 makes for a worthy debut that have us hankering for the next chapter in Ferdinand Berthoud’s renaissance. ①