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# Come Rain or Shine

THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN BREVA'S **VINCENT DUPONTREUÉ** AND CHRONODE'S **JEAN-FRANÇOIS MOJON** HAS RESULTED IN THE GÉNIE 01, A TIMEPIECE THAT CAN PREDICT THE WEATHER



Bridging the gap between fashion and art to horology could be construed as a large leap of faith, but Dupontreué is well versed in the language of luxury and knowing what customers really want. After all, he is one himself – he decided to set up Brevia Genève only after a search for his notion of the perfect watch resulted in zilch. Hence the birth of the brand's debut timepiece at Baselworld last year: the Génie 01.

A breath of fresh air, the timepiece pays homage to the origins of the brand's name – Brevia is the warm southern wind around Lake Como in Italy – and can predict the weather to come. This highly complicated timepiece is the first of its kind, and was three years in the making, thanks to its unique combination of a barometer, altimeter and timekeeping mechanism, with a 65-hour power reserve.

It was a project fraught with difficulties, but Dupontreué had an ace up his sleeve: Chronode's Jean-François Mojon, the brains behind watches such as Harry Winston's Opus X, MB&F's Legacy Machine No. 1, and HYT's H1. Together, they set about to find solutions to a series of challenges, which included miniaturising the barometer and allowing air, not humidity, into the case, while ensuring that the movement is housed in

**I**T TAKES A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CHUTZPAH for a man with no prior experience in watchmaking to brave the waters of haute horlogerie. Vincent Dupontreué is an intrepid entrepreneur and a master of all trades: a deadly combination. Having discovered his knack for business when he was just 11 years old by selling bracelets on the beaches of Corsica in France, the Frenchman would go on to set up his eponymous fashion brand, do an MBA course, and run an art gallery – all before he turned 35.

an open case that allowed the wearer to appreciate watchmaking at its finest.

Dupontreué explains, “You have to do something different; if you do a ‘me too’, you don’t sell. It’s not like displaying the minutes and hours differently is going to change the life of the customer – you have to come up with something strong, innovative.”

Both men, who were recently in town to launch the watch to collectors in Singapore, tell us about the challenges they faced as well as their convivial working relationship.

**SINGAPORE TATLER:** *What would you say is Breva’s DNA?*

**VINCENT DUPONTREUÉ:** Thinking out of the box. We want to create movements that are in direct relation to what’s outside the case. Our first watch is based on air pressure; it can predict the weather. The next one will read something around you – for example, we could do something with smell. Breva fills in the gaps of what is around you and gives you information that you don’t know. This is what makes us different from the rest. Others don’t do the complications we do; or they don’t know how to do them. Even if you own all the watches in the world, we guarantee you don’t own this complication. Not all our watches are based on weather though. The Génie 02 will be different. The client, I think, will really start to understand the brand in 2015.

**ST:** *Can you run us through the Génie 01?*

**VD:** You have the hours and minutes hand, a very small seconds subdial, a power reserve indicator for 65 hours, an altimeter that goes from 0 to 5,000m and a barometer. Both the barometer and altimeter are linked by the capsule that calculates how the air is changing. First you unlock the crown by turning it 90 degrees so as to equalise the pressure outside and inside the case. If the barometer indicator goes anticlockwise, it’s going to rain; clockwise means the weather will improve. To put it simply, hot air goes up because it’s lighter, and it creates condensation, more clouds. If the pressure decreases, it means the air is going up, and it will be cloudier. When the air pressure increases, it means that it will be sunny.

**ST:** *What were the most challenging parts of creating the watch?*

**VD:** First of all, we had to create the smallest microcapsule in the world that was reliable. We also had to make sure that the valve would not allow water or humidity into the case, but it had to let air inside to calculate the pressure. So after much research, we decided to use a moisture-resisting osmosis membrane Teflon fabric.

**ST:** *Did you have any prior experience with creating such a mechanism?*

**JEAN-FRANÇOIS MOJON:** This is really new; we had to study this field. The challenge was to really understand what happens and to get all these mechanisms in this small part of the watch. The barometer is generally a big mechanism, so we had to miniaturise it. We worked in 3D to find a place



for each component. And then of course comes the design, which had to be nice.

**ST:** *How did your partnership come about?*

**VD:** I did a lot of research on the people behind the brands I was interested to work with. We met through a designer we both knew – I explained to Jean-François what I wanted, and he decided to join me in my venture. If you ask someone to do something he’s already done 10 times, it’s a bit boring. His people are dedicated to the project. It’s exciting.

**JFM:** It was really in the right field. We don’t make conventional watches, but something new, innovative, challenging. We are very reactive, and our team tries to find the best way to make things work.

**VD:** It is really a partnership. It’s not like a brand and supplier relationship – it’s more than that. Previously, I had trouble in finances, because it takes millions to invest in such a project. Jean-François supported me during that time, and it’s quite rare to find a partner to do so. Even if there are problems, we always keep going in good humour. This kind of relationship can be quite fragile, but we both respect each other. We have the same goal, but our jobs are different. Together, we need to push boundaries to create a very stunning product that is reliable, of perfect quality and on time.

**ST:** *How did your collaboration with Yafriro come about?*

**VD:** They called us before Baselworld last April, as soon as we had launched the brand. They are really aware of what is going on. They’re our only distributors for Southeast Asia. So far, it’s been a really good partnership – they’re very focused and enthusiastic. **T**

## SPIRITED GENIUSES

### FROM FAR LEFT

Breva’s Génie 01 comes in a limited edition of 55 pieces in white gold, and 55 pieces in pink gold; Vincent Dupontreué and Jean-François Mojon