



CREATING A MANUFACTURE

*Chopard produces its own movements for 12 years. Moreover, High-end ones!
The following interview dates back from December 2009.*

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The movement of L.U.C Chrono One

CONSTANTIN STIKAS: *For a vast majority of people, Chopard is more known for its very beautiful, and often precious watches for women and jewels, as well as for its sports watches for men. Nevertheless, Chopard has an important tradition of watch manufacturing, before 1963, when your father, Karl Scheufele, bought it back to the descendant of Louis-Ulysse Chopard, Paul-André. What is the sales ratio between women and men watches along all these years?*

KARL-FRIEDRICH SCHEUFELE: In 46 years, the sales ratio of women and men watches has changed, progressively, several times. At the beginning, when my father took over, the ratio was 50-50. And then, there was a very strong increase in women models because Chopard had taken a more jewellery-watch orientation, and with the arrival of Happy Diamond, obviously, these collections took over and then the ratio went up to 80% for women watches. Then, with the launch of the Mille Miglia collection, and with the growing success of this collection, the ratio of men watches reversed and grew again. The arrival of the L.U.C collection was thus the final trigger to reach the ratio we have today, a ratio of 45% of men watches for 55% of women watches.

Are you speaking about number of watches or value?

These are units. In value, women watches often have several precious stones and therefore cost much more money, although with the L.U.C collection, there are also models with complicated movements, which are rather expensive.

At a time when many traditional watchmaking Houses Maisons Horlogères purchase their movements to external suppliers, Chopard invested a considerable amount to create its own proper manufacture. How did you start this attempt?

In fact, we decided to invest in a manufacture at a time when it was not really a question. Around 1994, I decided and also convinced the family, to invest in the development of a movement to relaunch the tradition bearing the name of Louis-Ulysses Chopard. At that time, nobody could really see the need to run into such adventure, we could very well repurchase movements from different suppliers. Following that, things have changed a lot and today obviously we do not regret having taken the decision to launch Chopard manufacture and we already have a tradition regarding the manufacture of our movements.



CHOPARD



*Karl-Friedrich
Scheufele*



The history of the L.U.C movements started 12 years ago, at a time when Swiss watchmaking experiences a very big increase. It was also a time of great competition between the brands...

It is true that over the last years, and since we launched the manufacture and developed several movements, competition in the field of mechanical movements became more important. Therefore there is a need to differentiate ourselves from the competition with our own movement, without mentioning the fact it enables us to be independent.

Despite that fact, most of the great names of the industry did not dare such an investment with regards to the manufacture of their own movements. Did it take time for you to pay off the money invested in the project?

The initial investment was significant in time and of course in money, but we invested progressively following the development of the Chopard Manufacture Company, therefore it was not a single investment, it was an investment over 10 years. Obviously this means tens of millions of Francs, but today we can say the investment was worth the pain financially, without mentioning the positive image that this gave to the Chopard brand. Therefore we largely recovered the money invested.

How many L.U.C movements have you manufactured since 1997 until today?

We have produced about 35,000 watches L.U.C all models together and currently the production is of 4,500 watches per year.

Why did you choose Fleurier to settle your manufacture there?

The choice was made because of our collaboration with the watchmaker Michel Parmigiani, who helped us with the manufacturing of our first movements. Afterwards, we took over internally the project. At the time, they were 5 employees in Fleurier, today, we are almost 150.

Tell us about the Geneva Seal.

As being established in Geneva, it was natural to also have – as an objective for ourselves – in the range of L.U.C watches, movements bearing the Geneva Seal, because we consider that it is the guarantee of an excellent finish. In fact, the Geneva Seal, today, refers mainly to the movement aesthetic and not so much the movement accuracy. In fact, it was the starting philosophy, all L.U.C movements are certified chronometer (C.O.S.C.) then the movements are assembled and finished in Geneva. We – as a watchmaking House – we believe in external and objective independent control agencies. Because lately, we have seen a trend of brands setting internal objectives and that proclaim their own quality label. According to us, we have to remain in objectivity and to submit ourselves to external controls.

There was a reflection on this subject this year. After Patek Philippe announced the creation of its own quality certificate for its watches, some implied that one of the reasons why Patek Philippe announced its own certificate was that some brands did not deserve the Geneva Seal.

Balance sheets of large companies are also monitored by external auditors controllers AEEI. In the same way, movement precision and quality of TO OF XPEIAZETAI; should also be controlled by external auditors TO IΔIO ME IIPIN, even if the company has already placed, for its watches, very high standards. In any case, the Geneva Seal rules are is clear and there is no reason why a brand reaching its standard should be excluded.

Not only have you succeeded in having your own movements, but you also went to complicated ones movements, presenting, in parallel, many new ideas: indication of power reserve of 9 days, quadruple barrel, ultra thin movement, perpetual calendar, diver's watch, tourbillon, indication of moon phase, but also your own chronograph, which is also of a very excellent quality, including the fly-back and the chronograph activation system with column wheel! One can count on the fingers of a hand the brands, which dared their own chronograph!

It is very nice you mention that, because I think not many people know, that to build a chronograph, and specially an integrated chronograph such as ours, and not just the addition of a module, at the end, it is much more complicated than a tourbillon! For us, this chronograph movement really represents the most important “extra” up until now. I even place it before the tourbillon. And moreover, it includes some patents we managed to obtain. It is really a part of exception. an exceptional piece.

How many different calibres have you already presented up to now?

Initially, there was the automatic with all its alternatives. After, there was the 9-day calibre, the 4 barrels, the perpetual calendar, the tourbillon also with 4 barrels, the cushion shape automatic calibre, the chronograph and now we are presenting our new automatic calibre. It is a rather classical calibre with a central rotor, which will make it possible to draw many complications from, without any problem. It is a calibre that we call movement-tractor in the watchmaking industry.

In the interview I had with Philippe Dufour, I asked him a question regarding the classification he would make of the watchmaking manufactures, having as a criteria the finish, and the famous watchmaker master placed in 1st position A. Langhe & Söhne, in 2nd Chopard, 3rd Audemars Piguet, 4th Cr dor of Seiko and in 5th, Patek Philippe! Which is your comment?

Obviously it pleases me twice as much as it is very rewarding for our work, but as well because Mister Dufour is a watchmaker I have a lot of respect for.





- A -
Chopard L.U.C.
Chrono One

- B -
Chopard L.U.C.
Lunar Big Date

- C -
Chopard L.U.C.
Tourbillon Lady

- D -
Chopard L.U.C.
Tourbillon Tech
Steel Wings





I also estimate it comes from a person who is one of the true last craftsmen of watchmaking. I admire him as he is himself the manufacture! I also would like to add that I have the happiness to have in my collection one of his most beautiful watches.

Chopard does not communicate the name of the watchmakers who manufacture its movements, as other brands do.

For the development and creation of a movement, for example, we estimate that the synergy of a team is important and this is beyond the work of one only person. All the efforts are teamwork and on the development of a movement, watchmakers always work by two, for a better result.

During my interview with Jean-François Ruchonnet, the person associated with the emergence of watch creation computer assisted, but also achieving the best results with this practise, he declared that the first watch ever created on a computer is was the Impérial of Chopard! In parallel to what we have already mentioned above and said by Philippe Dufour, that is to day, the very high positioning and objective value of Chopard in the field of Haute Horlogerie, all this qualities are not very well known from the general public. Many people are not aware that the quality of Chopard movements of Chopard are is equivalent to the one of A. Lange & Söhne or even better that the one of Audemars Piguet or Patek Philippe! In the forums across the world, no one gives Chopard the place it deserves. Many place it amongst the brands, which have series movements, presenting mainly watches for women! However you are one of the most powerful Houses in terms of communication. How do you explain that?

It is true that we communicate much more on other activities of the Company and not on its capacity to manufacture its own movements. This is why many consumers are not really aware about the depth of Chopard and the fact we are vertically integrated at the production level, that we have a manufacture and that we have a full range of movements. I would say that in a way, our movements are a little like our a hidden treasure!

I have already thought about it as well. The clients of the L.U.C collection of watches are also discreet. José Carreras is an example of that: this great artist is one of the admirers of the L.U.C collection and he has already 4 of those models!

That is what we can call internal beauty. Most of the L.U.C models are not watches that are extravagantly large or imposing but rather elegant and classic and

their true value is rather the timeless design and obviously a movement of impeccable quality. And this is something more dedicated to the connoisseur and collector and less to the one that wants to somehow show what he can afford. We choose this path, that is maybe longer, but we try to build something at long term and we think L.U.C must be first of all recognised by professionals and collectors and then we will extend the target public.

Will we ever see one of your movements in the Mille Miglia Collection?

We founded a company called Fleurier Ebauches, which manufactures a generation of movements that we will be able to use in particular for some Mille Miglia watches. This is scheduled for 2011, at the latest.

Are you going to continue producing your movements just for your watches, or are you going to start providing other brands?

We are going to cover our needs first. There is also a need for components, in particular for L.U.C movements that are also going to be produced by us. From now on, the manufacturing of all the components is also going to be integrated in Fleurier Ebauches.

You are member of the 4th generation in the family company. What is your feeling about having managed a successful historic change in your company? I am talking about the manufacturing of your own movements.

I think that this development enables and will enable even more possibilities for Chopard to be “seated” on several pillars and this was a significant pillar that we were missing in order to “establish” the brand. I think it was a very important contribution for the future.

Can you tell me which is your favourite watch and is there a type of watch you would like to have, in the future, in the L.U.C Collection?

Next year, 2010, as you know, we are celebrating our 150 years of Chopard creation and we are going to present a L.U.C which is even more exceptional, which will be a combination of the different achievements we have already presented. Personally, most of the time I wear the L.U.C Lunar One. It is a watch, which has a lot of character, which is technically impressive because it presents more than 350 components, a tiny volume and all that fascinates me when I wear it around my wrist.

Could you describe me in a single word what does the L.U.C movement represents for you?

In one word, it is maybe difficult. Maybe with two. Innovation and tradition!



CHOPARD



*The movement of
L.U.C Lunar Big Date*