



FELIX BAUMGARTNER

Photographed by Richard Ansett at Marcus, Bond Street, London, on December 19, 2008, wearing a Harry Winston Opus V.

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The Swiss master watchmaker and co-founder of Urwerk brings a unique combination of futuristic vision and retro styling to haute horlogerie.

What do you understand by the term "new technology"?

It is fascinating to see how techniques and materials have improved. Today, with CNC, we can produce elements within microns' tolerance. It would be a shame not to use these developments. At Urwerk, we are like a laboratory, always trying to work with the best tools, inventing complications that are definitely of our century, experimenting and pushing the boundaries.

What are the limits of new technology; when does new technology become gimmicky?

When you use elements that not only fail to provide any amelioration to your watch but also damage it.

What elements of new technology are in your watches and what are the benefits to the wearer?

To make our plates, we use an alloy called ARCAP for its non-magnetic, corrosion-resistant properties. This is just one example. We make extreme complications—original ones created and developed in-house. To do so we use a savoir-faire dating from the 18th and 19th centuries but with the best of what this century can provide in materials and processes. We want to offer to the wearer of the watch a new way to experiment with time.

Where do you see future markets for fine Swiss watchmaking?

Wherever there is passion for good work.

What are the three most important design features of your watches?

We are inspired by films from the 1960s and 70s like the Bond series and *The Thomas Crown Affair*—movies with style—and the shapes of aircraft and spaceships. The Russians' Sputnik inspired our first collection in 1997.

Which watch are you wearing at the moment?

I am not usually nostalgic but today I am wearing the Opus V.

Which is your favourite watch by another company?

The Patek Philippe Cobra.

If your watch were a movie star, who would it be?

Sean Connery. He has an aura, an elegance that is rarely seen today.

An artist?

Joseph Beuys, for his complexity. Nothing is ever obvious with him.

A sportsman?

Michael Jordan—he wears an UR103 in red gold.

A literary figure?

Anton Chekhov, for his sensitivity and realistic vision of the world.

Which figure from watchmaking history do you most identify with?

Thomas Tompion, the 17th-century English clockmaker.

Who or what inspires you?

Traditional watchmaking; classic movies; machines with special designs—complex things with screws everywhere.