

MCT Watches – From Riches to Ruin and back again

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It's been a long and sometimes hard road for MCT Watches to get to where they are today. Theirs is not a unique story however; in fact it chronicles what many independent watchmakers go through as they fight to build a name for themselves in the highly competitive world of luxury watches. Through the highs and lows however the brand has always strived to produce a unique, top quality product, which more than anything else has helped ensure their survival.



MCT Watches – A brief history

MCT came onto the watchmaking scene in 2009, although in reality the development of their concept had been in the works for years prior to the official launch. Founded by Denis Giguet – with the assistance of an unnamed financial backer – the brash young brand set itself the goal of designing unique, distinctive watches that would allow customers to actually tell the time quickly and easily.



MCT Watches Founder Denis Giguet

Not exactly a revolutionary concept perhaps but you have to remember that this was right around the time the full repercussions of the global financial crisis were beginning to be felt worldwide. The ostentatious but often impractical designs that had dominated the six figure price range of luxury watches were being eschewed in favour of more subdued wrist wear, that would still look good without attracting a lot of unwanted attention. That being said, this was always going to be a challenging market to crack.

Giguet however was ready for the monumental task ahead of him, after all this wasn't exactly his first foray in watchmaking. At the young age of 39 the incredibly driven French Engineer had already enjoyed a very successful corporate career, first with [Rolex](#) and then with [Harry Winston Watches](#) where as Head of Production he was closely involved with the highly acclaimed Opus series (from 1 to 6).

MCT Watches Sequential One S-110

He then went on to found his own consultancy practice in Geneva where he helped leading brands to realize their own technical goals whilst developing his own ideas. It was here that he conceived the original idea for MCT, sharing his grand plans for the future in an early interview:

“I aim to ‘change the face of time’ by using new and quite unique movements and visual displays, always featuring a large and distinctive Hour indicator. Many expensive watches have appeared with weird and wonderful designs but they often have very little functionality. Our customers tell us that they now want to buy “real” watches, not pure objects of fantasy.”

Still, he knew they would need an amazing first timepiece to really capture people's attention, going on to say:

“Launching a new brand is very high risk and in the current climate that risk is greatly exaggerated. If new watches are not exceptional in their own way, the brand is unlikely to survive for long. For me it was important to design and produce a watch that would be the first of it's kind, with our own movement. I have to ask others to judge if it is truly exceptional.”

MCT Watches – The Sequential One

His answer was the Sequential One (S1), MCT's inaugural watch. A unique take on the jumping hour complication, the S1 presented a never before seen dial configuration. Conceived in conjunction with watch designer extraordinaire Eric Giroud and a team of watchmakers, each function was based on a combination of elements rotating on three-dimensional axes, at different speeds and points in time. Over-sized Hour numerals on 12 prism faces combined with a jumping, sapphire crystal dial complete with a single hand to indicate the Minutes. It's hard to explain exactly how it looks, so it's easier to just show you in this video courtesy of industry veteran Ian Skellern:

What really impressed the aficionados however was the complexity of the movement. Developed completely in-house, it is comprised of some 471 components. More complicated than a tourbillon to construct, each one took days to assemble in MCT's Geneva Atelier. A sapphire exhibition caseback allowed a sneak peek into its inner workings.

Despite its slightly unusual square-shaped case the Sequential One is extremely comfortable on the wrist. It slides easily under the cuff for those more discrete occasions and thanks to the highly intuitive – and legible – time display, it can be read quickly and easily with just a glance at your wrist. What I really like though is the fact that you can easily wear this watch with a suit and tie and people won't look twice and yet at the same time it still has enough of a wow factor to immediately capture people's attention if you bring it out of its hiding place.

MCT Watches – The times they are a changing

Unfortunately though, despite the brand's initial success, MCT struggled to gain real traction and were unable to launch any successive models to the highly acclaimed Sequential One. That was until last year, when new owners took over, injecting new life and some much needed capital into the business. Giguet was gone, replaced by new CEO François Candolfi and it was clear they needed to do something quickly to keep the brand alive in the hearts of minds and collectors.



MCT Watches CEO François Candolfi wearing the Original S1

Charged with turning things around Candolfi's first move was to release the S-110, designed by Fabrice Gonet (co-founder of HD3), at Baselworld 2013. More of a range extension than the new series people were perhaps hoping for it nevertheless gave some insight into the brand's longer-term strategy and more importantly put MCT back on people's radar. Priced more competitively than their older siblings, the new S-110 collection is comprised of several variants, based on the 45mm case as the original, although now in titanium instead of gold. As with their predecessors each is extremely comfortable on the wrist and a breeze to read, plus they just look really cool.

It may have been a tough road back to redemption for MCT Watches but I believe 2014 will be the year when things will really start to turn back in their favour. Of course, only time will tell.

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Note from the Author: The focus of the article is more on the Sequential One as I believe that is necessary to tell the story of MCT but unfortunately I only have live shots of the newer S-110 (they were reluctant for us to focus too much on the S1 at Baselworld because obviously the S-110 was the new collection they were presenting.) The watches are basically the same though, except the dials are slightly different on the new models and cases are made from titanium instead of precious metals.