



## THE DUBOIS ET FILS DBF007 – ‘HANDS-ON’

*A few weeks ago, I wrote about the DuBois et fils DBF007, focussing on its case, vintage movement and design. I also touched on what constitutes a ‘Swiss Made’ watch. Recently, I had the opportunity to get ‘hands-on’ with three versions of this new model and I relate my observations herein.*

Over the years, I have handled a number of watches produced by the Swiss brand, DuBois et fils. There is a reoccurring theme with this company’s products, namely, a palpable quality that can be readily discerned with an outstretched index finger or an inquisitive eye.

The brand does not compete in the rarefied world of Haute Horlogerie, its middle-of-the-road prices preclude such an approach. However, when it comes to delivering a high quality-price ratio, Dubois et fils, led by its charismatic CEO, Thomas Steinemann, has an impressive track record.

There have been occasions when I’ve seen a rival’s watch and superficially it has appeared better value for money, however, close examination of the materials used invariably reveals they lack the same virtue. Furthermore, DuBois et fils places much importance on a Swiss watch being, well, primarily Swiss.

A few years ago, DuBois et fils chose to equip the DBF004, a new model at the time, with a vintage movement, the Calibre Record 662. It set the brand on an interesting course, utilising ‘new old stock’ movements. Later, the Swiss Maison equipped its DBF006 model with a period Felsa Calibre 4007N and simultaneously introduced the watch buying public to the idea of tokenisation. This proved incredibly popular and the company has now repeated this approach with the sale of 330 examples of an Adolf Schild movement dating back to 1960. It is this latter movement which sits at the heart of the new DuBois et fils DBF007, the focal point of this article.

### **The dial**

The DuBois et fils DBF007 is the brand’s first divers’ watch. This is a popular horological genre among horophiles, even though few buyers will ever wear a neoprene ensemble nor engage in subaquatic pursuits. However, before dismissing the divers’ watch as irrelevant, it is worth noting that, with few exceptions, most divers’ watches prove simple to read, have a useful degree of water resistance and tend to be exceptionally robust. On reflection, the reasons for purchasing a divers’ watch prove compelling.

During my time with Thomas Steinemann, he presented three variants of the brand’s divers’ watch, namely, bronze (DBF007-01), stainless steel (DBF007-02) and stainless steel with a

PVD treatment (DBF007-03). While each reference has its own unique look, the family likeness is clear to see.

Upholding the divers' watch remit, the DuBois et fils DBF007 delivers peerless legibility. The hour and minute hands are plump and employ a unique and distinctive profile. Although the edge of both hands matches the case material, most surfaces of the hands are suffused with Super-LumiNova, aiding readability in restricted light conditions. Personally, I like how the sharp tip of the minute hand kisses the minuterie with laser-like precision. There is no ambiguity, everything is expressed with sublime lucidity.

The central sweep seconds hand is svelte, pointing to the various markings on the minuterie. However, despite being a highly practical dial, DuBois et fils has not eschewed style. The counterweight on the seconds hand emulates the appearance of a fir tree, the brand's logo and a traditional symbol synonymous with the Swiss Jura.

The hour markers are circular and framed with a gleaming metallic border. Furthermore, upholding divers' watch tradition, they have received a liberal application of Super-LumiNova. The minuterie, positioned adjacent the hour track features crisp, neat markings, facilitating ease of read-off. A date is positioned at 3 o'clock, completing the model's inventory of functions.

Divers' watches are typically utilitarian by nature, however, nobody has told DuBois et fils. The dial of this model is enlivened with a sumptuous sunray motif and exudes a notable quotient of elegance. Put simply, DuBois et fils demonstrates that a divers' watch can be practical and look sophisticated at the same time.

### **The case**

When it comes to professional divers, watches are often worn over the sleeve of a wetsuit. They may wear a watch that is water-resistant to 2000m and fitted with a helium valve. These timepieces are designed for serious deepwater action, however, such watches are best described as 'horological leviathans' and prove unnecessary in most cases.

DuBois et fils, no doubt recognising that most wearers are likely to be 'desk divers', has produced a watch that isn't cumbersome, measuring just 44mm in diameter. And yet, despite its comparative neatness, the DBF007 is robust and water-resistant to 200m, making it ideal for daily wear.

The unidirectional bezel features a ceramic insert and is endowed with beautifully defined knurling around its edge, facilitating manipulation. In addition, the bezel sports a luminous triangular index at noon and is marked with a count-up scale employing a combination of Arabic numerals and simple strokes. Beneath the aforementioned knurling, the sides of the bezel swoop inwards, making it easier to grip.

A bevelled edge hugs the upper edge of the lugs. As the lug emanates from, say 4 o'clock, the bevel narrows, tapering to nothing. This may sound inconsequential, but it is one example, along with a myriad of other features, that demonstrates the brand's fastidious attention to detail. Throughout its composition, the DBF007 encompasses brushed and polished surfaces,

adding a touch of elegance, thereby surpassing the perfunctory approach found with some divers' watches.

The dial sits beneath a domed sapphire crystal, endowing the watch with a slightly retro appearance. It proves stylish while contributing to the dial's overall impressive legibility. To the rear of the watch, DuBois et fils has subscribed to divers' watch convention, equipping the DBF007 with a solid caseback. In this instance, the caseback is stylishly engraved with a crest incorporating three fir trees standing to attention.

The bronze version of the DBF007 is supplied on a tan calfskin strap paired with a gold-plated polished and brushed clasp. Both the steel and steel-PVD options are presented on black rubber straps with matching steel or steel-PVD clasps.

### **The movement**

In my previous feature, I talked extensively about the Calibre AS 1895, however, in this article, I wish to supplement this information with some additional details.

Ordinarily, at this stage of a detailed watch review, I would discuss the finishing of the movement, but the Calibre AS 1895 is different. The self-winding movement is not decorated with mirror-polishing nor does it feature hand-bevelled bridges. Quite simply, when the Calibre AS 1895 was made in 1960, robustness and day-to-day reliability were the order of the day. Indeed, the movement was clearly intended for use in watches made for manual workers. Moreover, unlike many modern-day watches that require servicing every 3 – 5 years, the Calibre AS 1895 was designed to go much longer without seeing the watchmaker's bench. As a result, the Calibre AS 1895 was widely revered within the watch industry in the 1960s and was used by the likes of Blancpain, Girard-Perregaux and Tudor.

The movements employed within the DBF007 are referred to as 'new old stock', meaning they have remained unused since their production some 50 years ago. DuBois et fils has subsequently overhauled, revised and regulated these movements. The Swiss brand has not added additional finishing, preferring to retain the movement's original character.

The frequency of the balance is 21,600 Vph (3Hz) and the movement contains 25 jewels. Assuming the watch is fully wound, it will run autonomously for 42 hours.

### **Closing remarks**

As mentioned in my previous article, the Swiss brand commissioned freelance designer, Stephan Messmer, to design the DBF007 and the results speak for themselves. A quick glance reveals this is an accomplished design which not only admirably fulfils the remit for a divers' watch but proves exceptionally handsome. Furthermore, with prolonged examination, a plethora of exquisite details comes to the fore. It is these refined aesthetic details which help deliver ownership delight, making the model ideally suited to daily wear.

Once again, DuBois et fils has produced a superb watch that looks to the past but very much belongs in the present and beyond.









