



F.P. JOURNE FFC BLUE – ONLY WATCH 2021

When attending social engagements, the subject of my profession invariably leads to an onslaught of questions. When asked what I think of smart watches, I feign interest and answer politely, despite having just died a little inside. However, when asked to name the greatest watchmaker of all time, my eyes widen, a grin inevitably appears on my face and I begin to share my opinions. Certainly, Ferdinand Berthoud and Antide Janvier are names that readily spring to mind. However, there is one individual who, for me, stands out as the greatest watchmaker of all time, Abraham-Louis Breguet.

Breguet was ingenious, famously inventing the tourbillon, the Breguet overcoil and the Parachute. The great man was an aesthete. Even today, some 200 years later, his caseband fluting and eponymous hands and numerals proffer much eye-appeal. The Swiss-born watchmaker was clearly a prodigious talent but he also had the ability to impart knowledge to others. Furthermore, he was a remarkable businessman recognising the commercial benefit of having famous patrons. Indeed, he masterminded the 'souscription watch', a business tool that continues to be used today. Quite simply, Breguet was the greatest watchmaker of all time because his brilliance was not limited to one discipline but encompassed a multitude of skills.

The Breguet of today?

Today, despite there being a number of excellent watchmakers around, one gentleman stands out from the crowd, the truly exceptional, François-Paul Journe. He is the closest we have to the living embodiment of Breguet. An innovator, aesthete, watchmaker and consummate businessman, Journe is a multi-talented individual.

Some Maisons churn out large volumes of mediocre watches destined to clutter the shelves of various strongrooms, but Journe makes timepieces that aficionados yearn to own. Indeed, he skillfully manages the supply and inevitable demand for his watches. Peruse recent auction results and one can see how the cognoscenti appreciate his work. Journe may be a modern-day watchmaker, but he crafts pieces of horological art worthy of any gallery wall.

Ordinarily, I would describe such praise as sycophantic, however, with Journe it is deserved. Moreover, a cynical mind may assume that my praise is driven by some commercial relationship. I can attest, that despite writing about Journe on many occasions, I have never received any gifts or payments from the great man save for the odd Christmas card. No, my respect for this son of Marseilles is genuine and heartfelt.

A simple question and nine years of painstaking work

Inevitably, remarkable individuals gravitate to other remarkable individuals. Back in 2012, Journe was having dinner with Francis Ford Coppola, the legendary film director famous for

the Godfather trilogy as well as other movies. Coppola allegedly asked Journe if it was possible to indicate time with an automaton-type hand. Journe asked for time to consider the idea. After all, how do you indicate 12 hours with five fingers?

Eventually, the French watchmaker conceived a solution and Coppola was tasked with creating sketches showing the proposed 'finger positions'. Two years later, Journe had invented his ingenious system. Thereafter, he spent another seven years finessing the watch that is now known as the [F.P.Journe](#) FFC Blue. Once again, the watchmaking genius reaffirmed the F.P.Journe motto, 'Invenit et Fecit' meaning 'invented and made'.

The composition of the F.P.Journe FFC Blue

The fingers are inspired by a mechanical hand produced by the French surgeon, Ambroise Paré (1510-1590) and their precise motion is powered by the mainspring. The minutes are indicated by a static arrow, positioned at noon, that points to a rotating minute disc.

The case measures 42mm in diameter and has a height of 10.70mm. Interestingly, it is made of tantalum, a rare metal that is very hard, corrosion-resistant and hypo-allergenic. The metal also exhibits a blue-grey appearance which coalesces wonderfully with the various orange hues employed on this charity watch.

At the heart of the F.P.Journe FFC Blue is the Calibre FFC 1300.3, formed of 18-carat rose gold. This is a derivative of the Octa Calibre 1300, a movement that is currently celebrating its 20th anniversary. It delivers several benefits, including a prodigious power reserve, a uni-directional oscillating weight that spins with extraordinary alacrity and a variable-inertia balance with masellotes positioned in-board.

As stated earlier, the movement is formed of gold, a very soft noble metal. It requires the watchmaker to exercise great care when working on it as one absent-minded slip of a screwdriver could potentially mar the calibre's pristine appearance. However, the primary benefit of using gold is that it is the least reactive metal, hence it will retain its showroom fresh condition for many years to come.

Closing remarks

At this point, having read my words expressing praise for Journe's aesthetic prowess, you may understandably expect me to say I adore the look of the F.P.Journe FFC Blue. Well, I'm sorry, but I don't. It's simply not as beautiful as many of his other creations.

However, I applaud Journe for making this watch. It is technically brilliant and highly original. Furthermore, it encompasses serious watchmaking expertise. Few other watchmakers would have dared to make this watch, let alone execute it to such an exalted standard.

What the F.P.Journe FFC Blue demonstrates is that François-Paul Journe is a unique talent who stands out from the crowd. I already knew this before, but I suspect with the advent of this watch, an increasing number of people will now share my opinion.



