

THE BEST OF SIHH — HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2012 GENEVA FAIR

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REVOLUTION

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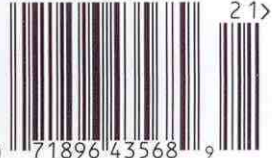
**FRANCK
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OCCASION
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DEEP TIME

THE LOUIS MOINET VERTICALIS
TOURBILLON "RED STROMATOLITE"

BY JACK FORSTER

Whatever your spiritual beliefs, there is near-universal agreement that the spirit is but a brief tenant in the body, and even today, to live out one's biblical assurance of threescore and ten years is to consider oneself relatively lucky. We unhappy mortals, therefore, are like to surround ourselves with things that seem to offer us a glimpse into a more enduring perspective — a universe of more ageless attributes where time stretches out into illimitable vistas whose vastness reassures rather than intimidates. (Hence the equally timeless phenomenon of gentlemen of a certain age pursuing young ladies of a decidedly more recent vintage, but that's another story.)

Consider, then, the Louis Moinet Verticalis Tourbillon "Red Stromatolite." Louis Moinet is a rather particular kind of horological concern, with a rather distinctive perspective. The watches made by CEO Jean-Marie Schaller's small company are not intended to be so much forays into bleeding-edge horological innovation, nor extroverted announcements of endorsements of sportsmanship or membership in that fortunate demographic dubbed the "One Percent" by

disgruntled protesters, but rather essays in stone, steel, brass and rare minerals (with a little leather thrown in to hold them on your wrist) on nostalgia, and the pleasant melancholy that accompanies the knowledge that the work of human hands and minds can outstay in its beauty the individual hand and mind that made it.

The Red Stromatolite is a tourbillon wristwatch whose dial is made of an unusual material. Stromatolites are among the oldest fossil evidence of life on earth. They are the remains of colonies of some of the earliest life forms to grace what astronomer Carl Sagan called "a pale blue dot... A mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam". Before anything with a spine — or for that matter, anything capable of breathing that nasty corrosive and dangerous gas called oxygen — existed on our world, the blue-green unicellular organisms known as cyanobacteria gathered together in their microscopic metropolises and formed colonies, growing into layered mats that accumulated on the sunward-facing surfaces of rocks in the shallow pools that laid across the shores of the infant earth.

Today, stromatolites still exist on earth, but in

vanishingly small numbers compared to their heyday. They were, once upon a very long time ago — some three billion years, a stretch of time so enormously vast that all of human history dwindles into an insignificant footnote to their immensely protracted history — masters of this world. They are now found still mutely huddling on mushroom-shaped rocks here and there in suitably out-of-the-way salty shallows, and to look on them is to hear a voice whispering from across the deeps of time, "Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you." And in the rich tradition of timepieces as memento mori (Mary, Queen of Scots carried one such watch, in the shape of a skull), master craftsman and expert lapidary Daniel Haas has taken a whisper-thin sliver of the remnants of some of earth's first living things and placed them on the dial of a watch.

No, it is not a cutting-edge technical tour de force, nor is it a lavish pronouncement of one's affluence. But it is a sensitively and smartly done meditation on time and the nature of its presence in the human mind, and a reminder to not sweat the small stuff. And also, of course, that taken from a wider perspective, it's all small stuff. ★



**LOUIS MOINET VERTALIS
TOURBILLON "RED
STROMATOLITE"**

MOVEMENT Manual-winding
mechanical movement;
72-hour power reserve

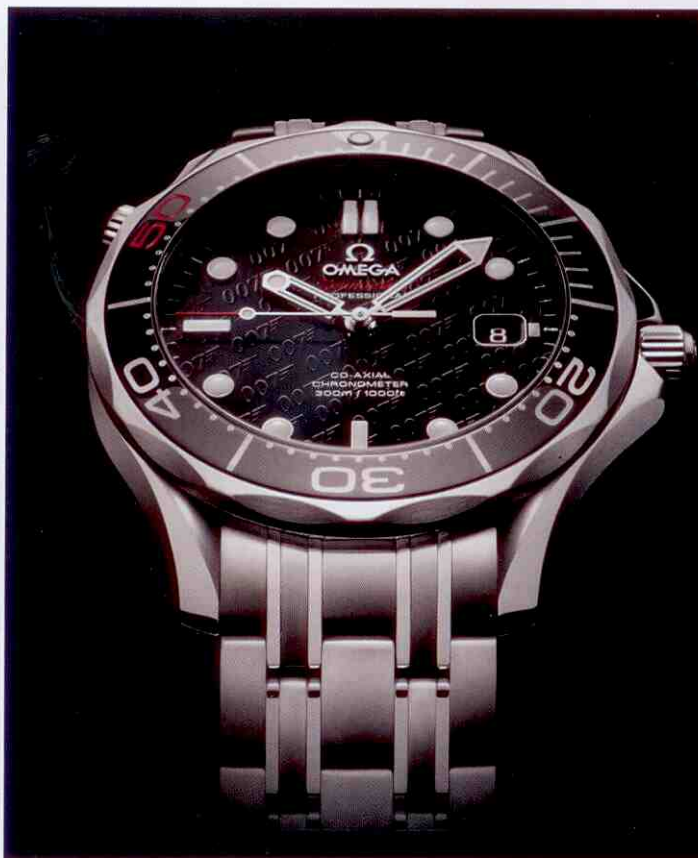
CASE 47mm; rose gold

STRAP Alligator leather

OMEGA'S

JAMES BOND

ANNIVERSARY EDITION



The actors who've played the silver-screen secret agent over the last 50 years have varied, ranging from a rugged Scot to a soft-spoken Irishman to the fair-haired fellow we see thwarting egomaniacal criminal masterminds today. But one constant in every 007 film since *GoldenEye* has been the Omega timepiece gracing Bond's wrist. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of one of the world's most iconic and enduring film series, Omega has released a special collector's piece in the form of a Classic Seamaster Co-Axial 300M. Crafted in stainless steel, the watch features a ceramic bezel ring with diving scales in matte chromium nitride with the number "50" in red in honor of the anniversary. The limited-edition pieces come in two sizes: 41mm and 36.25mm. Both feature Omega's caliber 2507 self-winding movement, fitted with the revolutionary Co-Axial escapement that was first launched in 1999. The certified chronometer features a bullet decoration on the caseback. True to its inspiration, this watch can be shaken or stirred to a 300m depth.

A LOUIS MOINET FOR CAPTAIN NEMO

Inspired by 1870's legendary novel *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, Louis Moinet presents the Jules Verne Instrument III. Designed as a high-precision instrument for the novel's lead, Captain Nemo, the watch is a technological chronograph equipped with an inventive subaquatic-looking monopusher and an interesting indicator display inspired by telegraph transmitters on historical ships. The dial also picks up the signature Louis Moinet "Côtes du Jura" guilloché decoration. With a case made of Grade 5 titanium, the Jules Verne is incredibly light, while the black PVD-coated lower bezel and rose-gold upper bezel make for a lovely combination. The movement

features a screw-balance "machine" beating at 4Hz (28,800vph), and is wound by a ball-bearing-mounted rotor with an openworked segment. The attention to detail is completed with a black-finish Côtes du Jura motif on the movement.

