**L’EPÉE 1839 X MB&F ‘ALBATROSS’**

**Up, up and away: the most ambitious clock co-created  
by L’Epée 1839 and MB&F is ready for lift off.**

After 10 years and 15 different clocks, the L’Epée 1839 X MB&F Albatross is by far the most technically audacious co-creation by the two companies. Totalling a whopping 1520 components, Albatross features a striking hour function – chiming both the specific hours on the hour and a single strike on the half-hour – and an automaton composed of 16 pairs of propellers that launch into action every hour.

The brainchild of designer Eric Meyer, Albatross was inspired by the “Albatross” airship in Jules Verne’s novel Robur the Conqueror, but also more generally by the rockets and hot air balloons imagined by the French author, who had a fascination for flying objects. The works of Jules Verne have already inspired several MB&F creations, including the Legacy Machines collection and more specifically a series of *Pièces Uniques* based on the LM Split Escapement, engraved by Master Engraver Eddy Jaquet.

The clock’s technical specifications are impressive: 1520 components, 17kg, 60cm long by 60cm high and 35cm wide. The aircraft springs into action as the clock strikes the hours and prepares for take-off with its 32 rotating propellers that whirl for about seven seconds.

Inside the aircraft are two movements and two winding systems; one powers the time and striking hour, thanks to two separate barrels, while the other provides the energy for the propellers, powered by a third barrel. The first is manually wound via the propellers at the front of the flying machine: clockwise for the striking hour and anti-clockwise for the time. The propellers at the back wind the automaton. In terms of power reserve, the clock can run for an average of eight days – whether the chiming function is turned on or off – and the automaton for one day.

Not only is this the first “propeller hour” clock ever to be created, but it has a mechanical system inside that allows its future owner to turn the action on or off, as desired. Thanks to the two movements, it is possible to have the propellers turn without the hour chime, and vice versa. There are also two “on demand” buttons to chime the time and/or turn the propellers separately.

A closer look at the propellers reveals that they work in pairs, turning together to give the impression that they are going faster. They turn at a speed of 7 seconds for half a turn, or 14 seconds per turn, so that they always remain visible and don’t create any wind. Arnaud Nicolas, CEO of L’Epée, had some fun working on this: *“We had to make several attempts to find the correct power and speed for the propellers as our initial experiments caused chaos in the workshop: it was like a helicopter ready for take-off!”*

The propellers on the left side of the spaceship turn one way, while those on the right side go the other way, as if the ship really was going to take off. Another detail to note is that when the hour strikes, the propellers operate instantaneously, attesting to the attention to detail that has gone into the Albatross’ creation.

As the “grown-up children” who worked on this creation remember only too well what they were like as youngsters, they have included fail-safes so that any unauthorized manipulation of the propellers won’t cause anything to break. They have also crafted a miniature cockpit, complete with a dashboard and ship’s wheel, behind the porthole to delight curious young eyes. At first, there was no plan for a dashboard in the boat’s cabin, but as soon as the idea of having a see-through element was discussed, they could not resist adding these secret details.

The clock is made from a mix of brass, steel, and aluminium and comes in a choice of five colours – blue, red, green, champagne, and black – all of which are limited to only eight pieces. The coloured parts are achieved using a translucent cold lacquer, a little like enamel, which allows the different finishing techniques to be perceived beneath. This colouring technique offers a superior depth compared to typical anodising treatments, and took L’Epée years to perfect.

Albatross flies in a class of its own: combining an automaton creation with a precision chiming clock mechanism is particularly rare. This creation continues to fuel the spirit of exploration and adventure that was first imagined by Jules Verne many years ago, and will without a doubt inspire others as these airships take their place in homes across the globe.

**ALBATROSS  
Technical Specifications**

**Albatross is launched in five limited editions of only 8 pieces each: blue, red, green, champagne, and black.**

**Functions**

Hours and minutes displayed on individual revolving discs.

Striking hour chiming both the specific hours on the hour and a single strike on the half-hour.

Automaton composed of 16 pairs of propellers that launch into action every hour.

Chiming and propeller functions can be activated/disactivated.

Two “on demand” buttons allow to chime the time and/or turn the propellers separately.

**Movements**

Two separate movements and winding systems, designed and manufactured in-house by L’Epée 1839; one powers the time and striking hour, the other provides the energy for the automaton (propellers).

Movements finishing: mix of satin and polish.

**Time and striking hour movement**

In-line 8-day power reserve movement

Balance frequency: 2.5 Hz / 18,000 bph

Jewels: 11

Incabloc shock protection system

Winding: Manual via the propellers at the front of the flying machine: clockwise for the striking hour and anti-clockwise for the time.

2 separate barrels powering the time and chiming functions.

**Automaton movement:**

Winding: manual via the propellers at the back.

Power reserve: when activated, the automaton can run for one day.

1 barrel dedicated to the automaton movement.

**Components/parts**

Total of 1520 components

**Dimensions**:

600mm long x 350mm wide x 600mm high  
Weight: 17kg

**Body/frame**

The clock is made from a mix of brass, steel, and aluminium.

Colours: translucent cold lacquer in blue, red, green, champagne or black

**L’EPEE 1839  
SWITZERLAND'S LEADING CLOCK MANUFACTURE**

L’Epée 1839 has been a prominent clockmaking manufacture for 185 years. Today, it is the only manufacture in Switzerland to specialize in the production of high-end clocks. Founded in 1839 by Auguste L’Epée in Besançon, France, the company originally focused on producing music boxes and watch components. Even at this early stage, the brand was synonymous with entirely handmade pieces.

Starting in 1850, the manufacture became a leader in producing escapements and began to develop special regulators for alarm clocks, table clocks, and musical watches. It gained wide recognition and filed numerous patents for special escapements, particularly for use in its anti-knocking, auto-starting, and constant force systems. L’Epée 1839 became the principal supplier of several famous clockmakers and went on to win many gold medals at World Fairs.

During the 20th century, the firm owed its success largely to its remarkable travel clocks. Many associate the L’Epée 1839 brand with influential individuals and people in positions of power; members of the French government often gave clocks to their distinguished guests. When the Concorde supersonic airplane began its commercial flights in 1976, L’Epée 1839 fitted the cabins with wall clocks to give passengers the time. In 1994, the brand demonstrated its penchant for challenges by constructing the largest pendulum clock in the world, the “Giant Regulator”, which features in the *Guinness Book of Records*.

Today, L’Epée 1839 is based in the Swiss Jura Mountains (Delémont), under the direction of CEO Arnaud Nicolas. The manufacture still upholds this incredible know-how in the passionate creation of unique horological sculptures manufactured entirely in-house.

The clocks’ technical prowess, combination of form and function, long power reserves, and remarkable finishes have become signature features of the brand.

In 2023, L’Epée 1839 wins the “Mechanical clock” award at the Grand Prix de L’Horlogerie de Genève (GPHG) with Time Fast II in chrome, a creative and technical challenge.

*L’Epée 1839 collections focus on three themes:*

Creative Art: artistic pieces first and foremost, sometimes developed in partnership with external designers as joint creations. These clocks surprise, inspire, and even shock the most seasoned collectors. They are for those consciously or unconsciously looking for exceptional objects.

Contemporary Timepieces: technical creations with a contemporary design (Le Duel, Duet, etc.) and minimalist, avant-garde models (La Tour) incorporating complications such as retrograde seconds, power reserve indicators, moon phases, tourbillons, chiming mechanisms, and perpetual calendars.

Carriage Clocks: also known as “officers’ clocks,” these historical pieces issued from the brand’s heritage also feature their fair share of complications: chiming mechanisms, minute repeaters, calendars, moon phases, tourbillons, and more.

**MB&F – GENESIS OF A CONCEPT LABORATORY**

Founded in 2005, MB&F is the world’s first-ever horological concept laboratory. With over 20 remarkable calibres forming the base of the critically acclaimed Horological and Legacy Machines, MB&F is continuing to follow Founder and Creative Director Maximilian Büsser’s vision of creating 3-D kinetic art by deconstructing traditional watchmaking.

After 15 years managing prestigious watch brands, Maximilian Büsser resigned from his Managing Director position at Harry Winston in 2005 to create MB&F – Maximilian Büsser & Friends. MB&F is an artistic and micro-engineering laboratory dedicated to designing and crafting small series of radical concept watches by bringing together talented horological professionals that Büsser both respects and enjoys working with.

In 2007, MB&F unveiled its first Horological Machine, HM1. HM1’s sculptured, three-dimensional case and beautifully finished engine (movement) set the standard for the idiosyncratic Horological Machines that have followed – all Machines that tell the time, rather than Machines to tell the time. The fiercely unconventional Horological Machines have explored themes as diverse as space and science fiction, aviation, supercars, the animal kingdom and architecture.

In 2011, MB&F launched its round-cased Legacy Machine collection. These more classical pieces – classical for MB&F, that is – pay tribute to nineteenth-century watchmaking excellence by reinterpreting complications from the great horological innovators of yesteryear to create contemporary objets d'art. Certain Legacy Machines have also given birth to EVO editions, featuring increased water and shock resistance compatible with collectors’ active lifestyles. MB&F generally alternates between launching contemporary, resolutely unconventional Horological Machines and historically inspired Legacy Machines.

As the F stands for Friends, it was only natural for MB&F to develop collaborations with artists, watchmakers, designers and manufacturers they admire.

This brought about two new categories: Performance Art and Co-creations. While Performance Art pieces are MB&F machines revisited by external creative talent, Co-creations are not wristwatches but other types of machines, engineered and crafted by unique Swiss Manufactures from MB&F ideas and designs. Many of these Co-creations, such as the clocks created with L’Epée 1839, tell the time while collaborations with Reuge and Caran d’Ache generated other forms of mechanical art.

To give all these machines an appropriate platform, Büsser had the idea of placing them in an art gallery alongside various forms of mechanical art created by other artists, rather than in a traditional storefront. This brought about the creation of the first MB&F M.A.D.Gallery (M.A.D. stands for Mechanical Art Devices) in Geneva, which would later be joined by the M.A.D.Gallery in Dubai – along with MB&F Labs, which showcase a more compact selection of artists in locations like Singapore, Taipei, Paris and Beverly Hills.

There have been distinguished accolades reminding us of the innovative nature of MB&F’s journey so far. To name a few, there have been no less than 9 awards from the famous Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève, including the ultimate prize: the “Aiguille d’Or”, which rewards the best watch of the year. In 2022, the LM Sequential EVO was awarded the Aiguille d’Or, while the M.A.D.1 RED won the ‘Challenge’ category. In 2021, LMX won the Best Men’s Complication and the LM SE Eddy Jaquet ‘Around The World in Eighty Days’ was awarded in the ‘Artistic Crafts’ category. In 2019, the prize for Best Ladies Complication went to the LM FlyingT; in 2016, LM Perpetual won the Best Calendar Watch award; in 2012, Legacy Machine No.1 was awarded both the Public Prize (voted for by horology fans) and the Best Men’s Watch Prize (voted for by the professional jury). In 2010, MB&F won Best Concept and Design Watch for the HM4 Thunderbolt. In 2015 MB&F received a Red Dot: Best of the Best award – the top prize at the international Red Dot Awards – for the HM6 Space Pirate.