

THE WORLD'S ULTIMATE WATCH LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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LUDOVIC BALLOUARD'S

SEAN LI *(text)*

UPSIDE DOWN

An unconventional watch from an nontraditional watchmaker



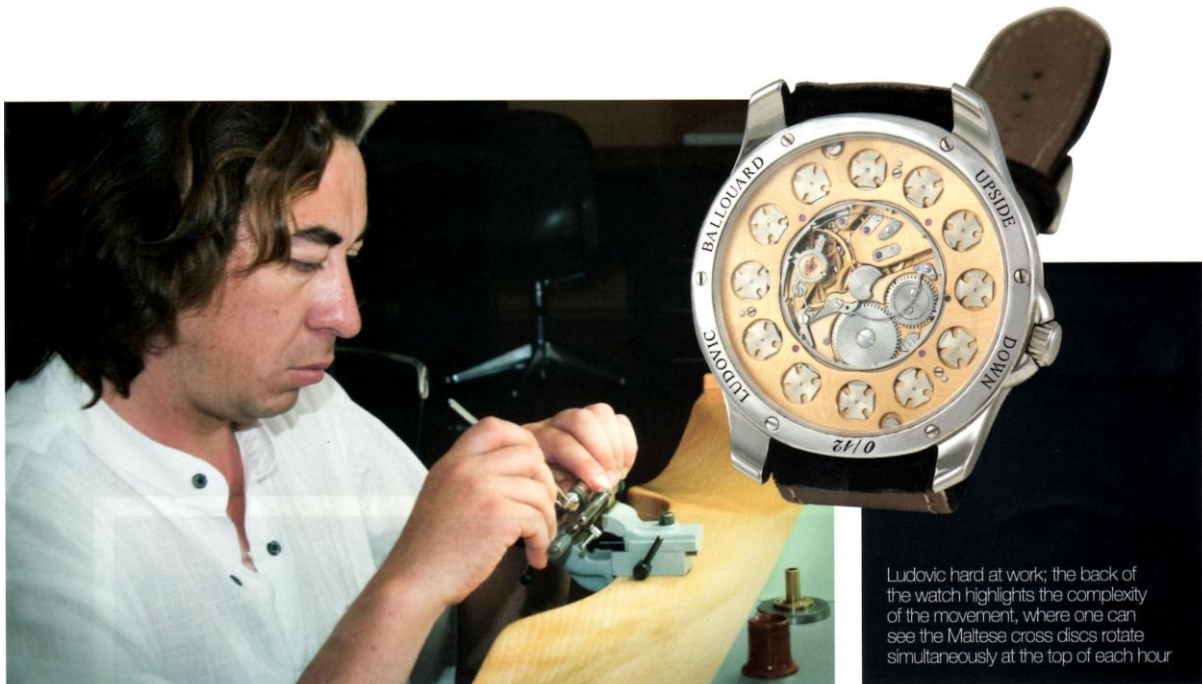
LUDOVIC BALLOUARD UPSIDE DOWN

MOVEMENT: Manual-winding B01; patented upside down complication; 42-hour power reserve; 21,600bph

FUNCTIONS: Hours indication by correct hour being right side up, while the rest are upside down; minutes indicated by flamed blue steel hand; sub seconds at 6 o'clock

CASE: 950 platinum; 41mm; water-resistant to 30m

STRAP: Black handstitched alligator with custom 950 platinum buckle



Ludovic hard at work; the back of the watch highlights the complexity of the movement, where one can see the Maltese cross discs rotate simultaneously at the top of each hour.

Ludovic Ballouard has not had the most traditional path to establishing himself as an independent watchmaker. At a young age, he became interested in model aviation. When it came time to think of a professional career path, he thought that his micromechanical motor skills could be put to good use as a dental prosthetic technician, but thankfully his career adviser suggested watchmaking instead. He started his formal training at 17, in Rennes, France. Upon completing his studies, he moved to Switzerland's Vallée de Joux, to work at Lemania.

However, one thing his career counsellor didn't mention at the time is that Switzerland has many areas that get covered in snow, and after six months, Ludovic had enough of the climate and moved back to his native Brittany, in France. For the next six years, he worked as an aircraft instrument technician, until he felt that his watchmaking skills needed to be better utilized. The next three years were spent at Franck Muller, in Geneva, where snow was less of an impediment.

He first attempted to establish himself independently in 2001, a not so valiant effort that lasted a mere six months, before he joined François-Paul Journe's young manufacture. Under Journe's guidance, he gained a tremendous amount of experience, becoming one of only two of the manufacture's watchmakers to be dedicated to the Grande Sonnerie, Journe's most complex piece to date.

With some fresh ideas of his own, Ballouard was bitten by the bug of independence again, and left Journe in early 2009 to establish his own brand. Perhaps aptly for someone who never saw watchmaking from a traditional aspect, his first piece is called the "Upside Down." At first glance, you would be hard pressed to notice

that there is something missing, namely the hour hand. Perhaps you'd think that it's merely hidden by the minute hand, or that it's some kind of regulator watch. Upon closer inspection though, you'll see that there's something particular about the digits around the dial: all but one is upside down! In fact, the one numeral that's the right side up are the one indicating the correct hour. A small dot is added to the hour marker's disc, to help in reading the correct time. You may notice some Upside Down pieces with a single red numeral as well; in fact, Ballouard followed in Journe's footsteps when he spread his wings, and the first 12 pieces were sold by subscription, with the red numeral indicating the collector's individual number.

Turn the watch over to admire the technical aspect of the calibre B01 and its patented upside down time indication, where each hour marker is controlled by Maltese crosses. The hour indication flips instantaneously at the top of each hour, with two of the discs rotating simultaneously. Ballouard wanted to expose the complexity of this mechanism, necessitating the drilling of 12 holes through the movement in order to show the Maltese cross discs at work. The 41mm case shows a similar attention to minute details, with sides that curve slightly inwards, giving added scratch protection along with a different tactile feedback to many of the straight sides we are accustomed to. The Upside Down is manually wound and features a 42 hour power reserve.

Rev★lution would like to congratulate Ballouard's career advisor on such enlightened counsel. Ballouard may not have followed it in the most traditional sense, and his aversion to snow came close to making the watchmaker choose an entirely different path, but the Upside Down shows that his years under Journe's wings have planted some horological seeds that are just starting to grow. We look forward to following Ballouard's future developments! ★