

## **M.A.D.EDITIONS**

### **The side project that started as a thank you**

September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**The MB&F team announces today the M.A.D.1 GREEN: a third edition of the M.A.D.1 wristwatch it first disclosed in June 2021 under a separate label, M.A.D.Editions. An occasion to look back at what started as an experimental thank you to clients and suppliers – and has become a horological phenomenon.**

#### **The beginning of the adventure**

Not many creations can boast about being born as a scheme to say thank you. The driving force behind M.A.D.Editions was a certain frustration that not everyone could afford a high-figure MB&F timepiece, including MB&F founder Maximilian Büsser's own friends and family; it started as a side project to thank those supporters of MB&F who have played a major role in the success of the brand.

Already during the inception of MB&F, nearly two decades ago, Maximilian had an idea for a parallel watch brand at a more affordable price point. The project was a bit mad; at the time, his attention was naturally focused on MB&F and he was not able to drum up enough funding to get it off the ground. The concept never left him, however, bubbling away in the back of his mind... until 2014, when the idea resurfaced. After several months of work, Max decided once again to put the prototype of what would later become the M.A.D.1 on the back burner – until it came back again in 2020, at the beginning of the Covid pandemic, when the MB&F team spent countless hours in Zoom meetings, brainstorming on new projects.

Between 2020 and mid-2021, the MB&F team fine-tuned and finalised the design – and invested into the manufacturing of a few hundred pieces. The timepiece would be as creative as everything else MB&F had developed, only at a much more affordable price. It could clearly not carry the MB&F name; to keep the price accessible, the engineering, complexity and finishing would obviously not be in the same league as MB&F's Horological and Legacy Machines. The team chose M.A.D.Editions, linking the watch to the mechanical art universe of the brand's M.A.D.Galleries.

#### **The M.A.D.1 BLUE: the "Friends and Tribe edition"**

The M.A.D.1 was never "launched". In June 2021, without any forewarning, it was simply presented on a short email, accompanied by a few photos, to MB&F's suppliers and collectors. It was not announced on the brand's website or social media channels. But that simple email generated a media storm unlike anything MB&F had ever seen.

Coming from MB&F, whose timepieces range from about \$60,000 to \$500,000, the price of CHF 1,900 + tax (approximately \$2,000) seemed impossible to believe. At the time, since the project was created purely as a thank you to all those who had helped create MB&F, it was not intended to be a business and its price did not reflect the real value of the timepiece.

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This first edition of M.A.D.1 watches – recognisable thanks to its blue accents – was proposed to two well-defined groups of people: first, MB&F's network of suppliers – the "Friends" as the brand calls them – who had been helping create their timepieces since 2005. From dial makers to hand makers, those who craft the brand's cases, escapements, movement components and sapphire crystals; but also to the photographers, writers, designers, and other creatives who have been part of the journey.

The second group were the registered members of "The Tribe", the MB&F owners' club – the collectors, the patrons who had supported the brand from the very beginning by acquiring its Horological and Legacy Machines. Incidentally, the team would decide later that Tribe members retain a permanent access to future M.A.D. Editions, recognising that MB&F would simply not exist without them.

This thank you to MB&F suppliers and collectors could have stopped there – but in today's world of social media and chat groups, it was just a matter of days before the word got out. Once in possession of their M.A.D.1, the Friends and Tribe members started to share their new timepiece with the world, opening the floodgates of desire for watch lovers the world over. After a few weeks of frenzy, the MB&F team realised that it would be impossible to limit the project to existing suppliers and collectors – it had to consider opening M.A.D. Editions to a wider public.

### **Why the frenzy?**

The M.A.D.1 was conceived with the same amount of creativity as an MB&F Machine, but with an additional constraint, which one could argue is even more challenging: the affordable price point. Developing a movement from scratch would clearly have been too expensive, so modifying a tried and proven base calibre was required. Among a few potential candidates, the Miyota 821A movement was chosen for its unidirectional winding system – essential for easy and high-speed rotation of the winding rotor, a key element of the M.A.D.1 design.

The case structure and time display were particularly innovative with the movement encased upside-down, allowing the watchmakers to place the specially-developed triple-blade, titanium and tungsten rotor on the dial side of the watch – a feature typical of several MB&F timepieces. The revolving hours and minutes were positioned on aluminium cylinders visible on the case band, another nod to the much-loved lateral displays seen on many MB&F Machines.

Housed in a 42mm stainless steel case, combined with large sections in mineral glass and sapphire crystal, the M.A.D.1 was enhanced with blue touches and generous Super-LumiNova, also around the rotor, for hours of spinning amusement in the dark.

### **A production conundrum**

MB&F's compact and highly skilled team of engineers and watchmakers create about 400 watches per year. Even though the M.A.D.1 was not as complex as what they usually work on, they still needed to modify the base movement, mount the hour and minute cylinders, the oversized rotor, encase the watch and do the final testing.

Assembling hundreds or thousands of M.A.D.1 timepieces was just unthinkable, dangerous even to the brand's core business. After much internal debate, it was decided to respond to the mind-

blowing demand for more M.A.D.1 watches, but to proceed step by step and in the fairest way possible.

### **M.A.D.1 RED: the first edition accessible to the public**

The M.A.D.1 RED was unveiled in March 2022 to the public, featuring a vibrant cherry red design. It also had its own special features, including a slimmer bezel and a more traditional round winding crown, instead of the key-like crown on the previous version. After a deeper analysis of the actual costs involved in developing, manufacturing and servicing M.A.D. Editions, the price was adjusted to CHF 2,900 + tax (approximately \$3,100).

The team manufactured a first batch of 1,500 M.A.D.1 REDs. To keep things as equitable as possible, those who had previously taken the trouble to send an email to the brand, clearly expressing their interest in purchasing a possible future version, were given priority. For the rest, a raffle was opened on the brand's e-shop where those interested could register for a free raffle ticket, to win the right to purchase one of the remaining pieces available. The MB&F team hoped that the raffle would attract maybe a few thousand aficionados... After thorough cleaning of the list, to filter out multiple entries and bot registrations, there were 19,000! The lucky winners were chosen at random via a draw – under the supervision of a bailiff – and the M.A.D.1 REDs were delivered between March and December 2022.

The year 2022 ended with an amazing reward as the M.A.D.1 RED won the Challenge Prize at the famous *GPHG/Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève*, rewarding the year's best watch under CHF 3,500.

Recognising the gap between supply and demand, MB&F decided to manufacture a second batch of M.A.D.1 REDs, which were made available again via a raffle in February 2023. This time, the raffle attracted over 22,000 fans – and the lucky winners snapped up the 1,500 pieces available.

### **The raffle system**

Choosing the fairest way possible to allocate the M.A.D.1s has been the subject of endless hours of internal debate at MB&F. The team felt that the usual systems – including drops, queuing endlessly in line at retail outlets, or never-ending waiting lists – were extremely frustrating for customers. It was decided that raffles were the fairest way: they give everyone a fair chance and ample time to register, since the raffle registrations stay open for about two weeks.

Admittedly, no system is perfect; raffles do not totally eliminate those unsavoury characters looking to flip watches for financial gain, but they remain the most impartial method for those truly interested in acquiring a M.A.D.1. They also allow sufficient time to clean the registration lists, filtering out the inevitable multiple entries and bots; the team typically spends about a week after the registrations are closed to clean the list as best as possible, before the random draws take place. The draws are carried out under the supervision of a bailiff.

### **M.A.D.1 GREEN**

After the original M.A.D.1 Blue ("Friends and Tribe Edition") and the M.A.D.1 RED, the M.A.D.1 GREEN joins M.A.D. Editions' colourful series in September 2023. With this new choice of vivid mint

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green, fans and collectors who haven't been able to acquire their own M.A.D.1 yet, will get another chance – with a little bit of luck – to be picked and join wearers of the blue and red models.

The new batch of 1,500 pieces with the green colourway will be available via the usual M.A.D.Editions' raffle system where watch lovers can sign up for a ticket on the M.A.D.Gallery e-shop. The raffle will be open for registrations from September 12<sup>th</sup>, for two weeks, and after filtering and cleaning of the list, the tickets will go into a draw (as always, supervised by a bailiff) with the lucky winners being chosen at random. Results will be announced in early October and deliveries scheduled between October 2023 and April 2024.

**The M.A.D.Editions journey has been – for the want of a better word – totally mad, and it is far from over. Look forward to further developments in 2024 and beyond!**

M.A.D.Editions Press section (including high-res photos and videos):  
<https://www.madgallery.net/geneva/en/press/mad-editions>

M.A.D.Editions raffle page:  
<https://shop.madgallery.ch/products/m-a-d-1-green-raffle>