08 Sep, 2026

DUBOIS ET FILS, INDEPENDENT WATCHMAKING, NEW WATCHES 2026, WATCH MANUFACTURERS, WATCH REVIEWS

DUBOIS ET FILS DBF010

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BY ANGUS DAVIES

DuBois et fils DBF010 Watch Review

The inaugural version of the DuBois et fils DBF010, the DBF010-01, a limited edition of 11 pieces, was unveiled at the company's AGM in 2025. All examples of this limited edition model were eagerly snapped up by shareholders. However, the company has since unveiled a further five versions of the watch, each limited to 22 pieces. Angus Davies, a longstanding admirer of the brand, explains why DuBois et fils has always done things differently, an approach that has led to it creating an impressive body of work.

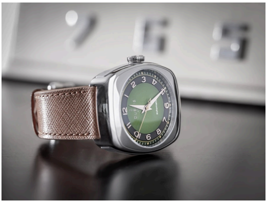

Image – DuBois et fils DBF010-04

Introduction

Having written about watches for the last 15 years and obsessed over timepieces my whole adult life, I've witnessed much. During this time, I've encountered many interns, graduates and ambitious young executives vying for success. On more than one occasion, I've met a fresh-faced twentysomething, still cutting their teeth, only to meet them a decade later, a worldly CEO in their late thirties. The route to greatness is well worn: make no enemies, form useful alliances and play it safe. By and large, this approach works, albeit it often results in the same forms of ownership, the same distribution channels, the same promotional strategies and products that sometimes look very similar.

When an individual tries an alternative approach to running a watch business, it tends to pique my interest. As a former marketing professional, I confess that I view non-standard strategies with a fair degree of scepticism. On occasion, I feel a pang of sadness when I see an ill-conceived plan, knowing it's almost certain to fail. Quite simply, 'same' works. The approach may yield mediocrity, but it remains the most predictable route to prosperity. However, there are a few mavericks within the watch industry that have shown courage and, against the odds, made it work; step forward Thomas Steinemann, CEO of DuBois et fils. Allow me to elaborate.

Image – Thomas Steinemann, CEO of DuBois et fils

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DuBois et fils depuis 1751 – crowdfunding

The DuBois family registered the company's current name, 'DuBois et fils', in 1751. Philippe DuBois's sons joined the business in 1785. At this point, the company had already produced in excess of 21,000 timepieces. The firm's headquarters always remained in Le Locle, even when it briefly had German owners. It has also remained in continuous operation since 1751. In 2010, Thomas Steinemann acquired the brand and, two years later, re-registered the company in Basel (2012). Having purchased DuBois et fils, Steinemann, a son of Basel, needed to raise funds to revive the historic marque. The question was how? His solution was crowdfunding.

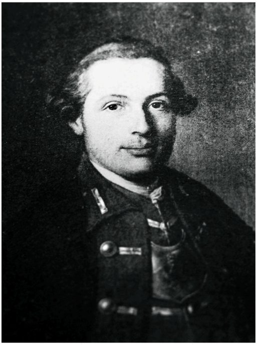


Image – Philippe DuBois

Peruse the Googlesphere, and it is said that crowdfunding dates back to the 1700s; however, in the modern era, the rock band Marillion is widely credited as a pioneer in the field. In 1997, wishing to raise funds for a US tour, the band set up a website and invited fans to pledge funds. By 2009, crowdfunding had become increasingly popular, providing entrepreneurs with a useful source of funding. Indeed, in 2012, the US government passed the Jumpstart Our Business Startups (JOBS) Act, which provided a legal framework, encouraging small businesses to grow through crowdfunding.

DuBois
Montres
DuBois
1785
CORDONNERIE
H. RYSER

Image – DuBois et fils founder's house in Le Locle

It was also in 2012 that I received a press release from DuBois et fils stating that it was raising funds using crowdfunding. At the time, I recall thinking, 'What's crowdfunding?' Setting aside my ignorance, Steinemann's idea of raising funds using this method proved very shrewd. He attracted hundreds of small investors, each buying a small stake in the newly revived company. As part of their ownership, shareholders received a voucher for a discount on one of the company's watches. This provided DuBois et fils with two additional benefits. Firstly, there was a ready market for the company's products. Secondly, shareholders, pleased with their watches, became unpaid ambassadors for the brand, proudly showing their new DBF model to friends and associates. Since the initial crowdfunding, additional small investors have bought a stake in the historic marque, while some existing shareholders have acquired further shares. Today, the company states it has over 1000 shareholders spread across the world.

In recent times, several entrepreneurs, keen to launch a new watch brand, have used crowdfunding; however, back in 2012, DuBois et fils was one of the first watch brands to adopt the concept.

DuBois et fils – vintage movements

We live in a world where, in the relentless pursuit of newness, we all too often discard proven mechanisms. While the watch industry is highly innovative and conceives new technologies that deliver genuine advancement, there remain some historical watch movements, rich in virtue and ideally suited to modern-day use, left languishing on shelves.

Watch movements produced between 1920 and 1970 were made using a combination of automation and hand assembly, just as they are today. However, in the past, there was less automation, with more assembly tasks performed by hand. For this reason, movements were designed to be easy to work on and sufficiently robust for hand assembly. Moreover, during this period, watches were often worn by manual workers; hence, they had to be resilient to the harsh realities of daily wear. Also, due to their intended use, these watches were designed to go longer between services.

Manufacture d'Ebauches et de Finissages
A. Schild S.A.
Grenchen
(Suisse)
Télégrammes: ASSA Grenchen
Maison fondée en 1896, affiliée à Ebauches S.A.
Berne 1914 Médaille d'Or
AS

Having spoken to several watchmakers on the subject, there is a widespread belief that the steel used in the past was superior to what we have today. In 2024, I interviewed Thomas Gronenthal of DuBois et fils and we discussed the qualities of vintage movements. He voiced his appreciation for calibres of yesteryear, agreed with the aforementioned attributes and pointed out several further benefits of using 'New Old Stock'. For example, with some vintage movements, the larger dimensions of gear train wheels mean the transmission of power from the barrel to the escapement is more efficient.

Image – Thomas Gronenthal of DuBois et fils

DuBois et fils is no stranger to using vintage watch movements in its timepieces. Indeed, in 2017, Thomas Steinemann signed an exclusive contract that provided access to a stock of 230,000 vintage watch movements belonging to an elderly watchmaker. The Maison has since acquired further 'New Old Stock' (NOS) movements as well as a large inventory of watch components that can still be used today.

Omega
Omega
Record
Record
Record
461 Record
462 Record
463 Rolex
464
465
466
Omega
Omega
Omega

The DBF004 was equipped with a vintage Calibre Record 662 and, later, when the brand unveiled the DBF006, it was fitted with another NOS movement, the Felsa Bidynator 4007N. In 2021, Steinemann's ingenuity once again came to the fore with the release of the DBF007. He equipped the watch with an A. Schild Calibre AS-1895, another NOS movement, but on this occasion connected it to the blockchain. DuBois et fils also combined this technology with NFT diaries, offering another interesting concept, a 'Swiss movement with tokens'.

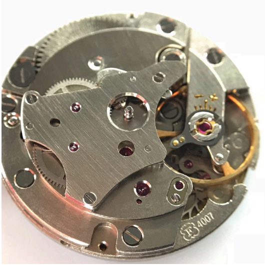


Image – Felsa Bidynator 4007N

All subsequent DuBois et fils have been equipped with an NOS movement. It has united period robustness with superior modern-day lubricants, all skilfully assembled at the brand's modern facility in Muttenz, located on the outskirts of Basel.

DuBois et fils – the brand

Having known Thomas Steinemann for several years, I like to think I know what makes him tick (sorry for the pun). He is driven in his quest to build DuBois et fils into an even greater success, creating a community of shareholders and collectors. He places great importance on making genuine Swiss watches, choosing to procure components from his home nation. Nevertheless, Thomas is very transparent, pointing out that there are occasions when a part is not produced in Switzerland and must be sourced from overseas, albeit this remains the exception, not the rule.

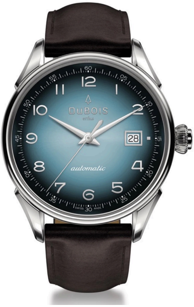


Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-10

When assessing the company's products at close quarters, the habillage (the components encapsulating the movement) exudes quality and refinement. Dials are rich in nuanced detail, sidestepping the mainstream with distinctive hues and, sometimes, intricate textures. Likewise, cases play with lines and curves, juxtapose different finishes, incorporate subtle touches and confer sublime wearer comfort. A few moments with a DuBois et fils watch and it soon becomes clear that Steinemann and his team have obsessed over every element.

A person who played a pivotal role in the creation of several DuBois et fils watches was Stephan Messmer. The hugely talented watch designer collaborated with the brand for the first time when he designed the DBF006. Thereafter, Stephan collaborated on several further models, including the DBF012, yet to be released. Unfortunately, Stephan passed away in 2025; albeit his stylish watches live on, a fitting legacy for a gifted professional and a genuinely nice chap.

Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-03

The brand's innovative approach to raising capital, its fondness for vintage movements, its preference for Swiss-made components and its almost obsessive attention to detail differentiate it from rivals. DuBois et fils also loves 'limited editions'. Indeed, all DuBois et fils watches are limited in number, from 11 pieces to a maximum of 99 pieces. Furthermore, prospective purchasers can visit the company's website and, assuming it has not already been sold, select the 'limited edition number' of their choice.

DuBois et fils DBF010 – a new model

Recently, I caught up with Thomas Steinemann, keen to see the Swiss brand's latest model, the DuBois et fils DBF010.

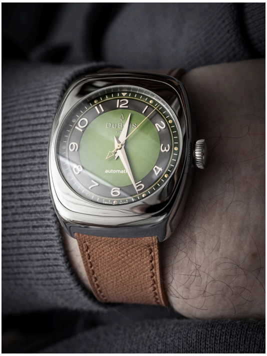


Image – DuBois et fils DBF010-04

The watch is presented in a barrel-shaped case, features an integrated leather strap and incorporates a 'New Old Stock' Calibre Record 1959-2 automatic movement from the 70s. An exemplar of blue-sky thinking and a paragon of nonconformity, the DBF010 introduces two unexpected delights. It is endowed with two interchangeable elements, the bezel and the side panels gracing the vertical flanks of the case. The model was designed by Philippe Girard and, based on first impressions, his work promises to perpetuate the brand's reputation for quality and originality.

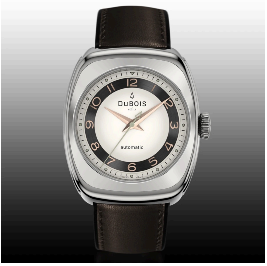


Image – DuBois et fils DBF010-01

When the DBF010-01 was presented at the company's AGM in May 2025, all 11 pieces were immediately purchased by shareholders. Currently, the Swiss marque offers five additional versions of the model (DBF010-02, DBF010-03, DBF010-04, DBF010-05 and DBF010-06), limited to 22 pieces each.

Without further ado, I will endeavour to point out some of the DBF010's many features.

DuBois et fils DBF010 – contrasts

When you hold the DBF010 in your hand for the first time, the thing that immediately grabs your attention is the wonderful play with contrasts. Watch designers often juxtapose finishes, orchestrating the way light performs; playing a few high notes to the accompaniment of some deep bass tones. But with the DBF010, Girard has gone further, repeatedly and masterfully playing with several dissimilar elements that, when brought together, form a harmonious composition. There is a 70s feel to the design and yet there are numerous details that exude modernity.

This game of contrasts begins with the round dial set within a barrel-shaped case. Most barrel-shaped watches feature similarly shaped dials, but not the DBF010. The curving lines of its case evoke thoughts of pebbles being shaped by lapping seas. The resultant shape feels soft and gentle. Indeed, the case almost wants to be caressed. In contrast, the circular dial is functional, unambiguous and direct, conveying meaning succinctly.

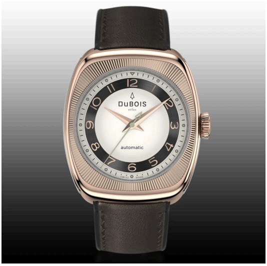


Image – DuBois et fils DBF010-05

DuBois et fils DBF010 – dial

The hour and minute hands are dauphine-shaped, a classical design that grants ease of read-off and exhibits notable style. Arabic numerals are presented on a dedicated track, the chosen typeface appearing more contemporary by comparison. Look at the word 'automatic', located above 6 o'clock, the letterform oozes modernity – unfussy, yet imbued with flair.

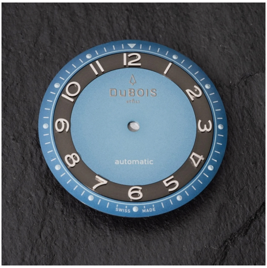


Image – DuBois et fils DBF010-03

A central seconds hand completes the list of functions. It's elongated, stretching beyond the hour track, and floats above a dedicated minute track that's punctuated with circular markers, each positioned at 5-minute intervals. The Maison's name resides below noon and features the brand's fir tree emblem, a logo that also graces the seconds hand.

Image – DuBois et fils DBF010-04

DuBois et fils offers the DBF010 in an array of colours, some conspicuous and ebullient, others more understated. While Girard has endowed each variant with contrasting dial details, the DBF010-02 is the boldest option, juxtaposing black and orange hues to glorious effect. The colour palette is likely to polarise opinion, but with only 22 pieces available, I doubt there will be a shortage of takers.

DuBois et fils DBF010 – case

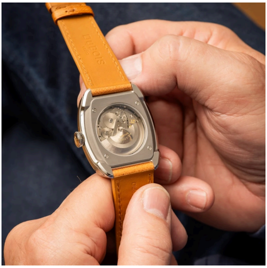
Measuring 40 mm in diameter and 13 mm thick (including the crystal), I found the watch afforded a comfortable wrist fit (my wrist circumference is 19.0 cm). It wears smaller than you might expect, primarily because the watch eschews conventional lugs with the leather strap neatly integrating within the case.

All cases are formed of stainless steel 316L; however, in some instances the metal has been subjected to an additional treatment. For instance, the DBF010-02 is coated in black DLC. To the rear of the case, a pane of sapphire crystal offers a glimpse of the Automatic Calibre Record 1959-2 within.

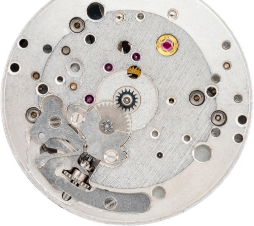
Once again, Girard has introduced another dose of ingenuity and verve. The upper surface of the case features a smooth bezel with an integrated sapphire crystal. However, this bezel can be removed and swapped for an alternative endued with a fluted motif. Likewise, the side panels, gracing each side of the case, can be swapped to create a different look. This work can be undertaken at the DuBois et fils workshop or at an authorised retailer but should not be performed by an overambitious hobbyist. The brand offers a customisation service and clients can always purchase the interchangeable elements retrospectively as and when new configurations become available. Interestingly, DuBois et fils invites visitors to see watchmakers at work within its atelier where timepieces are assembled, regulated and serviced.

DuBois et fils DBF010 – Automatic Calibre Record 1959-2

Made in Geneva, the Automatic Calibre Record 1959-2 was produced in the early 1970s. When describing a movement as 'New Old Stock', it means that it has never been used and is no longer in production. The vintage NOS movement is fully serviced, subjected to extensive quality controls and regulated.



DuBois et fils has sensitively decorated the movement by satin-finishing the bridges and incorporating polished screws. The oscillating weight is nickel-plated and engraved with 'DuBois et fils'.



As part of the DBF ownership experience, details of a watch, including its movements, are saved to an 'Interactive Watch Chronicle'. Connected to the blockchain, this electronic passport will always accompany the watch. Additional information can be added to the chronicle at any time, but once submitted, it cannot be deleted or overwritten. It serves as a permanent record of the watch and its ownership and can be used to archive images of the timepiece, service records and even personal photographs eg a wristshot. In an age where counterfeits are becoming increasingly common, the blockchain is a useful means of demonstrating provenance.

RECORD
AUTOMATIC
SWISS MADE
JEWELS

Closing remarks

The DuBois et fils DBF010 exudes period charm with its barrel-shaped torso and vintage movement. Girard has conceived a model that does not mimic other brands' watches, but delivers something fresh and exciting. His expert use of colours, proportions, lines, curves and especially contrasts, has imbued the DBF010 with a handsome and characterful mien.

Image – DuBois et fils DBF010-02

While unquestionably different from most rival watches, DuBois et fils has not sacrificed practicality on the altar of style. The dial is eminently legible and the case confers a cosseting wrist fit. The DBF010 is an accomplished design incorporating some ingenious touches. In particular, the interchangeable bezel and side panels are a truly inspired idea. These elements allow owners to adapt the look of their watch in the future and, no doubt, help DuBois et fils maintain contact with its clients; always a sensible idea for any brand.

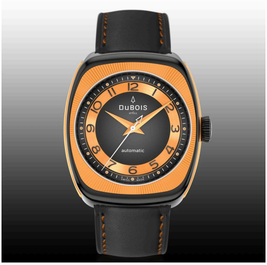


Image – DuBois et fils DBF010-02

Large watch companies tend to favour round watches because they are 'safe'. However, DuBois et fils has never subscribed to 'safe', preferring to be courageous, frequently approaching watchmaking with a different mindset. By being unconventional, DBF delivers new, exciting and different products; watches that some CEOs dare not make. Indeed, like Frank Sinatra, Steinemann has repeatedly done it his own way.

Image – DuBois et fils DBF010-02

Further reading

https://duboisfils.ch/

Technical specifications

- **Model: DuBois et fils DBF010**
- **References: DBF010-02 (steel black DLC coating), DBF010-03 (steel), DBF010-04 (steel), DBF010-05 (steel & rose gold 5N plated), DBF010-06 (steel & gold 3N plated)**
- **Case: diameter 40 mm, height 13 mm (including crystal), water resistant to 3 bar (30 metres), sapphire crystal to front and exhibition caseback.**
- **Functions: hours, minutes, centre seconds**

- **Movement: Automatic Calibre Record 1959-2, self-winding movement, frequency 19,800 vph (2.75 Hz), 17 jewels, power reserve 44 hours.**
- **Strap: leather strap, beige lining with pin buckle**
- **Prices: from CHF 7,950 (RRP as of 21.7.2026)**

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