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DUBOIS ET FILS, WATCH MANUFACTURERS,  
WATCH REVIEWS

## DUBOIS ET FILS DBF008

BY CARL EADY

### DuBois et fils DBF008 Watch Review

Carl Eady delves into the rich history of Swiss company DuBois et fils and explores the brand's most recent creation, the DuBois et fils DBF008. The watch is a modern and elegant timepiece equipped with a historical movement, ingenious date adjustment feature and blockchain technology enabling maximum authenticity throughout the watch's lifetime.



*Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-03*

## **DuBois et fils depuis 1785**

Independent watch brand DuBois et fils can trace its roots back to 1684 when the DuBois family purchased their family residence at Le Locle, in the Swiss canton of Neuchâtel. At the time, this small municipality had just over three thousand residents, but, in the watch world, it was already becoming known for its horological expertise. Le Locle, along with neighbouring La Chaux-de-Fonds, would go on to become the epicentre of the Swiss watch industry and home to many distinguished and pioneering brands such as Zenith, Tissot and Universal Genève.



***Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-08***

Originally, the DuBois family had business interests in textiles. Moise DuBois, who assumed the reins of his father's business in 1720, branched out into trading watches in the early 1740s. His subsequent passion for timepieces led to him founding the DuBois brand in 1751, initially producing high-quality pocket watches. Ownership of the company passed to Moise's children, Phillip and Isabeau, around 1760. By 1785, Phillip's sons had joined the company and it became known as 'Dubois et fils'. It wasn't until 1910 that the brand shifted from pocket watches to wristwatches, following the trend set by Louis Cartier a few years earlier.



*Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-03*

The subsequent years saw the DuBois et fils company swap hands several times until it was eventually sold to a Hamburg-based company, 'Schweizer Uhren'. Unfortunately, despite producing some exquisite timepieces (many of which are still in circulation), DuBois et fils eventually ceased trading. It then remained dormant until 2010, when former Fossil Group director and industry veteran, [Thomas Steinemann](#), considered reviving the historic Maison.

## **DuBois et fils – crowdfunding**

Recognising its enormous potential, Steinemann set about acquiring [DuBois et fils](#). Having the funds to purchase the brand was one thing; however, manufacturing watches is a far costlier business. Steinemann decided to offer shares in the company to help realise his dream. Back in 2012, crowdfunding was a relatively new concept, but, despite having not produced a single watch, Steinemann successfully used this innovative practice of funding to raise approximately CHF 1.5M from 600 eager investors.



*Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-04*

A shrewd businessman, Steinemann has skilfully transformed the DuBois brand into a highly successful business. In a stroke of genius, he acquired some 230,000 unused Swiss watch movements and, by refurbishing and repurposing them, he now has a large inventory of movements that will fulfil the brand's needs for years to come.



## Follow



***Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-01***

It is over a decade since the start of his adventure and, as the brand's product portfolio grows, so too does the interest from passionate collectors, impressed by the firm's investment opportunities. The brand shunned the obvious path of re-issuing historical DuBois models and has instead created modern timepieces in a range of styles, including dive watches, large date chronographs and an exceptional day/date chronograph in a square case (DBF002). Each creation proffers genuine exclusivity, with models limited to a maximum of 99 pieces; many of which get snapped up by the original investors.



*Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-05*

With its latest offering, the DBF008, DuBois delivers an elegant, minimalist 'three-hander' with a well-executed date window and an ingenious date adjustment feature. There are circa 330 pieces, offered in an array of dial finishes with each iteration limited to a maximum of 33 pieces.

### **DuBois et fils DBF008 – case**

At first glance, the case of the DBF008 appears understated. Measuring 39 mm in diameter, the watch will suit most wrists while the modest case thickness of 11 mm will allow it to comfortably slip under a shirt cuff. Close inspection reveals some fine details that distinguish the watch from many of its similarly-priced contemporaries.



***Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-04***

The case is presented in a well-executed blend of satin and highly polished finishes which delightfully play with light. The bezel is particularly narrow, affording more space for the dial and the clean expression of time.

DuBois et fils has embraced historical techniques by soldering the lugs to the case. Whilst this approach is certainly protracted and, by default, costly, it is consistent with the brand's respect for traditional craftsmanship. Aesthetically, these 'horns' bestow a wonderful balance to the case.



*Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-04*

Finally, the most significant feature of the case is the winding crown. It is somewhat ornate with its deep fluting, yet it remains tasteful and easy to manipulate. The crown has a clever, labour-saving feature that allows the wearer to advance the date by simply pressing the pusher at its centre. This is a brilliant example of smart thinking, made even more remarkable by the fact that it was masterminded over 60 years ago.

## **DuBois et fils DBF008 – dial**

DuBois et fils has selected a domed sapphire glass with anti-reflective coating on both sides to ensure a perfect view of the dial estate. The luxury brand offers the DBF008 in an array of beautiful dial colours. The DBF008-03 and DBF008-05 are paired with stainless steel cases and look fresh-faced with their respective mint green and sky blue 'sun ray' finishes.



*Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-05*

Given it is a key feature of the watch, it is pleasing to see a properly framed and decently-sized date window at 3 o'clock – a shortcoming found on many watches, even those costing twice as much as the DBF.



***Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-04***

A black printed minute track is positioned close to the bezel and, courtesy of deliberate minimalism, it does not detract from the elegant silver polished Arabic numerals. The brand's moniker and fir tree logo, positioned below noon are also silver-hued. The hour and minute hands are dauphine-shaped, polished and accompanied by a long slender rapier-like second hand.



*Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-03*

## **Calibre AS-1985**

One can only imagine the quandary faced by Steinemann and his team when producing a new watch, having to select one of the many different calibres within the firm's extensive inventory. In this instance, the Maison has chosen to use the Calibre AS-1985 from A. Schild S.A to power the DuBois DBF008. The movement specialist was a prolific producer of high-quality calibres between the 1890s and 1970s. At its peak it supplied many esteemed Maisons, but fell victim to the quartz crisis, eventually merging with Eterna's movement arm, ETA. Many A.S. Schild movements exist today, still prized by brands for their extraordinary robustness.



The Calibre AS-1985 is a prime example of this horological dependability. The movement has a frequency of 21,600 vph (3 Hz), 25 jewels and features Incabloc shock protection. Produced in 1960, it is known to run for long intervals in between services and promises years of ownership joy.



*Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-04*

## **DuBois et fils DBF008 – strap**

Each member of the DBF008 collection is presented on a simple, colour-coordinating leather strap paired with a polished and brushed stainless steel folding clasp.

## **DuBois et fils DBF008 – closing thoughts**

At a time when sustainability is high on the world's agenda, buying into the DuBois et fils brand makes much sense. By repurposing high-quality 'new/old stock' movements, Steinemann is able to avoid the expense of opening his own Manufacture whilst delivering a high quality-price ratio. It seems the brand's approach is very logical, not just from a financial perspective but also from an environmental standpoint.



*Image – DuBois et fils DBF008-03*

There is much to like about the DuBois et fils DBF008 collection. The models are endowed with elegant styling, high-quality execution and a very clever date adjustment feature. With middle-of-the-road sizing and a breathtaking choice of dial colours, these models should appeal to a large number of watch enthusiasts. The historic, 63-year-old movement, the modern styling and futuristic 'blockchain' technology, demonstrate the Maison's creative prowess and its novel approach to watchmaking, an approach that distinguishes it from many of its competitors.

## Further reading

<https://duboisfils.ch/>

## Technical specification

- **Model:** DuBois et fils DBF008
- **Case:** diameter 39 mm, height 11 mm (with glass), water resistance 5 ATM (60 metres), sapphire crystal to the front and rear
- **Functions:** hours, minutes, centre seconds, date
- **Movement:** Calibre AS-1985; self-winding movement; frequency 21,600 vph (3 Hz); 25 jewels; power reserve 42 hours.
- **Strap:** various depending on the model reference.
- **Price:** starting from CHF 5,950 including VAT (RRP as of 9.9.2023)
- **Limited Edition:** all models are limited.



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