

Cutting edge

Named after the Persian emperor Cyrus the Great, the eponymous watch brand takes innovation and craftsmanship to a new level in its timepieces

BY PREETIKA MATHEW

It is not often that a micro watch brand can boast its own manufacture, but that is only one of the many things that sets the Le Locle-based Cyrus watches apart. Established in 2010, with a tagline that promotes ‘Conquest of Innovation’, the brand focuses on high horology with a design edge. On offer are cushion-shaped watches with double crowns and a 3D, layered dial design that is enhanced by complications like vertical tourbillons, double chronographs, a patented linear display of time, and retrograde date. Its Klepcys Mars features a 3D miniature of the planet, rotating a full Martian day every 24 hours, 37 minutes, and 22 seconds. In terms of materials, Cyrus’s unique pieces like the Klepcys Vertical Skeleton Tourbillon is crafted in sapphire and the recent Klepcys DICE Racing, in carbon fibre.

Cyrus’s movements are the work of master watchmaker Jean-François Mojon, the founder of Chronode, an ideas accelerator known to design, develop, and produce movements. Mojon is the name behind some of the most creative watches today, including MB&F’s Legacy

Machine N° 1, Hermès’s Arceau L’heure de la Lune, Czapek’s Quai des Bergues, and the Harry Winston Opus X. Cyrus produces only 400 to 500 pieces a year, and is helmed by Walter Ribaga, who has had stints at TAG Heuer and Omega. All watches are limited editions, and the maximum that the brand has created of any model is 100 pieces.

With most Cyrus models soon to be available in India, we caught up with Ribaga to know more about the brand, its timepieces, and the kind of aficionados that Cyrus watches will appeal to.

WatchTime India: Cyrus watches’ tagline is ‘Conquest of Innovation’. Where does this come from and what does it mean for the brand?

Walter Ribaga: Cyrus was the emperor of Babylonia, and the founding family that established the watch brand has a coin from that time. It is the same coin that is replicated at the back of some of the models. Cyrus was known to be a very social, very innovative emperor—he introduced coins to the Persian empire. ‘Conquest of Innovation’ came because

our aim is to make traditional watches, but by being innovative in the type of display and complication. We proved it in the Klepcys Moon, an innovative product that was the first from the brand [the dial display features retrograde hours, and concentric discs for minutes and seconds, a retrograde date, and 3D spherical moonphase with its black cover gradually hiding and revealing the moon according to its position in relation to earth]. It has three patents—linear way of reading time, retrograde hours, and retrograde date with cubes. Then we continued with the Vertical Tourbillon, and now have the Klepcys DICE (Double Independent Chronograph Evolution), a novelty worldwide. So, we are living this ‘Conquest of Innovation’ every day and are looking to display time in a way no one else has.

WTI: How’ve the watches been curated?

WR: Jean-François Mojon is our master watchmaker. He decides and produces movements for us. We try to curate our products to keep them different from others. Mojon, in collaboration



From left: Klepcys Vertical Skeleton Tourbillon Sapphire, Klepcys Moon, and Walter Ribaga. Opposite page: Klepcys Mars.

with me and the owners of Cyrus, the Richard family known for their entrepreneurial ventures, decide what we will do in the future, in terms of different complications and how we will make our high-end products. The fact that we have a particular design of the cushion case also means that it is not always easy to convince the consumer of it. We may also in the future come with round watches.

WTI: Cyrus is a micro brand but has its own manufacture...

WR: All movements from the past six years have been manufactured by us, from scratch. The manufacture was established 15 years ago, but the owners bought Chronode 12 to 13 years ago, and then decided to launch their own brand. When I arrived, the understanding was that we would develop our own movements. So, we developed very strong automatic base movements ourselves. Today, the brand has four basic movements and on this we build up different complications.

WTI: The design is also layered, 3D, futuristic. What’s the idea behind it?

WR: It was something that started from the beginning, because the Klepcys Moon needed a case that was that shape given its complications.

Strong design is very important because it becomes the DNA and identification of the brand. The aim is for people to see a Cyrus watch and identify it as one. Right now, if you analyse the

main brands, they all look a bit same. I know that because I have worked at Omega and TAG Heuer, and I find that it happens that big brands lose a bit of their identity in design more than in the movement. For a niche brand, it is important to have a strong identity. You may like it or not, but it has to be recognisable.

WTI: Who is the Cyrus consumer?

WR: There are two types of collectors—one, the elderly gentlemen who are focused on mainstream brands, and the other is a new generation, aged 30 to 45 or 50. These are new collectors who have noticed that waiting years for a Patek Philippe isn’t fun. The second element is that if you collect a Patek Philippe or other main brands, you don’t have a personal relationship with the brand. You will never see a guy like me talking to them. They prefer to have a link to the brand. That’s why independent brands are having more and more success. That’s something I have seen in the Middle-East, Mexico, and even here in India.

We are not yet well known, but we are also in no hurry. That’s the good part. We are doing the linking up with collector clubs, and are going the way of niche brands. We also do more limited editions to boost the brand.

WTI: Most popular model?

WR: The GMT and the DICE have had big success.

WTI: What is the thing that you would like people to know about Cyrus watches?

WR: Independent brands have had problems because they do not have the financial basis that allows them to do what they want to do. What the consumers have to know is that Cyrus has a solid base, and that is important because tomorrow they will need after-sales service and components to repair. So, they will have continuity from the brand. The Richard family is Swiss and has different businesses; one is the watch business. They also own Chronode. So they have financial stability and there is no urgency.

WTI: What are Cyrus’s plans for India?

WR: We are starting now with Swiss Promotions and have identified retailers. I’m very confident that India is a very good market for watches. It’s just a question of time before we introduce all the watches here.

WTI: Challenges for Cyrus?

WR: To always live up to the slogan.

WTI: What’s upcoming?

WR: An integrated bracelet in titanium, widening the collection, and working on new models. ○

Cyrus watches are priced ₹8,00,000 onwards, and will be retailed by The Laboratory New Delhi and Johnson Watch Co.