



# 110 Years of Dubois Dépraz

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For those who need to know, Dubois Dépraz is famous, a complications manufacturer of extremely high quality, working with some of the best brand names in the business.

For those with only a passing knowledge of the watch industry, Dubois Dépraz is not a household name.

And that's just how the brothers Dubois, Pascal and Jean-Philippe, who now run this 110 year-old family-owned company, want it. They want companies in the watch industry, potential customers all, to know of their rock-solid reputation, but it matters little if end consumers know anything about them.

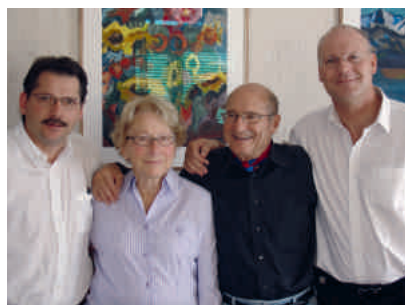
## History

The great grandfather of the brothers Dubois founded the company in 1901. When the company began, it manufactured complete movements, and one of the first complications that Dubois Dépraz specialised in was the repeater. "There was a big market for repeaters, because people couldn't see the time in the dark, so a lot of people wanted minute repeaters," says Pascal Dubois. "My great grandfather was a specialist in these kinds of watches. Then he developed chronographs and other complications."

Today, Dubois Dépraz no longer makes complete movements but instead focuses on com-



From left to right:  
founder Marcel Dépraz, employees circa 1902,  
the Dubois family in 1903, and Reynold Dubois.



The current *Conseil d'administration*  
Pascal, Denise, Gérald and Jean-Philippe Dubois.

plication modules that are placed on top of existing base movements, including ETA, Sellita and others. One of the true specialties of Dubois Dépraz is the chronograph, including flybacks and other varieties.

"It's really a question of price," Dubois explains.

"Today, for a chronograph, we can use movements at the correct price and they are at this price because the volume is so big. If we made our own movements, we would only have a very small part of this market, and volume would be very low, so it would be very expensive."

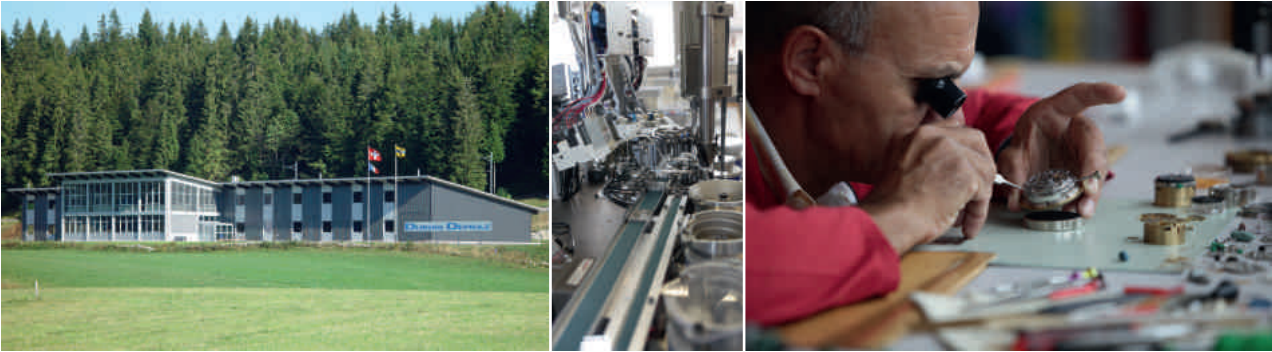
Having said that, Dubois Dépraz has begun looking into developing its own base movement, in response to the lack of reliable and dependable delivery from existing base movement manufacturers.

"A *manufacture* movement can be ten times as expensive as an ETA base movement, or more," Dubois says. "We are looking into where a *manufacture* movement from us would come in, and I think it would be at this level, significantly more expensive than ETA, due to the restricted production numbers. We have a very good relationship with ETA. We are a supplier to ETA with our sister company, DPRM SA (which makes wheels, pinions and other parts), and we are a customer too. Sometimes it is a bit difficult because we need movements but they are hard to get."

## The Manufacture

The Dubois Dépraz *manufacture* is located in Le Lieu, Switzerland, right in the heart of the Swiss Jura (and close to many famous watch brands, like Audemars Piguet, Jaeger-LeCoultre and others). They actually have two facilities, one that is responsible for the manufacture of the key parts of the complications, complete with all the CNC and specialised machinery needed.

At the bottom of a hill, down the same road as the parts *manufacture*, is the watchmaking



section, where the complications are assembled, then put onto the base movements. These are impressive facilities, one exceedingly high tech and the other more traditional, though the watchmaking facility is currently under renovation, with hopes that it will be ready for the October anniversary celebration.

### Attention to detail and quality

One of the hallmarks of Dubois Dépraz and a focus for the Dubois brothers is quality. The brothers know that 110 years of a solid reputation can be ruined with one bad product. "We know this job, my brother and I are both watchmakers, we have always pushed the quality," he continues. "We prefer not to sell something rather than to worry about the quality. We have a good reputation in the industry and we know how easy it is to damage an image, so we take great care when it comes to quality."

### Recognition

Surprisingly, it doesn't matter to the Dubois brothers that no one outside the industry knows much about them. "It's our job to make the complication modules and we are proud when we see the watches from our customers in the shops," says Dubois. "We know they come from us and that's enough. It's our job and we are proud of it, but it doesn't bother me when a brand doesn't give us credit. If we couldn't accept this, we should change what we do." Some brands communicate that Dubois Dépraz makes their modules, in order to gain credibility for their brand. Some of Dubois Dépraz's customers have asked them to engrave the Dubois Dépraz name and logo onto the movement or the rotor, and they all have been denied. Though it seems to be a small step from what they are doing now to making complete watches, there are no plans in the works to do

their own Dubois Dépraz watches. "Making a brand is completely different from making a complication," Dubois details. "We don't know this business. It's possible, but it's difficult to be competitors of our customers. We supply brands and that is our job, and we are doing our job. We couldn't be so open when we create new products, which could potentially interest the entire watch industry. With our own products, we are not a subcontractor, we own our production. For some customers, we are subcontractors for specific pieces, where we make to their specifications, rather than from our own designs."

The Dubois Dépraz catalogue is a dream list of complications, though Dubois has seen a bit of pulling back on complications for complications sake. "We have had a flyback chronograph in the catalogue for five or ten years," he says. "It's more difficult to sell complicated



complications today. It's hard enough to explain how a chronograph works, then you have to explain how a flyback works. Four years ago, there was a competition of complications, but now the trend is more simple information complications. We are, however, the specialist in flybacks and other chronographs."

### The future

The challenge in the future for Dubois Dépraz is to continue to come up with interesting and novel products to offer to their customers.

"We must have a lot of imagination and constantly come up with new ideas, which is demanding," Dubois explains. "In addition, we have to maintain the highest level of quality in our products."

Despite being a supplier to a number of brands in the industry, Dubois didn't hesitate for a moment when asked what his favourite watches were. "My favourite watch is Pierre DeRoche, my brother's brand," he says. "I like Pierre DeRoche and Richard Mille, for sport chic watches. In classical watches, I like Patek Philippe, Vacheron Constantin and Audemars Piguet. I don't have any Pateks, but I would really like one."

"My favourite complication is the repeater and I love the five minute repeater," he continues. "For the watch industry, it's easy to sell, because you have the sound to explain to the end customer. It's very nice to make a watch you can hear, and I love the sound of a minute repeater. It's probably the best complication in the watch industry, and it is a very difficult complication to make. If one of three or four key components is not absolutely perfect then it won't work. It's very difficult and we have five minute and quarter repeaters, which are very prestigious."

This year, Dubois Dépraz will mark its 110th anniversary with a huge party in the autumn. We at Europa Star salute this venerable company and look forward to watching its continuing history unfold. <



TNT Collection

### THE WAYWARD DUBOIS BROTHER

In the Dubois family, all the men have been watchmakers for more than 110 years. Pierre Dubois, the owner and founder of Pierre DeRoche, has the dubious distinction of being the first male descendant not to become a watchmaker.

"When I was 16, I wasn't interested in becoming a watchmaker," he explains. "I studied and became a sports teacher. Teaching was so boring to me that after one full year, I decided to stop (I was 24). I went back to university and studied economics and when I graduated, I worked for the biggest bank in Switzerland. After seven years, I was contacted by Audemars Piguet to work for them as CFO. I was still interested in watches, just not as a watchmaker. I came back into the industry via finance."

Why didn't he work for the family business, Dubois Dépraz, as CFO? "Back in the 1990s, they didn't really need a CFO, they were too small," Dubois says. "I worked for Audemars Piguet for 15 years, then I left in 2004."

"When I left AP, I was open to many opportunities," he adds. "I wanted to stay in the watch business. I had been contacted by a few small or medium-sized companies. Several of them wanted me to invest money in the companies, but when I was doing my due diligence, I realised it would be better to start from scratch. I started to think about my own company. I contacted my two brothers and asked them if they had a totally different complication that could help me set up my company. They told me that they had one movement, which I was amazed by, so I set up my own company, Pierre DeRoche."

Dubois lives in the family house, near his two brothers. "It is great to have Dubois Dépraz as my main supplier for movements for the long term," Dubois says. "I am not a watchmaker. I think differently than the people in the watch industry. All my family thinks about technique, I focus on what people are expecting on the market."

"My goal is to present watches with complications in the middle range, and combinations of complications, original, innovative and playful," he continues. "I wanted something fresh. I am not interested in simple watches and in ultimate complications. After seven years, I feel we have the widest range of middle complications. Our most complicated watch is one with six complications combined – the GrandCliff annual calendar power reserve."

Pierre DeRoche watches range in price from CHF 10,000 – CHF 45,000. The newest collection is the TNT.

"We make around 250 watches a year," Dubois says. "We are working mainly in Russia, which is a stable market. Our number two market was Spain, which is close to bankruptcy now. Our third market is Japan, and we started in the US in July of last year."



Pierre Dubois

For more information, please visit [www.pierrederoche.com](http://www.pierrederoche.com)