

REVO AWARDS 2023

REVOLUTION
CELEBRATING THE MACHINE WITH A HEARTBEAT

Lifetime Achievement: F. P. Journe

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François-Paul Journe once said to me, “If someone composes music, then he cannot ignore Mozart. He can’t ignore Beethoven. He can’t ignore the history of music. But every once in a while, there will be a rare genius like Stravinsky that arrives and changes everything.

In watchmaking, we haven’t witnessed the birth of a Stravinsky for 200 years. The last one was Abraham-Louis Breguet.” Yet despite what he has said, what is clear to me, and to the discerning collectors and journalists the world over, is that our era of contemporary horology has been defined by our own Stravinsky — a genius watchmaker, a man of profound brilliance and, though he often tries to hide it, of immeasurable compassion. And that is François- Paul Journe himself.



Journe’s palmary achievements are the stuff of legend: The first wristwatch tourbillon with remontoir d’égalité; the first wristwatch tourbillon with a dead seconds mechanism driven by a constant force device; the first wristwatch successfully implementing the phenomenon of resonance; an extraordinary chronometric automatic caliber integrating a vast variety of complications, including a

chronograph in a mere one millimeter height of spare space; the world's first grande et petite sonnerie incorporating safety systems, making it immune to bad owners and using an all-new pair of flat gongs mounted beneath the dial; the world's thinnest minute repeater wristwatch (at the time) using the same single banana shaped gong; a chronograph with a 1/100th of a second hand capable of decoupling from the pinion driving it the moment the chronograph brake is activated; a chronometer with constant force mechanism and the Escapement Bi-axial Haute Performance (EBHP) inspired by Breguet's natural escapement; the Astronomic, a watch displaying sidereal hours and minutes next to civil time, indicating sunrise and sunset, equation of time and driven by an annual calendar and a hidden tourbillon.

His game-changing quartz watch, the *Élégante*, or even his wildly expressionistic outlier, the *Vagabondage*, has advanced the story of watchmaking in a real way. The list is endless and each act alone should by right engrave his name forever into the canon of watchmaking's greatest achievements.

Taken together, they form a tapestry of horological riches the likes of which the world had not seen for over 200 years — something that was made abundantly clear this year when Journe became the first living watchmaker to have a single thematic auction dedicated to him: Christie's *The Art of F.P. Journe*. With the addition of *Le Boîtiers* and *Le Cadraniers*, he now has a fully verticalized company, along with the opening of Journe restaurant and his London boutique to complete his universe.

What I love best about François-Paul Journe is that he is not motivated by wealth of material possessions. He lives in a normal apartment in Geneva's Old Town and, every day, he cooks and brings lunch to his mother who lives upstairs from him.

He is the same today as the young man that built a tourbillon with remontoir for the collector Dr. Eugen Gschwind so that he could do battle with George Daniels in a game of horological one-upmanship. He is the same today as the young man who after meeting Cecil "Sam" Clutton and feeling an electric bolt of inspiration at the sight of the two tourbillon watches the famous collector wore, set out to create his own tourbillon, armed with nothing more than the brilliance of his mind, the skill of his hands and a copy of George Daniels' book.

Indeed, my only hesitation at bestowing him with Revolution's 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award is that I know he has much more to achieve, including an escapement of his very own design so that he will join his mentor, the great British watchmaker George Daniels, as one of the very small handful of individuals who has accomplished this feat.

On Daniels' birthday in 2010, celebrated with an homage dinner organized by Journe and his partners in London, William and John Asprey, Journe declared, "You have opened the main door of contemporary horology and showed us the path back to authentic watchmaking with innovation sense, in the respect of the grand horological tradition of our great watch masters. He opened the main door; I could only follow in opening others."

On that night, Journe presented Daniels with a gift, a *Chronomètre Souverain*. As he passed him the watch, he said to Daniels, "Thank you, George, for being the best."

Daniels said to Journe and all the other horological luminaries arrayed around them, "I'm not the best anymore, François-Paul. You are." And when it comes to the world of independent watchmaking, this is the irrefutable truth. François-Paul Journe is our generation's Abraham-Louis Breguet. He is, unequivocally, the best.