**PRESTIGE HMS STAINLESS STEEL**

**Romain Gauthier’s first series watch in stainless steel features a**

**stunning dial crafted from a rare specimen of visually arresting meteorite**

Prestige HMS Stainless Steel – Romain Gauthier’s first series watch in this material – features a stunning dial crafted from a rare specimen of Henbury meteorite boasting exceptionally coarse intersecting bands of nickel-iron crystal that spectacularly shimmer as the wearer turns the watch.

Powering the hour, minute and second indications is the innovatively engineered, superlatively hand-finished in-house Calibre 2206 HMS, on full show through the display back and wound using an ingenious large-diameter crown configured ‘flat’ on the caseback.

Prestige HMS Stainless Steel is a 10-piece limited edition.

**The exceptional meteorite dial**

The slice of meteorite used to make the dial comes from an octahedrite – an iron meteorite – that was discovered in 1931 at the Henbury crater field in the Northern Territory of Australia, one of the country’s best known meteorite impact sites. It is believed that this fragment is the result of a meteor exploding and breaking up as it hit the earth’s surface there over 4,700 years ago.

The slice looks like a fairly ordinary chunk of grey metal until it is subjected to a nitric acid treatment that reveals intersecting bands of nickel-iron crystal, known as Widmanstätten patterns or Thomson structures. These structures formed during a long period of cooling within the parent asteroid.

A rare find on today’s meteorite market, this particular specimen is remarkable not only because of its size, but also for the coarseness of its nickel-iron crystal bands, called lamellae, and how pronounced and defined the resulting Widmanstätten pattern is.

To make each dial, a combination of three-axe machining centre and electrical discharge machining is used to create a disc of the meteorite that is 33mm in diameter and 0.8mm thick. An anti-corrosion treatment is applied to ensure its appearance will not deteriorate over time.

As the angle at which the observer looks at the dial changes, the many lamellae shimmer, lending the dial a real vivacity.

Romain was drawn to this specimen of Henbury meteorite not least because he grew up in a household surrounded by rocks and minerals collected by his father.

He says: “My dad would often take me to mineral and gem fairs where he would buy the likes of agate, labradorite, quartz and desert rose. I think when you are a young boy, it is hard not to be fascinated by these objects, their stunning colours and shapes that, quite incredibly, have been made by nature.

“So when I first set eyes on this meteorite, the size of its crystal bands and the way they reflect the light, I knew that it was something special. It really stood out from the other iron meteorites that we are used to seeing. Immediately my thoughts turned to how I could use it for a special edition timepiece.”

**The indications**

The HMS of Prestige HMS stands for hours, minutes and seconds. Hours and minutes are displayed in the large subdial at 12 o’clock, with small seconds at 5 o’clock. This 5 o’clock position makes for an easy reading of time: Once the wearer reads the hour-minute subdial, their eye is then naturally drawn to the seconds display.

Readability doesn’t stop there. The hands are all in blackened steel, with the hour-minute hands Super-LumiNova-filled to stand out against the shimmering meteorite backdrop, while the white gold applique hour markers also feature this lume for greater legibility at night.

**The stainless steel case**

Given the ferrous content of the meteorite dial, Romain thought it made perfect sense to pair the dial with a case also made from a ferrous substance – stainless steel – the first time the watchmaker has created a series watch in this material.

The 43mm-diameter case is distinguished by pure, clean, unbroken lines around its full perimeter. It is the absence of a ‘normal’ crown protruding at 3 o’clock that signals something special might be going on around the back of the watch.

**Large-diameter ‘flat’ crown on the caseback**

Indeed, Prestige HMS is wound using a ‘flat’ crown on the caseback. This increases winding efficiency because, unlike a traditional caseband crown, energy need not be transmitted through 90°. The large diameter and undulating profile of the crown enable effortless winding, even while on the wrist. The crown is pulled out for time-setting.

The crown system features a tiny ceramic ball and rubber spring. This combination handles the radial and axial forces exerted during winding and time-setting better than a conventional crown spring would, while the ceramic used for the ball is resistant to wear and reduces friction for a smooth functioning. Two o-ring seals – one of which is oversized – provide the necessary waterproofing and dust protection, especially when the crown is pulled out to set the time.

Contrasting finishes have been applied to enhance the stainless steel case: The bezel and caseband are sumptuously polished, while the caseback, crown and front and back of the lugs bear a subtle sheen, having been satin finished.

**Mouthwatering view of the in-house movement**

Turning over the watch, it is not just the caseback crown that we see, but also the Calibre 2206 HMS on show through the display back. This movement – boasting a 60-hour power reserve – was developed, produced, decorated, assembled and regulated at Manufacture Romain Gauthier in the Vallée de Joux, Switzerland. Virtually every component bears Romain's distinctive touch.

**Vallée de Joux finger bridges and superlative hand-finishing**

The movement adheres to the watchmaking tradition of Romain’s native Vallée de Joux by mainly having one *mobile* for each bridge (a *mobile* being a gear on a pinion or shaft). These finger bridges feature polished, rounded bevels that have been meticulously created by hand, as well as hand-chamfered and hand-polished jewel countersinks.

The bridges and mainplate are black NAC-treated, but the straight-graining on the bridges makes them stand out against the hand-frosted mainplate, while the black NAC sets off the rhodium-treated, circular-grained gears. The gear recesses and backs of the bridges are spotted, while there is snailing on both sides of the mainspring barrel. In total, as many as 60 hours have been devoted to hand-decorating the movement, even those components that are not visible.

The movement architecture is such that the observer can even see through the components to glimpse the disc of meteorite forming the dial.

**Bespoke balance wheel and triangular pallet lever**

The regulator features the Romain Gauthier balance wheel with curved arms and calibrated eccentric weights, plus hand-assembled pallet lever that is triangular for maximum rigidity.

**Gears with circular spokes and high-efficiency teeth**

The gears possess circular spokes that provide elegance and strength, while the patented, high-efficiency profiles of the gear teeth are designed for optimal contact.

**S-slot screw heads**

The signature screw heads bear an S-slot that not only is aesthetic, but also enables more torque to be applied during movement assembly.

**Just 10 pieces**

Prestige HMS Stainless Steel is a limited edition of 10 pieces.

**PRESTIGE HMS STAINLESS STEEL**

**Technical Specifications**

**Edition**

Stainless steel case featuring dial made from a rare specimen of Henbury meteorite – 10-piece limited edition

**Features and indications**

Hours, minutes and seconds

Entire dial made from a rare specimen of Henbury meteorite

Stainless steel case

Flat crown on caseback for ergonomic winding

Finely hand-finished, in-house movement visible through display back

**Dial and hands**

Off-centre hour-minute subdial at 12 o’clock

Small seconds at 5 o’clock

Super-LumiNova-filled hour and minute hands in blackened steel

Small second hand in blackened steel

Super-LumiNova-filled white gold applique hour markers

**Meteorite details**

Name: Henbury

Discovered at: Henbury Meteorites Conservation Reserve, Northern Territory, Australia

Year of discovery: 1931

Classification: Iron – IIIAB

**Movement and finishing**

In-house movement Calibre 2206 HMS

Dimensions: 34mm x 5.5mm

Power reserve: 60 hours

Number of jewels: 22

Number of components: 128

Balance frequency: 28,800 vph / 4Hz

Finishing: Highest-level *haute horlogerie* hand-finishing

Treatment: Black NAC-treated bridges and rhodium-treated gears

**Case**

Material: Stainless steel

Dimensions: 43mm x 12.1mm

Water resistance: 10m/1atm/30ft

Flat crown on caseback for ergonomic winding, pulled out for time-setting

Sapphire crystal with interior anti-reflection coating, front and display back

**Strap and buckle**

Black alligator leather with satin-finished stainless steel pin buckle

**PROFILE OF ROMAIN GAUTHIER**

**Romain Gauthier**

Founded in 2005, Romain Gauthier is a high-end watch brand based in the Vallée de Joux, Switzerland, led by its passionate founder Romain Gauthier. Gauthier marries the know-how that he has developed living, studying and working in this picturesque valley – the heart of fine Swiss watchmaking – with a no-compromise approach to *haute horlogerie* to create exceptional timepieces.

These timepieces have been hailed for their eye-catching designs, innovative in-house movements and extremely high level of hand-finishing. Their exclusivity is ensured by the very small numbers in which they are created – about 60 pieces per year.

**The man who built the brand**

Romain Gauthier was born in 1975 in the Vallée de Joux, Switzerland, the cradle of fine Swiss watchmaking. It was here that Romain developed his passion for traditional *haute horlogerie*, his grasp of mechanics and engineering, and his eye for design.

Having studied precision-mechanics at technical college, Romain qualified as a constructor of precision machinery in 1997. A year later, he started his first job as machine programmer-operator at a horological components manufacturer that he helped turn into one of the best-performing facilities in Europe.

Determined to build from scratch not just his own high-end watch, but also his own high-end watch brand, Romain completed an MBA in 2002. His final thesis was the business plan for his own watch company.

After working behind closed doors on his own timepieces for three years, he launched the Romain Gauthier brand in 2005, unveiling its first timepiece Prestige HM at Baselworld 2007. This was followed by Prestige HMS (2010), Logical One (2013), Logical One Secret (2014), Insight Micro-Rotor (2017) and Insight Micro-Rotor Lady (2018). These encompass classically refined pieces, contemporarily casual creations and ethereal *objets d’art*, all featuring supremely finished in-house movements.

In 2013, the jury of the Grand Prix d’Horlogerie de Genève – the Oscars of watchmaking – awarded Romain Gauthier’s Logical One the prize for Best Men’s Complication.

**Manufacture Romain Gauthier**

Romain Gauthier’s ability to create exquisite timepieces is in large part thanks to his *manufacture*, based in Le Sentier, Switzerland, that he has steadily built up.

The *manufacture* blends skilled craftsmen and time-honoured watchmaking tools with experienced technicians and cutting-edge production methods, allowing Romain Gauthier to design, produce, decorate, assemble and regulate in house all movements for the brand’s timepieces.

While this savoir-faire means that quality is uncompromised and precision is impressive, it also imbues Romain Gauthier timepieces with a rare beauty and unique soul.