

JEWELRY

## Audemars Piguet taps DJ to produce auditory expression of watchmaking

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*Gener8ion for Audemars Piguet*

By SARAH JONES

Swiss watchmaker Audemars Piguet is capturing the balance between innovation and tradition that goes into its Royal Oak Supersonnerie timepiece through sound.

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Audemars Piguet commissioned French DJ and producer Surkin to portray the striking watch's chime in an audiovisual project under his creative entity Gener8ion. Through recorded ambient noise at Audemars Piguet's manufacture in Le Brassus and sounds from the natural world, "Sound Awakens" tells the story of the brand's craftsmanship through a new point of view.

"Each of the videos ends with the tagline, "To break the rules, you must first master them,"" said Donnie Pacheco, principal at [Clean Channel Consulting, Inc.](#), Seattle. "These videos do just that, break the rules of traditional watch advertising.

"While the videos are visual, they either do not or only briefly show the finished product," he said. "Instead they focus on sound and imagery of the watchmaking process and nature.

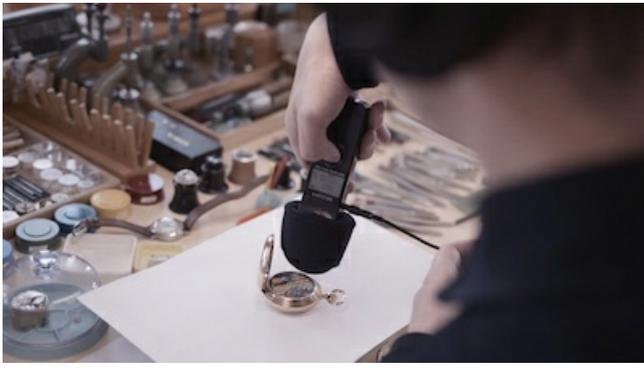
"This is a collection of minute repeater watches and they have chosen to focus solely on the craftsmanship and sound of the watch, instead of the look of the watch—a rarity in traditional watch advertising."

Mr. Pacheco is not affiliated with Audemars Piguet, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Audemars Piguet](#) was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

### Soundscape design

Surkin, who has previously collaborated with performers such as M.I.A., spent three days at Audemars Piguet's manufacture and the surrounding landscape, recording hundreds of tones. He then took these back to Paris, where he mixed them to produce the final tracks.



*Surkin at work in Audemars Piguet's manufacture*

"There's a brutal contrast between the hostile surroundings and the calm you encounter in the workshops," said Surkin, birth name Benoit Heitz, in a brand statement.

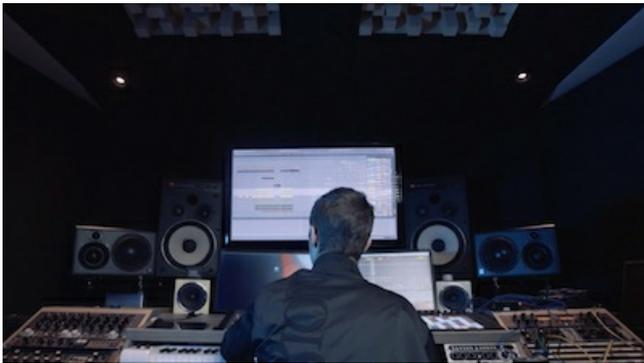
"While gigantism rules on the outside, attention to the smallest details prevails inside," he said. "Each step involved in the making of a timepiece delivers an extensive range of sounds ready to be captured.

"The soundscapes of these worlds truly personify Le Brassus. They convey rich emotions that I wanted to transcribe in my tracks."

Sound Awakens is available to consumers as a YouTube playlist. Each of the four videos focuses on a specific time of day, with the Royal Oak Supersonnerie chiming the time to open each soundtrack.

For instance, "06h03" sets the scene at the start of the day. As the watch dings to signify the sixth hour, animated peaks appear in lines, reflective of the mountains that surround the watchmaker's factory.

These jagged shapes appear with new beats in the electronically produced track, with labels appearing periodically to communicate new sounds audible, such as a blowtorch or birds.



*Surkin at work*

Between the animated visualization, Gener8ion intersperses brief shots from Audemars Piguet's manufacturing facility or the evergreen landscape that envelops it.

At the end of the film is Audemars Piguet's tagline, "To break the rules, you must first master them."

Audemars Piguet's "10h45" marks the beginning of the work day, capturing the buzzing sounds in the workshop as hand filing and machine work blends together.

Following that, "16h15" concentrates on the Valle de Joux, with sounds of thunder mixing with a siren and tweeting birds.

The final film, "22h17," centers on the end of the day, as watchmakers look back on their accomplishments.

#### *06h03 - Audemars Piguet x Gener8ion*

"These videos are the epitome of craftsmanship, but it is not obvious and requires the viewer to put the pieces together," Mr. Pacheco said.

"Each element of the video shows true craftsmanship: the imagery of the videos are stunning, the music is comprised solely of sounds from the home of Audemars Piguet and the physical art of watchmaking it woven throughout," he said. "The end result is stunning and entertaining videos, but they do not help educate consumers

about the watchmaking process, they instead demonstrate overall craftsmanship."

Be heard not seen

This sound-first approach to marketing has been leveraged before by brands in other categories.

Breaking from the usual focus on the appearance of vehicles, a number of automakers have using sound-only social content to give fans a different sensory experience of their models.

Aston Martin has a SoundCloud account, which it uses to highlight the noise of different vehicles, while Maserati used sound to illuminate the speed of its race cars. For brand loyalists intent on having a full understanding of a brand's cars, experiencing the sound of vehicles will appeal ([see story](#)).

Also, Danish audio and video brand Bang & Olufsen is showing that "sound matters" through a new podcast series.

Bang & Olufsen's Sound Matters is housed on the brand's BeoPlay Journal page and was promoted on its social channels to boost awareness and interest. Curating sounds that align with a brand's ethos can help share DNA while allowing consumers to explore its products and message ([see story](#)).

"These videos portray Audemars Piguet as a forward thinking brand, a brand unafraid to break the rules, because they have mastered them," Mr. Pacheco said. "These videos go beyond the traditional, and obvious, elements of traditional watch advertising.

"They are visually stunning without focusing on the finished piece and highlight the tonality by mixing it with other sounds of the Audemars Piguet watchmaking process and home," he said. "The videos should appeal to a younger consumer without alienating their exiting customer base and make a step forward to differentiate themselves from other brands by highlighting other elements of craftsmanship beyond watchmaking."

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