

JEWELRY

Louis Vuitton exhibits horological expertise with reimagined Tambour

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The automatic mechanical sports drop takes a turn away from the original design, with a price point that signals a desire from the label to enter the big leagues. Image courtesy of Louis Vuitton

By ZACH JAMES

French fashion house Louis Vuitton is reintroducing a staple, granting the timepiece an entirely new look as it turns 21.

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Originally released in 2002, the Tambour is now reinvented thanks to efforts led by Jean Arnault the brand's watch director is the youngest sibling of LVMH's founding family and executed on behalf of Louis Vuitton's specialist manufacturer of high-end movements, La Fabrique du Temps. The automatic mechanical sports drop takes a turn away from the original design, with a price point that signals a desire from the label to enter the big leagues.

"Innovation is a pillar of luxury," said Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#), Palm Beach.

"[Louis] Vuitton monitors legacy product lines against category growth and trends," Mr. Ramey said. "It intuitively knows when and how to innovate to drive growth."

Mr. Ramey is not affiliated with Louis Vuitton, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Reinvention and innovation

Featuring an all-steel frame, a slimmer-cased Tambour intends to take Louis Vuitton's categorical innovations to new heights.

Melding Swiss craftsmanship with Parisian design codes, the label's first integrated bracelet is now live in two varieties options.

A "Steel Grey" tone-on-tone model contains a silver-gray dial. A watch with a contrasting deep blue dial is dubbed "Steel Blue."

In an ode to its roots, branding is prioritized throughout. Louis Vuitton's likeness is applied to the face of the timepiece, while its signature LV iconography is featured prominently on the dial.

"The original design is of little importance when your primary brand is Vuitton," Mr. Ramey said.

The new Tambour watch. In an ode to its Swiss craftsmanship and #LouisVuitton's Parisian flair, the timepiece is adorned with a symbolic double signature on its dial: Louis Vuitton Paris and Fab. en Suisse. Discover the #LVTambour at <https://t.co/9VKwgQfRkN>. pic.twitter.com/pgyt6qOhY3

Louis Vuitton (@LouisVuitton) July 6, 2023

"Nothing is off limits in luxury, except the brand," he said. "The brand is sacred."

Developed on-site in Geneva in partnership with Swiss watch manufacturer Le Cercle des Horlogers, the arrival of Louis Vuitton's first proprietary automatic three-hand movement system also marks a first. Included as part of the updated model, "LFT023" provides its wearer with 50 hours of power reserve.

"Tambour," meaning "drum" in French, still boasts the distinctive shape that has brought the brand's watchmaking effort attention for two decades now.

Meant to accommodate the wearer's wrist with an arc-molded slim case back, Louis Vuitton's offering is intended to situate itself naturally on the curve of the forearm.

The new Tambour watch. A first for #LouisVuitton, the sleek integrated bracelet offers a close and comfortable fit with slim, curved links while the open case back reveals the boldly contemporary LFT023 caliber. Discover the #LVTambour at <https://t.co/usbPE3Mi2g>. pic.twitter.com/pVKGaPeBnx

Louis Vuitton (@LouisVuitton) July 5, 2023

Detailing pays tribute to its Confederation of origin as well, reading "Fab En Suisse," or "Made in Switzerland," near the bottom of the piece's dial.

"After twenty years of audacious watchmaking design based on the renowned Tambour shape, and with the same quest for modernity, elegance and functionality that the Maison has been built on for more than 160 years, Louis Vuitton elevates its watch offer with an unprecedented level of sophistication, on every element of the new watch," said Mr. Arnault, watch director at Louis Vuitton, in a statement.

"With this launch, we seek to open a new chapter in the history of the maison's watchmaking by creating a watch with strong horological credentials while identifiably Louis Vuitton in style."

Immersive launch

Utilizing its network of talents, Louis Vuitton debuted new Tambour designs during a July 5 launch party set at the Muse D'Orsay in Paris.

Simultaneously celebrating the 21st anniversary of its coveted selection and unveiling a brand-new design, the event transformed a room into a living, breathing watch model, with attendance from American actor Bradley Cooper and other well-known faces from the big screen.

Having previously helmed a campaign for the Tambour 20th anniversary as the label's first watch ambassador (see [story](#)), Mr. Cooper returned for the immersive and themed display.

The new Tambour watch. Celebrating the Maison's next chapter in watchmaking, House Ambassador #BradleyCooper explores the reinvented timepiece at an immersive launch hosted by #LouisVuitton Watch Director, Jean Arnault. Discover the #LVTambour at <https://t.co/kFRnt4L5zW>. pic.twitter.com/YTo1Yopd95

Louis Vuitton (@LouisVuitton) July 8, 2023

While placing a new twist on an established design has no surefire outcome, the brand's celebrity-studded launch certainly does not hurt the cause. A fivefold markup could register a bit riskier.

Both new models retail for \$18,500. To the question of whether pricing could ostracize the option, some see the upsell as particularly strategic, rather than an overshoot.

"Tambour has grown to be a brand within [Louis] Vuitton," said Mr. Ramey.

"Luxury brands don't cannibalize their brands," he said. "Instead, they leverage them."

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