



GUILLAUME TETU

By Keith W. Strandberg

Living the Dream with the Founder of Hautlence.



If there was a Swiss dream similar to the American one, Guillaume Tetu, co-founder of Hautlence and the brand's chief operating officer, is living it.

Tetu has many years of experience in the watch industry, including time spent in design at TAG Heuer. He left TAG more than 10 years ago to start his own brand, Hautlence. (The name is an anagram of Neuchâtel, the village where the brand was founded.)

MAN WITH A MISSION

Now, 10 years later, Hautlence is still thriving while many other independent brands have vanished. Tetu credits its survival with a mission to do things differently. "Hautlence was founded on real innovation. There are enough brands—there wasn't any room for a new one that did things the same old way. I wanted to change time-telling using mechanical structures. We included visible links from architecture—I love buildings where you can see the frames and structures, with the glass floating, and everything is visible, and I wanted to do that with Hautlence. You can see what is useful in the building, and this is what we did with our watches."

ARTFUL PARTNERSHIP

For the brand's 10th anniversary, Tetu decided to work with an ambassador for the first time. "When we decided to approach a famous person, the person we thought of was Eric Cantona, because he was a famous football player, but he had a secret life," Tetu says. "When he was 22 years old, he started collecting art. Just purchasing his image was not my goal, and he would never

sell his image—he wanted to be involved in the creation of watches. He wanted to combine his art with our watches, so we decided to do street art, which is very new—like our brand—and it's something Cantona collects. When street art started, the real artists said that they were the bastards of the arts. When we arrived in 2004, they said we were the bastards of watchmaking, yet after ten years, we are still here."

**"Since I am a product designer, I wanted a real new way to tell the time."
—Guillaume Tetu**

"I am really having fun," he continues. "We have made a lot of mistakes, but we can redo the launch and it's a great improvement. We are really working together like a family. I am smiling every day."

A watch industry veteran, Tetu admires Urwerk and Vianney Halter. "What Felix Baumgartner from Urwerk does is amazing," Tetu says. "He really motivated me to start as an independent brand, as well as Vianney Halter. They are my masters and mentors."

KEEPING IN TOUCH

One of the things Tetu really loves is talking directly with end customers, something he has been doing a lot of lately as Hautlence does its World Tour with Eric Cantona. "At the beginning, the first customer wearing our watch and giving us feedback was really a special experience," Tetu remembers. "He was from India and he contacted us through the website, and he wanted to buy the first watch ever. We

didn't have any production yet when he put his deposit down. He bought from a 3-D picture on the website. That's my favorite feeling, to see people wearing my watches and hearing why they love them. We create and produce the products, and then we have the privilege of sharing them with the people who own them."

hautlence.com



LEFT: Guillaume Tetu
ABOVE LEFT: The HL ti 01
ABOVE RIGHT: The Destination 02
NEAR ABOVE: The Hautlence HL2.5