

22 WATCHES

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ITALO FONTANA, U-BOAT, SHARES COMPANY AND PRODUCT NEWS
INTERVIEW BY ROBERTO CHILLERI

In 2000, Italo Fontana launched the first U-Boat watch, inspired by the model that grandfather Ivo had designed in 1942 for the Italian Navy. Today, the watches are showcased on the world's most prestigious shopping streets.

BWDN: Could you describe the U-Boat world in a word, which would you choose?

Italo Fontana: Identity. Our watches are the result of one heart, one mind, designing and guiding the creation of each model. Of course, the style is easily recognized.

Is there a detail that hallmarks you?

The crown placed to the left, which was my grandfather's idea, in order to leave maximum freedom for wrist movement. And the new addition presented last year: the button that lets you pull the crown out without using your nails. The idea was conceived with women in mind, but now we've also introduced it for the men's watches.

Did you really patent a dimensionable sapphire glass?

It's the latest news. Thanks to a double layer of glass, a crown placed at five o'clock can be turned to flip it until it becomes black. It was born as an anti-glare solution for the automatic watch designed for the GBS, the Italian Carabinieri special forces, and here at Baselworld we are presenting it on male models of 49 mm.

A line of yours is called Unicorn, which means unique. Do you identify with this word?

I think everyone is unique and so are the watches of this limited edition, which brings to the watch world the modern concept of vintage-style typical of certain garments. Thanks to expert craftsmanship, each watch is different from any other and has a retro feel starting with a hand-stitched strap made from 1960s' leather and ending with the IP black stainless steel case, the bezel and the glass, which appear time-worn. Unicorn will also be seen on the wrist of Arnold Schwarzenegger in the film *Expendables 3*.

How much does Italian style count for a brand like yours?

Aside from the movements, which are Swiss-made, we manufacture in our Lucina workshop, in the heart of a dynamic region where even the artisans have always been accustomed to experimenting with new processes. It is quite natural to move from one material to another, from a steel case to bronze, carbon, silver, or gold. We are open-minded also because when we look out of our windows we see a hillside covered with vines and olives. And opening a new Florence boutique on the Ponte Vecchio – a true icon for a Toscan – was a great thrill for me.

