



G.F.J.: A NEW COLLECTION BRINGS BACK AN ICONIC MOVEMENT TO CELEBRATE ZENITH'S 160TH ANNIVERSARY

When Georges Favre-Jacot established his manufacture in 1865, his objective was to create 'the perfect watch': the finest, most precise and most reliable timepiece ever made. This quest for perfection is reflected in the very name of his brand, ZENITH, referring to the highest point in the sky. To celebrate its 160th anniversary and its quest for excellence in all fields of watchmaking art, the brand releases a timeless classic powered by an exceptional movement. Named after the initials of Georges Favre-Jacot, the sleek, slender and elegant G.F.J. brings back to life the legendary calibre 135, the most awarded movement from the golden age of observatory chronometer competitions.

ZENITH, Chronometry and the legendary calibre 135

Decades ago, observatory trials were extremely important. Beyond chronometric science, the fame associated with these timing competitions was considerable. Observatories witnessed and vouched for the level of precision that expert watchmakers were able to achieve. Aware of the prestige they could acquire, brands submitted specifically prepared movements to these trials. ZENITH took part in trials as early as 1897, and over the years, its movements have won a record 2,333 chronometry prizes, more than any other brand.

Among these, a movement outshone all others, the legendary calibre 135. Designed by Ephrem Jobin at the request of Charles Ziegler, Technical Director of ZENITH, this chronometer calibre was specifically developed to compete in chronometry competitions at the Observatories of Neuchâtel, Geneva, Kew Teddington, or Besançon. Its name is derived from its dimensions, 13 lines (or 30mm, the maximum size allowed in the wristwatch category competition at the Neuchatel Observatory trial) and 5mm in thickness. It was produced from 1949 to 1962 in two distinct versions: a commercial variant (135), and an "O" iteration (135-O) created exclusively for observatory chronometry trials. The calibre 135-O received 235 chronometry prizes, an absolute record in the history of watchmaking. Regulated by renowned Zenith "*chronométriers*" Charles Fleck and René Gygax, this movement set an extraordinary record with five consecutive first prizes in the wristwatch category at the Neuchâtel Observatory, from 1950 to 1954.

The calibre 135-O legend was revived in 2022 through an exceptional collaboration with Kari Voutilainen and Phillips in Association with Bacs & Russo. Ten vintage movements from the 1950-1954 "serial winning" years were restored and decorated to the highest degree possible by master watchmaker Kari Voutilainen within an ultra-exclusive limited edition that struck a deeply resonating chord with discerning collectors. Icons stand the test of time, and the beauty of having such a rich heritage is being able to share it. Today, ZENITH takes things a step further, resurrecting the Calibre 135 and bringing it into the 21st century. This new version of the movement uses the dimensions, the look and the



architecture of its ancestor. It incorporates an offset center wheel, creating space to accommodate the oversized balance wheel that improves both precision and stability.

Yet, far from being a reproduction of the historical calibre, it is a modern re-engineering that integrates up-to-date technical solutions and materials wherever possible. The barrel now delivers 72 hours of power reserve compared to 40 hours in the 1950s version. It drives a new gear train featuring an optimized tooth geometry for enhanced efficiency. Operating at 2.5 Hz, the balance wheel features regulation screws and a Breguet overcoil. A signature feature of the 135-O, the double arrow-shaped regulator allows for precise adjustment, while a stop-second mechanism has been added to set the time to the exact second. The balance staff is now protected by spring-mounted jewel settings. The movements are regulated to be precise within +/-2 seconds per day, and their precision is officially certified by the COSC.

The sophisticated yet sober decoration of the calibre 135 is a testament to its history of excellence. Each component is meticulously finished. The bridges are distinguished by their "brick" guilloché finishing, inspired by the distinctive façade of red and white-painted bricks of the ZENITH Manufacture that proudly spell out the letters G.F.J., the initials of Georges Favre-Jacot. The barrel features circular a satin finish and the crown wheel is black-polished. The large jewels add another refined touch.

Perfection is in the details - the G.F.J.

After 160 years, the ambition to create a watch at the Zenith of perfection continues to guide the brand's watchmakers. In tribute to this unique legacy, ZENITH designed a timepiece distilled to its quintessential characteristics, where perfection is in the details. True to the era of the calibre 135, the new G.F.J. watch captures the essence of the 1950s, seamlessly blending vintage elegance with contemporary accents. Its slender, elegant 39mm platinum round case features a stepped bezel and curved stepped lugs. Its thin profile and sculptural lines are graced by exceptional finishes with alternating brushed and polished surfaces. The notched crown is emblazoned with the G.F.J. initials. Beneath the sapphire glass box, the G.F.J. is adorned with a blue dial - the ZENITH signature colour symbolizing, together with the star logo, the brand's connection to the sky and its relentless search for precision. Its three-part construction creates a compelling sense of depth while meticulously crafted details add a refined touch of sophistication.

The outer ring features a "brick" guilloché pattern, faceted white gold hour markers, and a discreet minute track of 40 white gold beads applied by hand. The central part is crafted from deep blue Lapis Lazuli, whose gold-colored pyrite flecks inevitably evoke a starry sky. Their natural texture makes each dial unique. Lastly, indicating the passing seconds, the oversized subdial at 6 o'clock is in mother-of-pearl. The hours, minutes, and seconds are indicated by thin baton-style white gold hands.



The ZENITH G.F.J. comes with three different straps: a dark blue alligator leather strap, a black calfskin leather strap, and a blue "Saffiano" calfskin leather strap. The platinum pin buckle is engraved with the G.F.J initials and the brick pattern. It is also available upon request with a seven-row platinum bracelet, whose center links are embossed with the brick pattern.

"Few movements in watchmaking history have achieved the level of chronometric excellence and recognition as the calibre 135. More than just a technical achievement, it became a true icon of precision. Bringing it back for our 160th anniversary is about honoring this legacy while sharing it with a new generation of collectors. With the G.F.J., we have reimagined this legendary movement, not simply as a nod to the past, but as a way to share a defining part of its heritage while offering a contemporary interpretation that resonates with today's spirit, and we are deeply proud of it."

Benoît de Clerck, CEO of ZENITH WATCHES.

Released in a limited edition of 160 pieces, the G.F.J is available for pre-order exclusively from the brand's physical and online boutiques, as well as through authorized retailers worldwide.

3 questions to Romain Marietta, CPO of ZENITH Watches

- Following the exclusive edition released with Kari Voutilainen and Phillips in 2022, why did ZENITH decide to re-create this legendary calibre?

We decided to bring back the legendary calibre 135 as a celebration of our 160th anniversary and pay tribute to our Maison's rich watchmaking heritage. The exclusive 2022 edition, developed with Kari Voutilainen and Phillips, reignited interest among collectors and enthusiasts, highlighting the historical significance of this calibre for ZENITH. Building on that enthusiasm, we wanted to bring back this emblematic movement, not simply as a nod to the past but as a way to share a defining part of its legacy while offering a contemporary interpretation that resonates with today's spirit.

- What modern upgrades does this new calibre incorporate?

While remaining faithful to the spirit and character of the original, the new calibre has been thoughtfully re-engineered to meet contemporary expectations. It benefits from subtle yet meaningful improvements that enhance its reliability, precision, and overall performance without compromising its true essence. The result is a movement that seamlessly blends the charm of its historical roots with modern advancements, ensuring it remains relevant and captivating for today's discerning collectors.



- What were the key principles behind the design of the G.F.J. watch?

It was all about striking the right balance—staying true to the original design while bringing a sense of modern refinement. The inspiration came from the clean lines, balanced proportions, and understated sophistication of the 1950s. Every detail was carefully thought out, from the harmonious case design to the beautifully refined dial and movement finishing. The idea was to create a watch that honors Georges Favre-Jacot's vision and legacy while offering a fresh take that speaks to both vintage lovers and modern collectors. As a subtle nod to the Manufacture's iconic façade and Favre-Jacot's ambitious dream of bringing every stage of production under one roof—even down to making the very bricks that built his empire—the guilloché dial is designed with a unique brick pattern, a tribute to that pioneering spirit.

3 questions to Laurence Bodenmann, Head of Heritage of ZENITH Watches

- ZENITH has an exceptional history with precision watchmaking and observatory trials. To what extent were these competitions essential for watchmakers at the time?

Observatory trials were highly significant for watchmakers, serving as the ultimate test of a movement's precision and technical quality. These competitions were more than just a pursuit of accolades; they represented a benchmark of excellence, with results that enhanced a brand's reputation and credibility, and they were one of the two most important moments of the year along with the watch fairs. Success in observatory trials was seen as a mark of distinction, confirming a watchmaker's technical mastery in an era when mechanical precision was paramount. For ZENITH, taking part in these competitions was a natural extension of its commitment to accuracy and precision, reflected in its record-breaking number of 2,333 prizes. It was the path chosen by its founder, Georges Favre-Jacot, to prove the manufacturing system he pioneered in the world of Swiss watchmaking would produce more reliable, more perfect watches. This long-standing involvement not only pushed the brand to innovate but also reinforced its position as a master of precision.

- What place does the calibre 135 hold in ZENITH's long tradition of precision watchmaking?

The calibre 135 holds a truly exceptional place in ZENITH's history and in the broader landscape of watchmaking. Developed specifically for observatory competitions (135-O), it became the most awarded movement during the golden age of chronometry trials, earning numerous first-place distinctions, including a remarkable series of five consecutive wins at the Neuchâtel Observatory from 1950



to 1954. What sets it apart is its extra-large balance wheel, which brings more inertia and shapes its entire architecture in a way never seen before. That is what makes it an icon in the world of watchmaking!

- How did the historical context of the 1950s influence the design of ZENITH's chronometers of the time?

The 1950s were a time of bold graphic exploration and innovation—designers were pushing boundaries, creating lines that felt both fresh and timeless. That same spirit is reflected in the vintage chronometer 135, where elegance comes through in the perfect balance of proportions and meticulous high-end finishing. The goal was always to create something that would stand the test of time, appealing across generations. In 2025, ZENITH is taking this idea even further, refining and modernizing this 'forever design' for the next generation.

ZENITH: THE HEART OF WATCHMAKING

Founded in 1865 in Le Locle, Switzerland, ZENITH has been at the forefront of Swiss watchmaking for over 160 years, driven by a pioneering spirit and a relentless pursuit of precision. As the first vertically integrated Swiss watch manufacture, ZENITH has continuously revolutionized horology by developing and manufacturing in-house movements, most notably the El Primero, the world's first automatic chronograph calibre launched in 1969, renowned for its unparalleled precision and high-frequency performance.

ZENITH's timepieces celebrate its dedication to innovation and exceptional craftsmanship. The CHRONOMASTER collection highlights the brand's mastery of high-precision chronographs, the DEFY showcases technical innovation and bold design, while the PILOT collection celebrates ZENITH's storied aviation legacy with distinctive, adventure-ready timepieces. This unwavering commitment to precision has been recognized with an unparalleled 2,333 chronometry prizes, underscoring ZENITH's enduring legacy of excellence. The calibre 135, having won majority of those prizes went through a modern re-engineering integrating up-to-date technical solutions and materials. ZENITH decided to give it a new home in its newly introduced G.F.J collection.

Throughout its history, ZENITH timepieces have accompanied pioneers who dared to dream big and achieve the extraordinary: from Louis Blériot's historic flight across the English Channel to Felix Baumgartner's record-breaking stratospheric free-fall jump. This daring spirit continues to drive the Maison as it redefines the future of Swiss watchmaking. Celebrating over a century and a half of excellence, innovation, and purpose, ZENITH remains at the forefront of Swiss horology, empowering those who challenge conventions and strive for greatness.

From Le Locle to the world, from 1865 to now, ZENITH is the heart of watchmaking.



G.F.J.

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Key points: Rebirth of the Legendary calibre 135. Chronometer Certified. Breguet Hairspring. Stop-second mechanism. Exclusive Edition for the 160th Anniversary of the Brand: Platinum case, lapis lazuli dial and special "bricks" guilloché finishing on the movement.

Movement: calibre 135 manual

Frequency: 18,000 VpH (2.5 Hz)

Power reserve: 72 hours

Functions: Hours and minutes in the centre. Small seconds at 6 o'clock.

Finishes: Exclusive 160th Bricks guilloché

Price: 48'900 CHF / 52'900 Euros / 49'900 USD

Material: Platinum 950

Water resistance: 5 ATM

Case: 39.15mm / **Thickness:** 10.5 mm / **Lug to lug:** 45.75 mm

Dial: Blue bricks guilloché on the outer ring, lapis lazuli in the center and mother-of-pearl small second counter

Hour markers: 18-ct white gold applied indices

Hands: 18-ct white gold faceted

Bracelet & Buckle: Comes with 3 straps: Dark blue alligator leather strap with platinum pin buckle + black calfskin leather and blue "Saffiano" calfskin leather. **Optional for purchase:** Platinum bracelet with double folding clasp

