

## Indies Watch Market: Bulls Rotate Away from Major Brands to Konstantin Chaykin

Watches dedicated to the symbolic creatures of the 12-year cycle of the Chinese zodiac are one of modern watchmaking's more beautiful traditions, enabling the timepieces to be imbued with the meanings and stories of Chinese mythology. Several years ago, Russian inventor, watchmaker, and current member of the Academy of Independent Watchmakers, Konstantin Chaykin, felt there was more to come from this genre, with the chance to add his own interpretations. His first piece in this field was the *Unique Pig 2019* watch, dedicated to the Year of the Pig in the traditional Chinese calendar. This model by Konstantin Chaykin showed that his take on watches in this genre would not be boring, while proving that the *Joker* indication he invented in 2017 allowed the creation of sophisticated and attractive new characters in the *Wristmons* collection, each with its own design and unique character. At the beginning of 2020, this Russian master celebrated the arrival of the Year of the Rat with the addition of the *Mouse King* to the collection. As well as its imposing design, with silver-grey tones, this *Wristmon* contained unique watch mechanics. The most notable of these was the realisation of one of Chaykin's long-standing ideas – the placing of the crown at the top of the case to create the look of a royal crown.

### The Year of the Bull – a good reason to create a new *Wristmon*

As 2020 drew to a close, with just a few months remaining before the start of the Chinese calendar's Year of the Bull and the time to think about a new watch for the occasion upon him, Konstantin Chaykin noted that the bull, in one form or another, appears in almost all mythologies of the world. Bulls were honoured (while also widely used in ritual sacrifices) in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, ancient Greece, ancient Rome and, of course, in China, where the bull is ranked second in the 12-year Chinese zodiac cycle. Before working on his latest watch, the Russian master had been considering the possibility of developing a new version of his *Joker* indication for about two years. Simply replacing the moonphase indicator with, for example, a day of the week indicator, would not have been his style, so he decided to wait for a suitable occasion, where the new calendar indication could be realised in an appropriate fashion. Why not do this when developing the new *Wristmon Bull*? That is exactly what he did.

Konstantin Chaykin looks at watchmaking as an artist. For him, the technical side of a project is undoubtedly important, but it is subordinate to the visual appeal of a creative concept. In search of inspiration, he began to gather information on how his chosen theme is reflected in mythology and art, and immediately thought of the legend everyone knows from childhood – the Minotaur, the Cretan monster with a human body and bull's head. Konstantin has always been amazed at how incredibly meticulous the ancient Greeks were in their myths when it came to numbers. In the myths about the Minotaur, it is stated that the Athenians, in paying the tribute demanded by King Minos, every year brought seven boys and seven girls to be devoured by the bull-headed monster. Seven and seven – for a watchmaker these numbers instantly bring to mind associations with the day of the week indicator. Chaykin immediately thought of a technical solution for how to make the day of the week indicator big enough to fit his idea of the *Joker* indication as a calendar. With two discs indicating the hours and minutes, there was no room for a day of the week indicator disc of a size to suit Konstantin. The two 'sevens' of the legend of the Minotaur led him to the idea



of constructing a watch with a double-disc day of the week indicator, with the first letter of the day of the week on the first disc, and on the second, the second letter.

And so, in Chaykin's imagination, the Minotaur – the creature of the myths of ancient Greece – burst its way into Chinese mythology. Note that the idea of interweaving myths and fairy tales of different cultures is not new to him. A similar idea inspired him to create the *Mouse King 2020* watch, where the rat of Chinese mythology at the same time becomes a character from Hoffmann's fairy tale *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, and the *Carpe Diem* watch, where he combined the ancient Greek myth of Chronos, the Father of Time, with the genre of allegorical still lifes incredibly popular in the Netherlands at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For his latest watch, he also bore in mind that the image of the bull is viewed with great optimism on Wall Street – exemplified by the fact one can find a 3200kg bronze statue there, created by the sculptor Arturo di Modica in 1987. The *Charging Bull* of Wall Street has since become one of New York's most popular attractions. If you go to New York without touching the charging bull, you haven't been to the Big Apple. To feel the life-loving power of the charging bull on your wrist, and at the same time touch Konstantin Chaykin's haute horlogerie creation, is what the *Minotaur Special Chinese New Year 2021* watch was created for.

## In the labyrinths of haute horlogerie

In the course of his reflections, Konstantin Chaykin gradually created the image of a watch – a bronze case, a dial made with bronze tones, a brutal buffalo-leather strap, and a watch décor featuring the motif of the Knossos labyrinth, where, legend has it, the Minotaur lived. This motif can be found in the relief pattern on the dial, the engraving on the strap buckle, and on the automatic winding system. The upper lugs are made in the form of bull's horns, without which the image of the Minotaur would be incomplete and unconvincing.

The master decided to use the Minotaur's two nostrils, flared in anger, as apertures in his large day of the week indicator. Perhaps not entirely respectful of the mythical monster, but such is the essence of watchmaking, putting everything at the disposal of watch mechanics. In order to make the indicator more convenient, Konstantin Chaykin opted to use sapphire lenses in the aperture window, the same as he had previously developed for the unique emoji-joker day of the week indicator in the *Joker Selfie* watch.

While replacing the moonphase indicator of the original *Joker* with a day of the week indicator may seem like a minor modification, Konstantin Chaykin started the development of the new Caliber K.08-1 literally from scratch. The base, as in the *Mouse King 2020* watch, is the Swiss-made automatic Vaucher VMF 3002 movement. Inspired by the legend of the Minotaur, Konstantin produced the two discs of the day of the week indicator in two different metals – bronze, symbolizing the Bronze Age, masculinity, and belligerence; and silver, symbolizing the Moon, femininity, and poetry. These two parts are almost completely hidden under the dial, yet, even so, like all other parts of the display module and a number of the parts of Chaykin's modified base movement, they are produced at the Russian manufacture with extreme meticulousness. When finishing the components, classical techniques are used – perlage, fine straight and circular grinding, sandblasting, bevelling and chamfering by hand, engraving, countersinks polishing for screws, pins and jewels, spherical polishing of pivots, and rhodium plating.

As has become tradition for Konstantin Chaykin's watches featuring the *Joker* indication, the second fixed crown of the case is used as an indicator corrector – in this instance, for the day of the week indicator, which has a built-in corrector to make setting the index to the required day quick and convenient.

Incidentally, Diodorus Siculus, back in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, reported that Egyptian women undressed in front of images of the sacred Apis bull...



KONSTANTIN CHAYKIN  
RUSSIAN EXCLUSIVE WATCHCRAFT

## Minotaur Special Chinese New Year 2021

### Technical Specifications

Limited edition of 8 pieces

Caliber	K.08-1 with automatic winding
Module indication	Produced by Konstantin Chaykin manufacture
Base movement	Swiss-made Vaucher VMF 3002
Movement dimensions	Diameter 31.5mm, thickness 7.6mm (with module)
Escapement	Anchor
Balance frequency	28800 semi-oscillations per hour
Power reserve	50 hours
Jewels	36 (base movement – 28 jewels, module – 8 jewels)
Module parts	67
Functions	<i>Joker</i> time indication with discs for the hours and minutes, and a large double-disc day of the week indicator
Case	Iron bronze
Case dimensions	Diameter 42mm, thickness 13mm
Crystal	Sapphire crystal with anti-reflective coating, diameter 34.5mm
Case components	36
Caseback	Titanium with sapphire window
Dial finishing	Guilloche relief décor, 'labyrinth' relief décor, multilayer lacquer coating
Dial components	18
Strap	Exclusive cognac-shade buffalo-leather with 'vintage' finish, white stitching, branded with the Konstantin Chaykin manufacture logo personally carried out by Konstantin Chaykin himself
Buckle	Standard, titanium, produced by Konstantin Chaykin manufacture, with 'labyrinth' relief décor