A close-up photograph of a man with short, dark hair, wearing a dark suit jacket and a dark shirt. He is holding a large magnifying glass over his right eye, which is significantly enlarged and magnified through the lens. The background is dark and out of focus. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the contours of his face and the texture of his skin.

BERNHARD  
LEDERER  
(BLU)

“I WANT  
PEOPLE  
TO THINK  
ABOUT TIME”

THE STRONG-WILLED WATCH BRAND BLU WAS ESTABLISHED JUST FIVE YEARS AGO. BUT IN THAT SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, THE BRAND HAS CERTAINLY BEEN THE TALK OF THE TOWN. OWNER AND FOUNDER BERNHARD LEDERER SAW HIS CAREER CHANGE FROM MASTER WATCHMAKER TO PRESIDENT OF A REFINED WATCH MANUFACTURER – A CHOSEN CAREER PATH LEADING TO ACHIEVING HIS DREAM.

"Time has nothing at all to do with what modern watch-making companies generally dish up to the public", says Lederer vehemently. "Time is an emotion. The normal way of making watches has absolutely nothing to do with time in my opinion. Just sticking some diamonds on somewhere? It may look fancy to some, but it is completely disconnected from the beauty of time. My idea is to create watches that provoke people to feel. Blu-wearers get the hang of my philosophy without having to promote it. I want people to really think about time. What does a minute mean to you? My watches make people realise that time, in essence, is an emotion. If you go deep and basic, time is something you can only feel. Think about it: when it is cold, it is winter. Your body virtually indicates time like a clock in that respect. That also applies to the indications of day and night. Time has been divided more specifically in the course of history, it has been over-defined. The day is snipped into little bits, hours, minutes, seconds. That process has caused us to forget how we should be able to feel the time.

### I AM BLU

"I am a normal watchmaker who is just sick with curiosity. Before starting up blu, I repaired antique clocks and watches in Germany. It is highly interesting to reproduce what the old masters invented. But after all these years, I got bored with it. I had so many ideas for my own ultimate watch, and wanted to work on that. Why just dream about it? I am glad I took the plunge and started my own business. My watches reflect my thoughts.

BERNHARD LEDERER



QUINTETT



QUARTETT

"But I must tell you, starting a new watch brand is not a piece of cake. Imagine what happened: a German couple coming in and opening up a niche market. We were not particularly welcome in Switzerland. For the first two years, we were complete ignored by the Swiss. Pure envy. If you picture the watch business as a pie, the Swiss feel that I steal from a Swiss brand with every sale that comes my way. So it is no surprise really that they are not applauding my efforts. I started in 2000 and for the past three years we have been accepted into the market. I am Mr. blu, 24 hours a day. If I sit on my boat and enjoy the breeze blowing over Neuchâtel, I am blu. It is no more than an abbreviation of Bernhard Lederer, Uhrmacher (watchmaker), of me. But in

most countries around the world, people have no idea what Uhrmacher means, so now we tell them blu means Bernhard Lederer Universe.

## NEW MARKETS

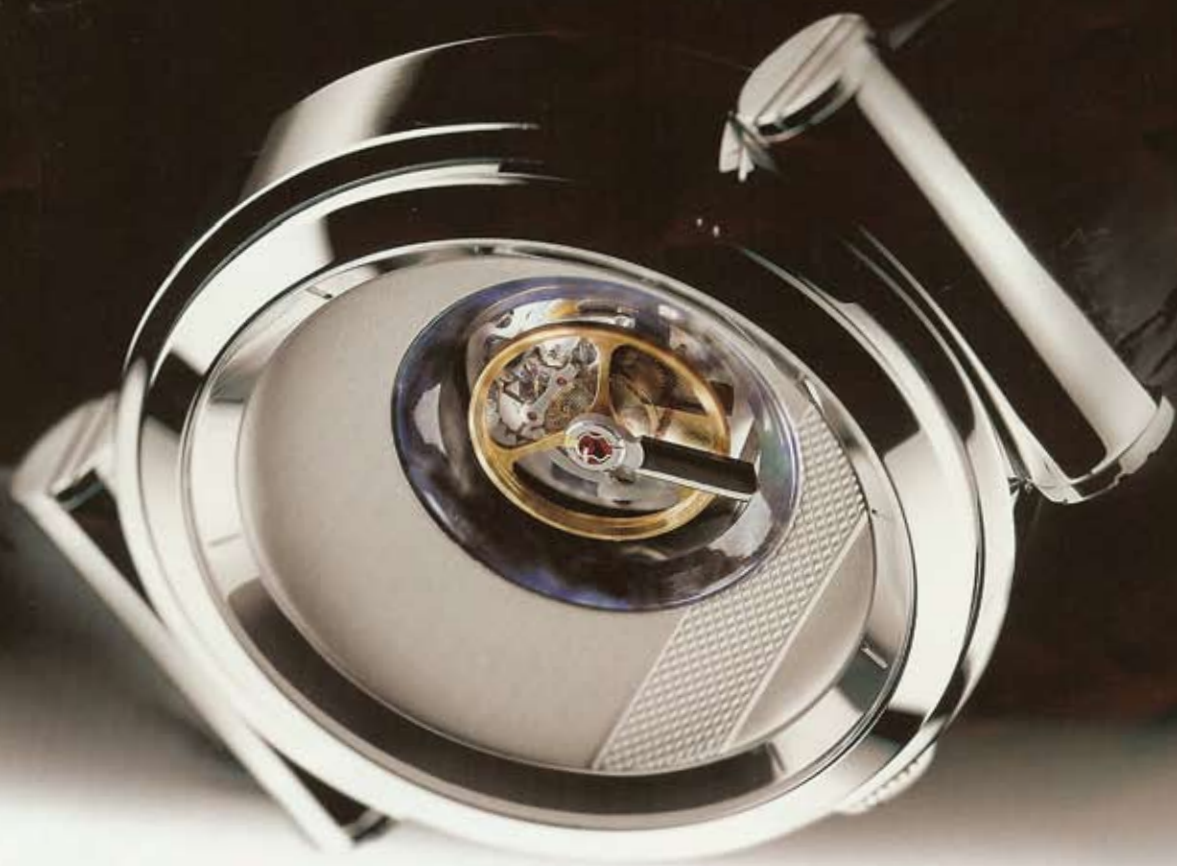
"We are working on it and getting there. I know we are very popular in Japan. Just about every person in Abu Dhabi knows my brand. But we are also getting increasingly popular in the Benelux countries. We have people who are looking after my brand with proper care in those three countries. We are in equally good hands in Russia. I am currently focusing on the American market, I think that we could get a lot of sales there. And then it is Asia: Indonesia and China. There are plenty of new markets for us to explore."

## ULTIMATE ENJOYMENT

"There is a saying: 'Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away. The beauty of reduction'. I am not a fan of watches that are stuffed with all sorts of things on the dial. Less is more. So I make watches with as few indications as possible. It must be a pleasure to look at your watch. Last year, a man came up to thank me during the watch show in Basel. I had no idea why, and he explained that ever since he has been wearing a blu watch, he can go shopping with his wife. They like going their own way in the centre and arrange to meet in a cafe at an agreed time. You must have guessed: his wife was always late and it always annoyed him. But ever since he wears a blu watch, time has a different relevance and it does not matter how late she is going to be. He orders a coffee, puts the watch on the table and enjoys everything happening on the dial."

## NO COMPROMISE

"One of my company's strengths is that I personally work on both the artistic and technical design of my watches. This allows me to apply perfection to the last detail. Many other watches are the result of compromising. The design is usually adapted to support the technology, form follows function. But if communication between design and technology happens within a single head, technical solutions can be devised that perfectly fit into the design. My watches are long-term items and are interesting when it comes to after-sales service. Whichever watchmaker opens the case, the clear construction line will immediately present itself. No watchmaker need be concerned about taking it apart, it is relatively easy to put back together. I use ETA movements for the basic collections as they make it possible to guarantee worldwide service. The additional benefit is worldwide availability of single parts, and all watch-makers know exactly how to work with these movements. For all high-end



products, such as the tourbillon, we make the entire movement ourselves. We do not buy a single item, our watches are 100% manufactured in-house.

"I also create specially commissioned watches, but with reservations. I would bluntly refuse a request for a minute repeater with double split chronograph and perpetual calendar in a single watch. That does not fit in with my style; I feel that all these complications are just that. Complications. A fight for attention, diversions of what is important. I also decided against making perpetual calendars and minute repeaters because these complications are made by every single high-end manufacturer. I feel it is not necessary to create something that already exists in a perfect form. There is, in fact, only a single requirement for my acceptance of a commission for a unique piece: I have to feel proud to sign it. I can do an awful lot if that requirement is fulfilled. For instance, I received a commission accompanied by a photograph of a lady's face, requesting I make a watch with hands the exact same colour as the lady's eyes, as her husband would not want to miss that colour for a second. I made that watch, of course. Wonderful!"

## LIKE A GRANDFATHER

"In fifty years time, I think it would be great to be able to look back on the company that I started and made myself, like a grandfather. What if the company would grow to Patek Philippe dimensions? Man, the very thought makes me shake all over, that makes me nervous. That is too big for me. A nice size is making up to 5,000 watches per year. Otherwise you are really escalating to mass production and that is something I definitely do not want.

## INDEPENDENT FOREVER

"I want to stay independent for the rest of my life. I cannot accept other people telling me what to do. I hate the word 'must'. Telling me I must do something is like waving a red flag in front of a fighting bull. I am happy to listen to any invitation. If someone wants to talk watches with me, I happily oblige. I am even open to financial partnership, provided that there are clear rules. But my freedom is everything to me. That is why I will always stay independent." ■