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## Future of Watches Looks To the Beginning of Time

Tunggal Wirajuda comes face to face with HYT's latest in watch innovation

The lines of the watch are as distinctive and futuristic as they are big and bold. Known as the H1 Black Titanium, the timepiece by HYT, the newest player in Switzerland's

renowned watch market, features two bellows that heave in and out like car pistons, their state of the art lines a veritable preview of watches in the future. The timepiece, which is one of 20 models offered by HYT, is a veritable storehouse of surprises and innovations unusual for a new brand.

The H1 turned horological convention wisdom around by incorporating water in its mechanics to tell the time, instead of staying with Rolex, Omega, Tag Heuer and other brands tradition to use their famed abilities to keep water out. We are certain that this innovation represents a revolutionary change in watchmaking.

"We have a simple vision that is a mix of liquids and mechanics. The bellows on the watches, which are of the same type used by NASA as speed captors, are used in this watch as to enable the water to tell the time, making (HYT) the only watchmaker in the world to do so," says

HYT chief executive Vincent Perriard, a leading figure in the Nouvelle Horlogerie watchmaking movement during a recent visit to Jakarta from the company's regional headquarters in Singapore to introduce the watch to the Indonesian market.

"We are certain that this innovation represents a revolutionary change in watchmaking, comparable to mechanical or automatic movements and the introduction of quartz movement in the 1960s."

He explains that the bellows contain a fluorescent water and oil that cannot be mixed. Compressing the first reservoir sends the fluorescent liquid up a capillary tube around the perimeter of the watch, displacing the other liquid into the second reservoir.

The fluorescent liquid advances to indicate the passing hours following due to hydraulic pressure. The position of the crescent-shaped meniscus between the liquids shows the hour. At 6 o'clock, the fluorescent liquid flows to return to its original position.

The brand, with two products to its name since its creation by investor Lucien Willemin and chairman Patrick Bardon in 2010, didn't take long to make an impression, as its H1 hybrid watch's use of hydraulic transmission to tell the time made an impact at the 2012 Baselworld trade show.

That same year, HYT won the Best Innovative Watch at the Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève and Best Concept Watch of the Year Award at Watch World Award in India and SIAR in Mexico. Since then, the watchmaker has expanded to the H2 watches, which boasts a redesigned movement and takes mechanic and fluid integration a step further.

**Bringing together age-old watchmaking traditions**

"HYT's cutting edge technology is actually a combination of Swiss watchmaking

techniques that date back to the 16th century and the clepsydra water clocks that were invented in ancient China and other civilizations like Greece, Egypt and Babylon."

"Though our clients in Asia mostly find our watches appealing as a talking piece, the latter point does bolster its appeal," Perriard says.

Perriard himself is no stranger to hydrologic watches, after he oversaw the production of the CI Gravity Tourbillon as president of Concord Watches in 2008.

The crowning glory of the HYT timepieces are the innovative approach to standard bellows systems.

"The bellows system provide our watches with eight days of power before one has to manually wind it. The movement is developed in collaboration with Audemars Piguet."

On its website, [hytwatch.com](http://hytwatch.com), HYT says Willemin conceived the concept in 2002. A nuclear physics engineer and microfluids specialist, he wanted to apply the ancient water-clock concept to a wristwatch.

But incorporating water and mechanics is no easy matter, despite the seemingly simple physics behind it.

"Outside temperatures initially posed our greatest challenge in our first years, as the liquid can expand or retract depending on whether its going to be hot or cold.

Though the mechanism might be accurate, it won't display time accurately," he said.

"Finally we came up with the tinier smaller composite system to ensure that the liquid remains at the right place."

HYT watches have no battery or electrical component, just a mechanical movement to power the pistons and push the liquids that indicate the time.

"The use of water clocks are one of the basic earth sciences as it uses physics, hydraulics and gravity. But since it's rife with challenges, we brought high technology from various sciences, like chemistry, nuclear physics to continually find solutions and tackle them as they come along," Perriard said.

**Spreading the word**

Perriard points out that HYT has invested more in research and development instead of advertising.

"We intend to create a fine balance between production and craftsmanship in our watches, which we will do by making the company stay viable with around \$100 million in revenue," he said.

"We also went from outsourcing our production to insourcing, so as to keep from giving away our technology."

One of the secretive techniques to keep the production process in-house the supplying of the liquid components by HYT's sister company, Preciflex, for use in the H1 and H2 line of watches.

HYT's emphasis on quality is reflected in the prices of its timepieces, which sell upwards of \$55.



HYT watches combine ancient technology with modern aesthetics to create watches for the 21st century.  
JG Protosoehadi

The prices don't deter watch buffs, who have snapped up hundreds of the watches since they went on sale in 2013.

"Nowadays, the demand exceeds the supply. Their appeal and distinctiveness is due to the sheer quality of our products," Perriard says.

HYT is preparing even more surprises.

"We plan to expand our watches from its current line of 20 timepieces to 26 or 27 by 2015. The watches will feature innovations like skeletonized structures and more linear lines," Perriard says.

"We will also expand to North America by opening our head offices in Miami."

The use of hydraulics technology will also be expanded by HYT's subsidiary Preciflex.

"Nowadays, Preciflex have used liquid technology for injections, so as to give a more accurate dosage of insulin and other medication," he said. "We hope to use the technology to enhance speedometers and other instruments in car dashboards, so as to improve their accuracy."

But regardless of how HYT continues to push for advances in the use of hydraulics, it's hard not to be impressed with the company's ability to utilize old technology for new futuristic purposes.

**“We are certain that this innovation represents a revolutionary change in watchmaking”**

Vincent Perriard, HYT chief executive

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Jakarta Globe **Saturday-Sunday, October 11-12, 2014**

**Social Scene** HYT Launch Party

Swiss-based watchmaker HYT launched in Jakarta last Thursday, and did so with a splash — quite literally.

The company, calling itself “the hydro mechanical horologists,” prides itself on its groundbreaking invention of a mechanical watch movement controlling hydraulic pistons — essentially harnessing the properties of water to power a finely crafted timepiece.

The company’s concept won the award for best innovative watch at the 2012 Grand Prix d’Horlogerie de Genève, the watchmaking world’s most prestigious forums.

At the Jakarta launch was the HYT chief executive, Vincent Perriard, who declared that “What seemed unthinkable, definitely crazy, has now become reality.”



Photo: The Peak Magazine/Suhadi

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