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# A Swiss-Italian Family Affair

In 2019, the professional dive watch specialist Squale celebrates its 60th anniversary with a new limited edition.

— **On the shore** of Lake Neuchâtel, right next to the city’s largest marina, is the location of one of Switzerland’s oldest dive centers. The Centre International de Plongée Neuchâtel (CIP-NE) was founded in 1957 and has played a vital role in the training and certification of divers in the largest lake located entirely in Switzerland. But, thanks to its proximity to the local watch industry, the CIP-NE also became instrumental in providing a real-life test environment for the growing category of dive watches, for example, by setting up the Centre de Recherches et d’Études Dynamiques d’Étanchéité (CREDE) to help research various aspects of water resistance in the 1960s. A small plaque at the center’s entrance shows just how important the CIP-NE must have been during that period: seven watch companies, almost half of the honorary members, are mentioned. The usual suspects, like Omega, Rolex, Longines and ETA’s predecessor Ebauches SA, were joined by companies like Favre-Leuba, Doxa and Squale – three players that had already built quite a reputation for creating professional dive watches by the time the dive club’s current headquarters was inaugurated in 1968.

#### **Von Büren SA**

Charles Von Büren had introduced the brand name Squale (Squalomorphii, or Squalia, is a superorder of cartilaginous fishes) as a “brand of quality” in the 1950s and later went on to use it both as a stand-alone product as well as a co-branding option for countless clients like Altanus, Ocean Diver/Blandford, Deman Watch, Eagle Star, Spirotechnique and Tavernier, to name just a few. This allowed smaller watch brands, dive shops or even dive equipment manufacturers to immediately offer a reliable dive watch without having to invest in equipment and the development of a model. In

—  
by  
**Roger Ruegger**  
—

other words, the Squale and Von Büren logos were often joined by a third brand name on the dial. The distinctive 500-meter case, however, with its crown positioned at 4 o’clock was used all the way into the 1980s by a multitude of watch brands and is perhaps one of Squale’s most recognizable watch designs, which can be seen in the form of the 1521 in the current collection.

#### **The Roaring ’60s**

Charles Von Büren went on to register the brand as a trademark in 1959 (hence the 60th anniversary in 2019). In 1967, Jean Tapu (World Spearfishing Champion), freediving pioneer and world-record holder Maria Treleani, Tony Salvatori (French Spearfishing Champion) and the whole Cuban spearfishing team were featured giving testimonials wearing “Squale Master watches made by the Von Büren SA in Neuchâtel.” Even free diving legends like Enzo Maiorca and Jacque Mayol were seen wearing Squale Master watches. The watch company’s first 1,000-meter dive watch was advertised as being able to withstand saturation dives as early as 1968.

When we did something for the 60th anniversary, we were obliged to go back.

**Andrea Maggi**





The bezel insert comes with an additional crystal.



The watch is 12.45 mm thick and equipped with a domed sapphire crystal.



Squale still uses both the shark logo and the original Von Büren logo on the dial, caseback and crown.



The 60 Year Special Edition is limited to 150 pieces and reintroduces a design inspired by a model from the 1950s.

## SPECS

### Squale

60 Year Special Edition

**Manufacturer:**

Squale Srl, Via Santa Maria Valle 4, 20123 Milan, Italy

**Movement:**

Sellita SW200 with 38-hour power reserve and 26 jewels

**Case:**

Stainless steel with screw-in crown and caseback, domed sapphire crystal, case diameter: 40.8 mm (39 mm without the bezel), thickness: 12.45 mm, lug width: 22 mm, water resistance to 300 m

**Strap and clasp:**

Black leather with buckle

**Price:**

**\$1,190**

Coming from a landlocked country, the Von Büren family started the international expansion of the brand in Italy, which was also the country where the family often spent their holidays. Monique Von Büren, Charles and Hélène's daughter, quickly developed the same passion for the underwater world and regularly tested the watches firsthand while diving in the Mediterranean Sea. It is also where the Von Bürens met the Maggi family, a partner that would become Squale's longtime Italian distributor and eventual owner of the brand.

### The Revival

Squale was relaunched about 10 years ago by the Maggi family and is now headquartered in Milan, Italy, this time with the production of the watches being outsourced to suppliers in Switzerland. Dr. Andrea Maggi said, "Eleven years ago, I thought this is the right moment for me to focus on Squale again. I already had some old models, and with this I tried to develop Squale. Some models were still very contemporary from my point of view. The 1521 was still a very good watch, a good size, and other watches like the 2002, the 1,000-meter watch, were very nice, but I wanted to change some things. I tried to keep the Swiss tradition, but in terms of colors, leathers, this comes from me. It's a Swiss watch with a very strong Italian touch."

With a combination of watches occasionally using new old stock (NOS) parts and a range of new models, Maggi and his small team are currently working on setting up international distribution and building a more consistent collection of moderately priced professional dive watches. The 1521 and the 2002 series still represent the heart of the collection, while GMT and models with a power reserve or depth gauge, often limited editions, have been recently added.





It’s a Swiss watch with a very strong Italian touch.

**Andrea Maggi**

*Andrea Maggi, Squale’s current owner, and Monique Von Büren, daughter of founders Charles and Hélène Von Büren, met for the 60th anniversary launch event in Neuchâtel.*

***A New Case for the Anniversary***

To celebrate the brand’s anniversary, Squale has now also introduced a new retro-inspired watch. The 60 Year Special Edition is loosely based on a much smaller vintage watch and introduces a design reminiscent of the 1950s/1960s, while the rest of the line-up works with designs based on the 1970s and 1980s. The watch is limited to 150 pieces and surprisingly carries the launch date “July 10, 1959” in French on the dial. The 39-mm diver (40.8 mm with bezel) is powered by a Sellita SW200 (Elaboré), features vintage lume, and a crystal insert on the bezel. Maggi commented, “I love history. I want this [watch] to be linked to something. So the best is to keep the tradition, but try something new at the same time. Step by step, I want to try something new, but always keep in mind where I have come from.” The diamond-shaped screw-in crown, for example, is certainly a new element on a diver. Overall, the anniversary edition offers a slightly more versatile style, with a design inspired by dive watches typically seen in the 1950s, and the date on the dial might appeal to collectors already familiar with the brand’s history. The limited edition of 150 pieces is a relatively small number, depending on what Squale has planned for the new case design in the future.

Every watch will be accompanied by a certificate signed by Andrea Maggi and Monique Von Büren. The two families recently reunited at the CIP-NE to officially celebrate the brand’s anniversary. Maggi said, “I still want to be linked to Neuchâtel, where Squale was born.” And Monique Von Büren, who traveled to Neuchâtel straight after a diving holiday in Egypt to see the watch for the first time immediately added, “My father would be very, very happy.” —

*First prototype on the wrist.*



*The plaque with the names of the honorary members of the CIP-NE shows how much the watch industry was involved with the dive center in the 1960s.*

