

# Honoring A Man, A Vision, And A Heritage

An Interview with Federico Ziviani, Chief Executive Officer, Gerald Charles

**EDITORS' NOTE** Since 2019, Federico Ziviani has served as the Chief Executive Officer of independent watch company Gerald Charles, which was previously sold to his family in 2003 by Mr. Gérald Charles Genta. Since a child, he has always been involved in the industry as his father, Franco Ziviani, was Audemars Piguet Italy Chief Executive Officer. Born and raised in Milan, he earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and management at Bayes Business School, and a MS degree in computer science at UCL University in London. He specialized in machine learnings, artificial intelligence, and blockchain networks. His passion for the watch-making industry inspired him to take the leadership of the family business and continue to grow the legacy of the Maison Gerald Charles ([gerald-charles.com](http://gerald-charles.com)).



Federico Ziviani

and commitment to excellence. In 2019, having grown up in a family passionate about technical excellence and high-end watchmaking, I could not do anything else than think about relaunching the Maison. I took over as CEO with a clear vision: to relaunch the Maison.

We've since grown from zero to thirty team members, partnered with over 70 retailers worldwide, and now produce 1,500 timepieces annually.

From the very beginning, my family was personally chosen by Mr. Genta to be involved with Gerald Charles,

## Will you discuss the history of Gerald Charles?

It's a story of passion, and I'm very glad you asked. Since childhood, I've been immersed in the world of watchmaking through my family, often accompanying my father to Audemars Piguet meetings with passionate professionals and engineers.

I can tell you the story of our brand, but the most important thing is to make you understand that everything we create at our brand stems from a common origin: Gérald Charles Genta. This origin can be summed up in three words: inspiration, passion, and technical performance.

Our brand, Gerald Charles, has a unique origin: it was founded in 2000 by the legendary designer Gérald Charles Genta, regarded as one of the most influential figures in modern watchmaking. After selling his eponymous brand, he created Gerald Charles as a final expression of his artistic genius and technical mastery. The brand bears his first two names, symbolizing a deeply personal project. Mr. Genta was a close friend of my father, now Chairman of the company. In 2003, he entrusted the brand to our family with the wish that my father would lead it. While my father was CEO of Audemars Piguet Italy at the time, my uncle, Giampaolo Ziviani, became General Manager. Mr. Genta remained Designer-in-Chief until his passing in 2011. Since then, we've honored his legacy by preserving his design philosophy



Maestro GC39 25th Anniversary (left), a tribute to 25 years of excellence; Gerald Charles donates unique Maestro GC39 Remaster featuring Opal stone (above) to Action Innocence for Christie's Rare Watches Auction; Maestro GC Sport Crafted in ultra-light darkblast titanium (opposite page)

making us one of the very few partners he ever selected in his illustrious watchmaking career.

We are proud to own a vast archive of Mr. Genta's unpublished designs and personal creations from the last 11 years of his life. In celebration of our 25th anniversary, we've opened part of this archive to the public through an excellent exhibition at our Geneva Atelier and in select cities. Many of these designs remain unpublished, serving as a long-lasting source of inspiration and a treasure trove for the Maison's future development. Today, our mission is to view this treasured archive not as a vault of the past, but as the starting point for developing the future of the brand. We remain steadfast in carrying forward Mr. Genta's legacy of artistic creativity and technical mastery into the future.

## How do you define Gerald Charles' culture and values?

At Gerald Charles, our culture is a balance of creativity, technicality, and deep respect for heritage. From the very beginning, we have embraced the exceptional and innovative craftsmanship and artistic vision that Mr. Gérald

Charles Genta established. His design philosophy continues to inspire everything we do. For us, a Gerald Charles timepiece must always meet the highest standards of quality, the most sophisticated shapes, and superior design language. But beyond that, two essential things are ergonomic excellence and versatility. We believe a watch should not only be a masterpiece of design and technical achievement, it must also feel perfect on the wrist and suit a variety of lifestyles and occasions. Whether it's worn during formal events or daily life, it should always offer comfort, elegance, and adaptability. Our commitment is not just to creating extremely high-performance timepieces, but also to building lasting relationships with our collectors and partners. Integrity, authenticity, and innovation are values that guide every decision we make. In everything we do, we aim to honor the extraordinary legacy that Mr. Genta entrusted to us while continuing to look forward and shape the future of Gerald Charles.



#### **How important has it been for Gerald Charles to maintain a family feel as it has grown?**

For us, keeping a family spirit alive isn't just important, it's everything. It's the soul of Gerald Charles. What makes this brand truly unique is the legacy that lives within it. In 2003, Gérald Charles Genta personally chose Franco Ziviani, my father, to carry forward what he had created. That wasn't a business decision; it was a sign of deep trust, friendship, and shared vision. Franco had worked closely with Mr. Genta and knew him not just as a master designer, but as a man

driven by pure creativity. Today, he continues to serve as our Chairman, guarding that original spirit like a keeper of the flame. As for me, I grew up breathing this world, attending watch industry dinners, sitting in on meetings, and slowly falling in love with the details, the precision, the beauty of *haute horlogerie*. Leading Gerald Charles isn't a role I stepped into; it's a legacy I chose to embrace out of passion and deep personal connection. That's why, even as we grow, we remain a family at heart. It's not just about preserving a culture – it's about honoring a man, a vision, and a heritage that continues to inspire every watch we create.

#### **Will you provide an overview of Gerald Charles' collections?**

Our signature collection is the Maestro, instantly recognizable by its unique asymmetric case shape, which lies between a square and an octagon, and is unique in watchmaking. Inspired by 17th century baroque architecture in Rome by the Swiss-born Italian architect Francesco Borromini, it is defined by its irregular shape and the "smile" at 6 o'clock, a reflection of the concavity of the monument's façades. The Maestro collection combines elegance with technical sophistication, featuring models in precious metals, such as 18K rose gold, in grade 5 titanium, and with various complications and movements. It is also characterized by the use of the vulcanized rubber strap, combining comfort, durability, and a distinctive sporty-elegant aesthetic.

The Masterlink was launched last year at Watches & Wonders. The name Masterlink clearly indicates the Maison's intent to maintain a strong connection with the founder's creative vision as this is the evolution of the last known integrated asymmetric bracelet designed by Mr. Genta. The design draws inspiration from a unique bespoke timepiece created in 2007 for the Royal Family of Sarawak, fully pavé-set with rubies and diamonds. The Masterlink is a contemporary interpretation of the integrated bracelet watch and combines Gerald Charles' signature design codes with modern versatility. Its sleek and smooth lines bracelet links offer a refined yet sporty appearance, ideal for both casual and formal occasions. It has been recognized as a piece with a strong design language, combined with the most advanced watchmaking engineering.

All our watches are 5G shockproof, 100-meter water-resistant and feature 50 hours of power reserve. We also developed our own standard of ergonomics, the Ergonteq, which guarantees high levels of comfort and a perfect weight distribution on the wrist.

Based on the feedback we receive daily, Gerald Charles is recognized as one of the best-in-class watchmaking brands and one of the most influential and fastest-growing names among independent brands.

#### **Where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth for Gerald Charles?**

The U.S. has become a key market for Gerald Charles since our official entry in 2023. With over 13 points of sale now established across the country, we are currently focusing on

expanding to the West Coast to further strengthen our retail presence.

Today, Gerald Charles has established a presence in various parts of the world through our growing retail network. As we continue to expand, we see significant opportunities for growth in the Asian market, where we are focusing on opening new authorized dealers and strengthening our distribution. At the same time, we remain committed to increasing our brand awareness globally, ensuring that collectors and enthusiasts worldwide become more familiar with the distinctive design, heritage, and craftsmanship that define Gerald Charles. Strengthening our bespoke offerings and collaborating with like-minded partners will also play a crucial role in our future growth, always with the goal of exceeding the expectations of our discerning collectors.

#### **Will you highlight Gerald Charles' focus on after-sales service and maintaining client relationships?**

At Gerald Charles, we place a lot of importance on after-sales service and building long-term relationships with our clients. We understand that purchasing a timepiece is not just a transaction, but the beginning of a lasting connection. Our dedicated after-sales team ensures that each client receives personalized support, whether it involves servicing, repairs, or bespoke requests. We are committed to providing an exceptional ownership experience that reflects the same care and craftsmanship we put into creating our watches. This approach has helped us cultivate a loyal and passionate community of collectors worldwide.

#### **What are your priorities for Gerald Charles as you look to the future?**

Looking ahead, my priorities are to continue innovating in design and technical craftsmanship while preserving the distinct identity of Gerald Charles. We have established a long-term vision through our 2030 Plan, which includes the introduction of one new complication each year, an ambitious yet focused goal that reflects our commitment to horological excellence.

We prioritize quality over quantity: our annual production will remain limited to around 1,500 pieces to maintain the highest standards of craftsmanship. Rather than increasing volume, we will expand our offering through the introduction of new models that remain faithful to our aesthetic and technical values.

Since it's our 25th anniversary, we'll be celebrating with events in select cities around the world, including Dubai Watch Week, which we'll be attending this November. We'll have a large stand-alone presence featuring innovative experiences and masterclasses.

Expanding our global reach, particularly in markets where there is growing interest in independent high watchmaking, is also a key objective. At the same time, we aim to deepen our engagement with collectors through exclusive events, limited editions, and personalized experiences. Above all, my priority is to ensure that every Gerald Charles timepiece continues to reflect the creativity, precision, and elegance that define our brand. ●