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The Watch That Money Alone Doesn't Buy Only Martial Arts Black Belts Can Purchase It

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Just launched is the Black Belt Watch, brainchild of Swiss watch industry CEO Yvan Arpa known for his international marketing savvy and quirkily creative ideas.



Geneva, Switzerland, and it is the opening night of the two-day 15th Martial Arts and Combat Sports Salon where the Black Belt Watch is being officially launched.

Yvan Arpa is in his element. This is his first watch since he forged out on his own earlier this year after leaving Romain Jerome (RJ), the Geneva-based watchmaker that Arpa between 2006 and 2009 propelled from a young and unprofitable company into one with international brand recognition and robust sales. Among Arpa's daring concepts for RJ were his "DNA of Famous Legends" Titanic collection, using rusted steel and coal from the doomed liner (watches from \$7800 to \$173,000 retail), and a follow-up moon-themed collection incorporating moon dust, bits of the Apollo 11 rocket or fragments of space suits into watches priced between \$15,000 and \$500,000.

At the martial arts salon, Arpa is in his element for a second reason: himself a karate black belt, he is once again teamed up with Claudio Alessi, a mixed martial arts master, driving force behind the Geneva salon, and inventor of a method to teach martial arts to the physically and mentally challenged.

The Inception Of The Black Belt Watch

Alessi and Arpa learned karate together as kids in a local Geneva dojo. About a year and a half ago in Las Vegas, Arpa, Alessi and Orianne Collins ran into each other. Alessi mentioned an idea he had for a watch. Collins, a black belt herself in karate boxing, had with ex-husband British musician Phil Collins created a foundation called [Little Dreams](#) which has a No Difference program enabling young people to achieve mastery in various disciplines including martial arts.

The net result of the Las Vegas encounter: Arpa's Black Belt watch inspired by Alessi and launched at the latter's salon, with a percentage of the proceeds of all Black Belt watches sold going to No Difference.

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The Design Of The Black Belt Watch

Four design elements besides the black belt on the watch face reference martial arts: the background pattern on the dial and the watch strap evoke the texture of kimono fabric; the hands are modeled on a Shinai, the sword used in Kendo; and most saliently the bezel has been stamped with Kanji pictograms representing the seven virtues of the Bushido code also known as the code of the Samurai.

Bushido, which means "way of the warrior", is a code subscribed to by many martial arts practitioners. Its seven virtues are: *Gi* (Rectitude), *Yu* (Courage), *Jin* (Benevolence), *Rei* (Respect), *Makoto* (Honesty), *Meiyo* (Honor) and *Chugi* (Loyalty).

The watch is entirely manufactured in Switzerland. It has a self-winding movement with a frequency of 28,800 Vph. The case is satin-finished steel, the bezel sandblasted steel, and the strap Alzavel waterproof calfskin and high-tech pierced rubber. The caseback is engraved "For Black Belts Only" in 5N rose gold.

The Launch Of The Black Belt And How To Buy The Watch

"All black belts, regardless of martial arts style, are eligible to purchase the watch," says Arpa. Aside from being willing and able to part with 3,000 Swiss francs (\$ 2,927) to do so, potential purchasers need to supply the name of their dojo (school), sensei (teacher), martial arts federation links, the exact date they received their belt – and attach a copy of their certificate to their order from the [Black Belt website](#). Among many black belt disciplines are judo, aikido, jujitsu, taekwondo and karate.

Demonstrations of ten disciplines were presented by black belts and others at the launch, along with a demonstration of nunchuka and other skills by Alessi-trained practitioners one in a wheel chair and another blind. Made popular by action star Bruce Lee, the nunchuka is two attached sticks which users learn to wield with dexterous speed. Among the supporters of the Little Dreams Foundation and the salon present was Seattle-based Jesse Glover, a non-classical Gung Fu expert and Bruce Lee's first student. Orianna Collins lent her support to the evening in a call from New York.

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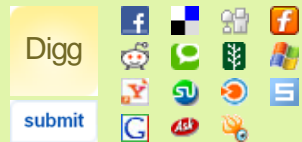
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