Micro Indy Collective

BUILT TO PERFORM

A CONVERSATION WITH ILIAS STROUSIDIS OF STIL TIMEPIECES

BEYOND THE RACING STRIPES

What happens when an industrialist with a passion for motorsport decides to build watches?

The answer is STIL — a young independent brand inspired by the engineering and mechanical character of performance cars.

But Ilias Strousidis is more than an entrepreneur who likes fast cars. He's a racing driver with a background in industrial manufacturing and a practical approach to watchmaking. For him, a beautiful design means little if it cannot be properly engineered and manufactured.

While motorsport-inspired watches are nothing new, Ilias wants to go beyond racing stripes and chronograph subdials. STIL's earlier models favour robust diver-style designs, while the new S6P Straight Six Pista takes a more ambitious direction, featuring a barrel-shaped case and a skeletonised, reworked Unitas movement inspired by an inline-six engine.

And this may only be the beginning.

Ilias discusses plans for watches potentially exceeding €30,000, alongside ambitions for exclusive movement architectures and complications. He also clarifies STIL's relationship with BMW Club GB and his plans to connect with automotive communities elsewhere, including the UAE.

As anyone familiar with motorsport will appreciate, getting the engineering right matters more than having the loudest exhaust.

This is a good one, so strap in.

You're an industrialist, entrepreneur and racing driver. How have these different worlds influenced the way you approach watchmaking?

"They have influenced almost every decision I make at STIL.

My industrial background taught me that a product must first have a purpose. It must be engineered so that it can be manufactured consistently, serviced properly and improved over time. A drawing can be beautiful, but if it cannot become a reliable physical object, it remains only a drawing.

Entrepreneurship taught me to be realistic about resources and to build gradually. STIL is operated in a very personal way by my wife and me. We cannot, and do not want to, behave like a large watch group. Every model has to justify its existence.



Motorsport has probably had the strongest emotional influence. I have competed in racing, I own and drive performance cars, and I understand the connection people develop with mechanical objects. In racing, every component has a reason to exist. I try to bring the same mentality into watchmaking. I do not want to place a racing stripe on a dial and call it a motorsport watch. The automotive influence should be visible in the construction, materials, architecture and story behind the watch.

Ultimately, STIL is a reflection of all three worlds: industrial discipline, an entrepreneurial willingness to take risks and the emotional intensity of motorsport.

Coming from industrial manufacturing, what surprised you most about the Swiss watch industry?

What surprised me most was how many specialised companies can be involved in creating a single watch.
In industrial manufacturing, I am used to looking at the complete production process. In Swiss watchmaking, particularly for a smaller brand, that process often brings together separate specialists for the case, dial, hands, movement work and final assembly.

There is real strength in that expertise. The challenge is coordinating it: even a small change to one component can affect several partners and extend development time.

My background makes me curious about how we can approach those challenges. Could a different manufacturing method help? Is there a material or process from the automotive, aerospace or chemical industries that would suit the application? I believe that perspective can contribute something useful to STIL while respecting the expertise of our watchmaking partners.



STIL is inspired by motorsport, yet you've largely avoided chronographs. Why do you favour diver-style watches for racing?

For me, motorsport offers more than one way to approach a watch.

The chronograph has an obvious historical connection with racing, but I also see a practical role for a rotating bezel. Set before a track session, it can provide a simple reference for the overall elapsed time, checked when it is safe to do so. It is not intended to replace lap timing or the car's own systems.

I also like the robustness and clarity of a diver-style layout. Those qualities feel natural to STIL and to the way I think about a watch inspired by motorsport.

The S6P Straight Six Pista takes us in a different direction, with a barrel-shaped case and a heavily reworked hand-wound movement inspired by the mechanical character of an inline-six engine. What connects these approaches is my interest in the engineering and experience of motorsport.

You mentioned a formal collaboration with BMW involving one of your limited editions. How did this come about, and what can you reveal about the partnership?

Our relationship is with BMW Club GB, the official BMW owners' club in the United Kingdom. STIL does not have a commercial partnership or licensing agreement with BMW AG, and the S46LM is not an officially licensed BMW watch.

It grew naturally from my involvement with BMW and motorsport. I own and drive a BMW M, and the S46LM comes from my personal connection with the M3 E46. Presenting it at BMW Live UK gave us the opportunity to share that story directly with people who understand what makes the car special.

The response was very encouraging. Visitors wanted to handle the watches, discuss the engineering and meet the people behind STIL. Many were watch collectors themselves, so the conversations moved easily between the two interests.

For a small company like ours, that personal connection matters enormously. BMW Club GB has brought us closer to the community that inspired the watch.



Few microbrands establish relationships with major automotive manufacturers. What does the BMW relationship mean for STIL, and could others follow?

The greatest value is the opportunity to build relationships with people who understand the inspiration behind our watches.

A BMW M owner often recognises the ideas behind the S46LM immediately. The conversation becomes about the car, the engineering and the memories attached to it. That gives us a very personal starting point for introducing STIL.

We would like to develop similar relationships with selected owners' communities in other markets, including the UAE. What matters is finding people who share our enthusiasm and creating opportunities for them to experience the watches in person.

An official manufacturer collaboration would be an exciting possibility, but any such step would have to grow from a strong connection and make sense for both sides.

You told MIC about plans for considerably more expensive watches, potentially exceeding €30,000. What's driving this move into high-end watchmaking?

What excites me is the opportunity to explore more ambitious watchmaking: more distinctive movement architecture, specialised complications, demanding materials and finer finishing.

The S6P Straight Six Pista is our first step in that direction. Its barrel-shaped case and extensively reworked, skeletonised hand-wound Unitas movement give us a new way to express the mechanical character of an inline-six engine.

Some of the ideas we are exploring beyond the S6P could eventually lead to watches above €30,000, particularly where development is substantial and production is very limited. Those remain longer-term possibilities rather than confirmed releases.

We will develop them at a pace the company can support. For me, the finished watch must make its value clear through its engineering, execution and character.



You mentioned a skeletonised, heavily reworked Unitas movement. How extensively will it be modified, and what will distinguish it from other watches at this price level?

We chose the Unitas as a proven, serviceable foundation, then developed the visual identity of the S6P around an extensively skeletonised and reworked expression of that movement.

There is no conventional dial. The mechanism itself becomes the face of the watch, exposing its structures, gears and the transmission of energy. The open architecture, satin-finished surfaces, visible jewels and gold-toned components create depth and contrast, while the front and back offer different views of the same working mechanism.

The relationship between the movement and the barrel-shaped case is central to the design. We wanted the complete watch to feel like a coherent mechanical assembly, with the exposed machinery carrying the automotive influence.

At €7,500 DDP, its value lies in the extent of the transformation, the finishing, the dedicated case development and the way these elements come together. The underlying calibre is Unitas; the identity of the finished watch is STIL.

The Pista will introduce this approach through a highly limited initial series. We see potential to develop the architecture further, but the first priority is to establish the watch on its own merits.

Can STIL successfully offer accessible motorsport watches alongside haute horlogerie pieces costing ten times as much? How will you maintain a consistent identity?

I believe we can, provided the watches share a clear identity and each has a reason to exist.

We intend to keep the collection focused. The S46LM will remain our most accessible model and an important part of STIL because of its connection with BMW M culture and the community around those cars.

As we develop more technically ambitious watches, the differences in price should reflect what goes into them: the movement work, construction, materials and finishing. The connection between the models should remain visible in their design and mechanical character.

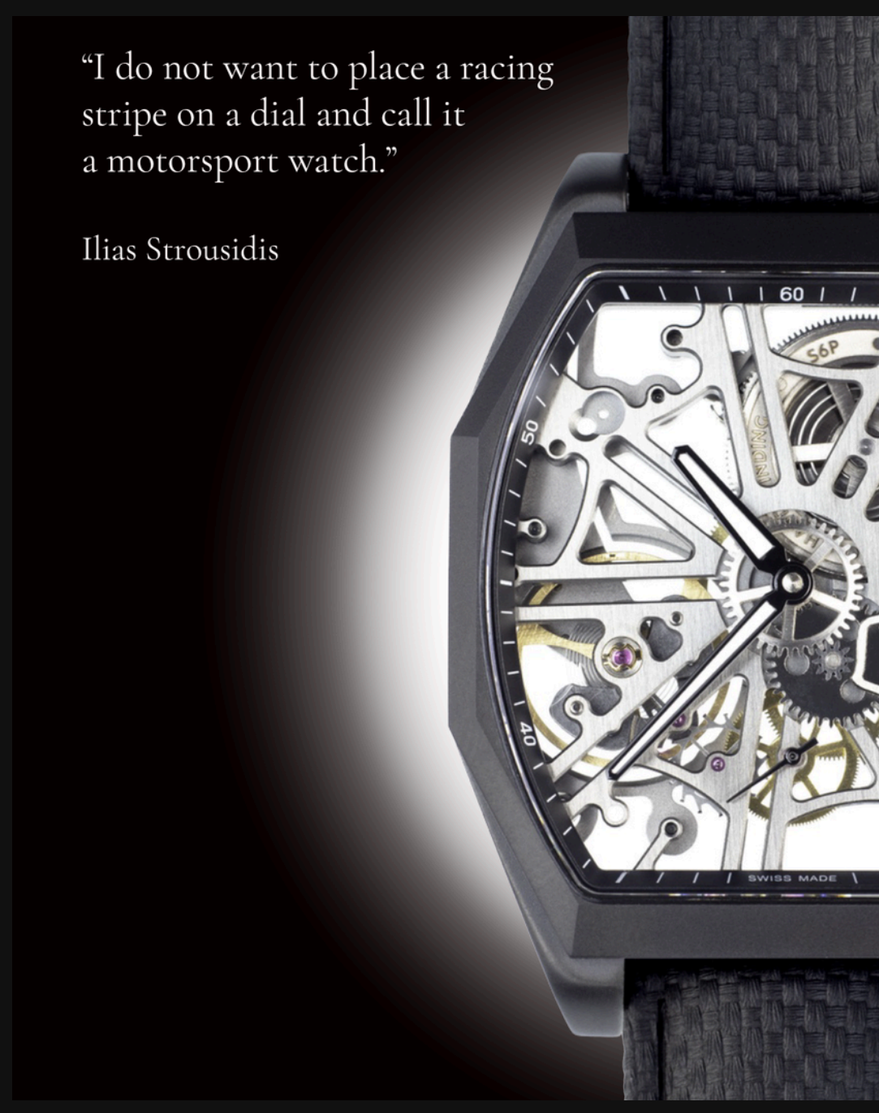
For collectors, the personal experience should be consistent too. Whether someone chooses an S46LM or a future complicated piece, they should have the same direct relationship with us and feel part of the company we are building.

You've experimented with titanium, carbon fibre and 3D printing. Are there other materials or manufacturing technologies you'd like to introduce to STIL?

Yes, but I do not want to use exotic materials simply because they sound impressive in a press release.

We are interested in materials that have genuine structural, tactile or aesthetic value. Carbon will become increasingly important, particularly where it can be used as more than a decorative dial surface. We have also considered materials such as Timascus, but no decision has been made.

My industrial background makes me interested in coatings, advanced surface treatments, additive manufacturing and production processes used outside traditional horology. Each technology must solve a problem or support the concept. Innovation for STIL should be purposeful.



Beyond the Unitas project, do you see STIL eventually developing proprietary movements or complications?

Yes, that is a long-term ambition. Our immediate focus is to develop a more distinctive mechanical identity using proven calibres as a starting point.

Over time, that could lead to exclusive bridge designs, dedicated modules or complications, and movements developed specifically for STIL with specialist Swiss partners.

A proprietary calibre would be a much larger undertaking. It requires the engineering and investment to develop it, together with the ability to test, service and support it for many years. We would take that step when the company has the resources and technical relationships to do it properly.

What interests me most is reaching a point where the movement feels inseparable from the watch: where its architecture expresses STIL as clearly as the case itself.