



HANDS-ON

## Hands-On: Raketa Avant-Garde Watch



St. Petersburg, Russia is where Raketa's historic factory continues to manufacture some of the last "made in Russia" timepieces in an industry that saw its zenith during the heyday of the USSR. Timekeeping was very important in the Soviet world, and most of Russia's watches were produced locally. Raketa continues that legacy of in-house watchmaking in Russia with a series of modern and historic watches that celebrate some of the authentic, timeless appeal of classic Russian watchmaking designs. Today, I look at the Raketa Avant-Garde 0240 watch, a very solid mixture of the old and the new at Raketa.



While the dial has a vintage style to it, my understanding is that the Avant-Garde is a rather new watch-face creation. It is directly inspired by era-appropriate avant-garde visual artists such as Kandinsky and Malevich. That said, the idea of the Avant-Garde begins with another Raketa watch known as the Copernic (Copernicus). This is where the ring-style minute hand comes from. Raketa currently produces a Copernic as the 0231 watch, which is inspired by the classic dial. Whereas on the Copernic, the ring-style hand represents the rotation of the Earth around the Sun, on the Avant-Garde 0240, the hand is just part of the mid-century avant-garde styling that for this watch uses different shapes for all three of the hands.



You see this look on timepieces from time to time, mostly from those people who are directly inspired by German Bauhaus. When it comes to matching different hand shapes on watch dials, I think of designers and brands such as Alain Silberstein, Xemex, and more. Bauhaus is very much at the intersection between industrial design and visual form. It is the practice of being playful (when appropriate) but also thoroughly functional. The result is quite interesting in the Avant-Garde 0240 with the uneven triangle hour hand, circular minute hand, and more traditional-style seconds hand. The backdrop is an attractive off-white dial with the right type of balance asymmetry to match that of the hands.



Something that isn't expected with the Avant-Garde case is how "domed" it is. The brushed steel case is 40.5mm wide (water-resistant to 50 meters), but also about 18mm-thick. It doesn't wear that large, though. Over the dial is a nicely shaped and AR-coated sapphire crystal. When I talk about the shape of the crystal, I also refer to the fact that its dramatic curvature does not result in an image distorting lens-effect. You rarely see crystals this uncommon done this well, especially at this price point.



On the side of the case, a bit of red material is included in the crown as a cabochon to match the red of the dial. The rear of the case has a small window for viewing the movement, which is the in-house-made Raketa caliber 2615. Russian-made movements are pretty "classic" in their performance and really are one snapshot of the past. The 2615 operates at 2.5Hz (18,000 bph), which is pretty modest for a modern wristwatch. It has 40 hours of power reserve. Why such limited stats? That answer, I believe, has to do with operating life. Russian-made watch movements were never as accurate as the Swiss ones (for example) but were designed to last longer and be less expensive to fix. It was thus a tradeoff between performance and overall reliability. It was thought that wearers of the watches would be better off having to reset their watches more often versus having to get their wristwatches serviced more often (a tricky proposition in the old USSR's Soviet world). The automatic rotor (partially visible) has some nice decoration on it, as well.





The Raketa Avant-Garde 0240 comes on a matching brushed steel bracelet, but Raketa also offers the Avant-Garde as the 0239 on a black leather strap, or as the Avant-Garde 0226 on a red-colored Ostrich strap. The watches on a strap (versus the steel) bracelet cost 150 Euros less. What I admire most about the Avant-Garde is both the dial design and the fact that the watch is not exclusively made interesting because of a dial design. The case, hands, and movement all contribute to the sense of artistic and sentimental interest in this Russian-made timepiece. The dial very much grows on you, and the Kandinsky-style numerals are both hip and pleasant to read. Certainly, the Avant-Garde isn't for everyone, but as the name implies, it isn't supposed to be. It's just nice to see this level of personality and originality from watchmakers, and in Raketa's instance, there's a lot of history and interesting stories within the brand to make its watches that much more noteworthy to collectors. Price for the Raketa reference W-06-16-30-0240 Avant-Garde 0240 watch is **1,300 Euros**. [Learn more or order via the Raketa website here.](#)

