

Review: hands on with the quirky Russian made Raketa Copernicus

By [PETER CHONG](#) — December 28, 2021

We recently was sent a Raketa Copernicus as a review loaner from the manufacturer in St. Petersburg. We had absolutely no expectation on the watch when offered the loaner, but our curiosity got the better of us, and we decided to accept the proposal. Here is our hands on review of the Raketa Copernicus.



Raketa who?

Part of the reason why we accepted the invitation to review is because of the recommendation of our friend Manuel Emch, who is currently Chairman and Strategic Advisor to the brand. We have known Manuel since he cut his teeth at Jaquet Droz, followed his career to Romain Jerome, and currently keenly observing his moves with small independents like Louis Erard and Raketa. Raketa is the oldest national brand and largest watch manufacturer in Russia. The brand, Raketa (Russian: *Ракета* meaning "Rocket") began manufacturing under the the Petrodvorets Watch Factory in St. Petersburg. The Petrodvorets Watch Factory is Russia's oldest factory, founded by Peter the Great in 1721. Raketa watches have been produced for the Red Army, the Soviet Navy, and for North Pole expeditions, as well as for civilians. In 1961, Yuri Gagarin became the first man to fly to

outer space on the rocket, Vostok 1. Inspired, Petrodvorets started to name its watches Rocket, or Raketa in Russian. During the cold war, the factory was over the Soviet side of the Iron Curtain, and had to be completely independent to manufacture everything they need for the watches they produced. Although the official history did not record it, we speculate that as the territory included the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) where Glashütte is situated, there was some transfer of technical knowhow and perhaps even machinery from the great *maisons* of Saxony. In 2011, after the fall of the Soviet Union, they began to **modernise the factory**, and are currently still totally independent from outside sourcing, manufacturing everything in-house in St. Petersburg.



The Raketa manufacture in St. Petersburg. Photo from Raketa.

The watch which we were sent is called the Copernicus Limited Edition, known in Russian as the РАКЕТА “КОПЕРНИК” 0280 Ref: W-05-16-10-028. In Raketa’s promotional literature calls it – “the kosmos (sic) on your wrist”. The watch is inspired by a model produced by Raketa in the 1980s of the same name, which pays tribute to the Polish renaissance astronomer’s discovery of the model of the universe with the planets, including Earth orbiting the Sun. This release is a limited edition of 300 pieces. A non-limited edition Copernicus Ref. W-05-16-10-0230 is also available with a different dial and case. This retails at EUR 140 less than the review model.

Review: Raketa Copernicus Limited Edition

Retail price of the Raketa Copernicus Limited Edition Ref: W-05-16-10-0280. is EUR 1,290 before taxes. Raketa watches are delivered worldwide free of charge by DHL from the European Union. Our review sample was shipped from, and returned to Germany.

Interestingly, there is a card inside the box which is an invitation to all customers to visit the manufacture in St. Petersburg.

The case, dial and hands

The case is in stainless steel, with a deep ink black PVD coating, measuring 40.5mm in diameter. The case design is rounded on all sides, and feels like a smooth pebble. The case has a water resistance of 50m, and feels very solid and rather luxurious, especially when considering the modest price point. The crown is accented with a bright red dot provides a nice counterpoint to the black ensemble. The top sapphire glass is domed and reaches almost to the edge of the very thin front bezel.



When Soviet Raketa designers created the original Copernicus model in the 1980s, they wanted a play of shapes. This design language theme is carried over to the new Copernicus. A big circle outline in a polished silver finish is used for the minute hand and symbolises the Earth. A smaller disc in a linear brushed copper for the hour hand is used to represent Jupiter. This follows the ratio of the natural orbits of these two planets. The Earth makes one orbit around the sun in Earth 1 year, and Jupiter makes its orbit in 12 Earth years, the same ratio as between the minutes and hours. Both the large circle and the smaller disc carry two grained silver bars intersecting the circles directly opposite the pivot point. These bars act as pointers for the hands. An even smaller circle, with the same pointer is used as the seconds hand. There is no lume on the watch.



Time 9:54:10 on the Raketa Copernicus. The domed glass catch the reflections from our strobes.

The dial itself is made from two different stones. A dark blue aventurine representing the dark sky with sparkling stars, and a round yellow agate placed slightly off center. This agate disc is framed by metal frame with radiating spokes which also serves as hour markers. Raketa does not specify what the material of the frame is, but it is a polished, white metal, possibly steel, with *anglaged* sides. The overall effect of the dial looks like the yellow agate is the sun, with its radiating rays, with the Earth and Jupiter orbiting it. Quite poetic, though the aesthetic is perhaps best described as quirky and unusual. Interestingly the name emblazoned on the agate disk says "Pakema" and not "Raketa" or even "Paketa". We are not sure if this is a transliteration difference from the Cyrillic script used in Russian.



The movement

The movement is an automatic winding movement, produced in the Raketa factory in St. Petersburg. This is a movement which is new to us, having not encountered this in any other watch before, though the specifications are quite standard. The movement beats at 18,000 bph and has a power reserve of 40 hours. The automatic movement has a traditional rotor pivoted in the center, a smooth balance with anti-shock protection. The movement is gold plated, and the rotor sports a circular Geneva stripes which Raketa calls Neva waves. These are hand made, and the rotor runs on ball bearings. The rest of the movement is engraved with stars and the planets of which we can make out Saturn with its ring and Jupiter on the main bridge, and probably Mercury engraved on the balance cock.



Movement finishing is not the best we have seen, nor the worse, and is par for the course at this pricing level. Rakepa does take the trouble to decorate the movement, and though this is not *haute horlogerie* finishing standards, is worth a thumbs up for the effort. The overall look through the case back is rather nice, and the gold plating giving the movement a luxury feel which is rather unexpected for a watch at this price level.

The competitive landscape

Who are we kidding? There is no parallel product to be found anywhere on the horological landscape which combines the quirkiness with the execution and the totally in-house production of the Copernicus. Perhaps a micro-brand somewhere, but we are not aware of.

In our survey, the closest we can consider is one of the offerings by Louis Moinet. The brand's current owner, Jean-Marie Schaller has a strong fascination with Soviet era cosmology, and they have a collection called **Cosmic Art**, which matches the quirkiness of the Rakepa Copernicus, but aimed at a much higher *haute horlogerie* level, with corresponding prices. For example, their **Space Revolution** is a serious high complication watch, with a multi tourbillon/satellite movement retailing for CHF 360,000.

Concluding thoughts

An interesting watch, to say the least. And as we have mentioned, it is quirky. But let this not detract you from its **inherent beauty**. The aventurine dial is quite a good looker, with a very deep, dark blue background and the specks picking up light sparkling like stars in the night sky. The agate disc is also unique, as this is a natural stone. The concept of the planets circling the moon is rather **romantic**. The overall feel of the watch is one which has the **feel of a luxury watch**. The smooth lines of the case and lugs are clean, and meet

beautifully with the domed sapphire crystal. The dial, as described has its own charms. The view of the case back has the high end feel, given the gold plating and the engravings on the visible surfaces.



This makes an interesting watch for those who love Soviet space exploration in particular, or for those who are fascinated by the solar system. Though, essentially a three hand watch with no complications, the visual aesthetic conveyed by the watch seems to be one with some astronomical complication. The complete in-house nature, and Made in Russia, makes an interesting conversation starter as well. And the **remarkably reasonable pricing** completes the picture.

Photo Notes

The loaner was photographed in our studio with the [Leica S3](#) with Leica Apo-Macro-Summarit-S 120 CS on all photographs except for the wrist shot and dial shot, which was made with the Fujifilm GFX 50S II with Hasselblad HC 4/120 and HC 2.8/80+ H26 tube via H Adapter. Profoto strobes.

Raketa Copernicus Specifications

Description of the watch

This edition, limited to 300 pieces, is based on Raketa's existing "Copernicus" model, with the following differences:

- its dial is made from 2 different stones: the beautiful dark blue aventurine that looks so much like the dark sky sparkling with stars, and the round yellow agate which conveys so well the feeling of incandescence on the sun's surface

- the second hand is also represented by a circle (the smaller disk) (in the standard collection the second hand is a straight hand)
- the black PVD case
- the open case back
- the decoration of the automatic movement (entirely produced at the Raketa Watch Factory): stars and planets are engraved on the automatic bridge, the rotor has beautiful hand-made Neva waves and the movement is gold plated to remind the colour of the sun.

Factory: Raketa Watch Factory (Saint-Petersburg)

Movement:

Calibre: 2615

Functions: Automatic

Number of jewels: 24

Testing positions: 4

Average rate (s/d): -10+20

Average running time (h): 40

Frequency/hour: 18.000 / 2.5Hz

Bi-directional automatic winding: Yes

Stopper of self-winding unit activated during manual winding: Yes

Decoration: Gold Plating, engraving, printing, hand-made Neva waves

Case:

Material: Stainless steel / PVD black

Diameter: 40,5 mm

Length (lug to lug): 45 mm

Front glass: Sapphire

Back glass: Mineral

Rotating bezel: No

Water resistance: 5 ATM

Dial: Semi precious stones: aventurine and yellow agate

Strap/bracelet:

Material: Genuine leather

Width: 22 mm