

THE TIME BUM

EXPLORING THE WORLD OF WATCHES ON A BUDGET



RAKETA RUSSIAN CODE 0224

It has been a long time since I reviewed a Raketa. All the way back in October 2013, I told you all about my Soviet-vintage "Big Zero," a watch I picked up on eBay for under \$100 shipped, and which still own and love. Today, I have a brand spanking new Raketa Russian Code, a 300 piece limited edition with an automatic movement, sapphire crystal, and a vastly different price tag of €1400 (\$1554 US). It is also a preview of what you can see on the Raketa display at the upcoming District Time show.

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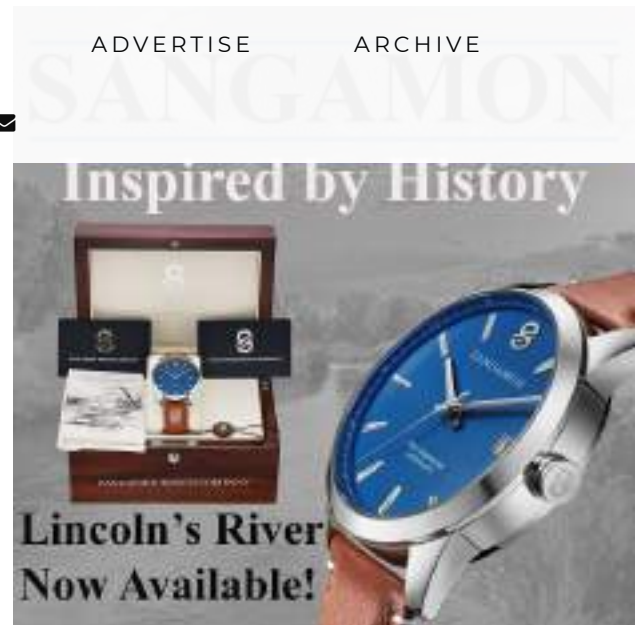
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Many of the modern Raketa designs owe much to old Big Zero, but the Russian Code I borrowed for this review reminds me of the Soviet commemorative dials popular in the 1960s and '70s, featuring as it does an illustration of a spinning globe in a field of gold constellations. Tall and radically stylized numbers appear equally retro. In a nod to the iconic Raketas, 12 o'clock is once again represented by zero. Its attractive sword hands are exceedingly long and thin, really more dagger-like. The second hand has an oversized blue circle near the tip, so it looks almost like a satellite circling that globe. All hands are filled with SuperLuminova, but the glow fades quickly.



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You will notice that the numbers track backward and this is my one massive gripe with the Russian Code, it runs counter-clockwise. Now, bear in mind, this is the whole point of the watch. Raketa's marketing copy notes that is the direction in which the earth spins and that it is in fact, the "code" for which the watch is named. I have to tell you right here that I don't understand the appeal of backward watches, although it is interesting to note that Raketa created the 2165R (reverse) by altering the construction of the barrel and escapement on their caliber 2165 automatic movement so the direction is reversed right at the beginning of the gear train. Like all Raketa movements, it was designed and built in-house. It has 24 jewels, an 18k bph vibration rate, a bi-directional rotor, and a 40-hour power reserve.





Through the porthole exhibition window out back, you can catch a glimpse of the caliber 2165R Avtomat movement and its Geneva striped and engraved rotor. You will find the same movement (running clockwise) in all the 12-hour watches across the Raketa range. If, like me, counter-clockwise is not your thing, keep reading, because in every other aspect, the Russian Code really is a very cool timepiece with elements that make me want to buy a different Raketa - jut one that can be read without decoding.



I'll start with the case. It measures 40.5mm wide and 12mm thick, but the watch is both smaller and larger than these figures imply. I say smaller because the brushed and polished gold case cuts a slimmer profile than you might think. Much of that 13mm height is

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section (from the case back lip to the bezel) the most visually prominent feature. At just 45mm long, the Russian Code sits quite comfortably on my 6.75" wrist.



Now, I also said the watch was larger than you might think, and that is all in the crystal. A towering sapphire dome with a beveled edge increases the watch's overall thickness to a massive 17mm. I didn't realize its size at first, and then I did an almost comical double-take. I love a tall crystal, and this one is beautiful. Its shape works in tandem with the deep case back to give the watch a unique profile. As wild as it may look, this crazy lens imparts no distortion.



While we are talking about eye-catching features, the

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detail, and its knurled edge is surprisingly industrial for this otherwise ornamental watch. It is a push-pull unit. Water resistance is 50m; short of true sports or tool watch specs but more than sufficient for daily wear.



I have poked fun at Russian watch straps in the past, and frankly, for good reason. Many are awful. The one on the Russian Code is not. The 22mm leather strap is a rich glossy brown, scored diagonally, finished in white stitching, and tapering to a 20mm signed buckle. It is an attractive and comfortable strap that fits the watch's dressy bearing.



All around, I was pleased to see what Raketa has to offer. The Russian Code is a sharp watch with some attractive features and an in-house movement. Granted, the counter-clockwise set up would not be



Avant Garde, and the very similarly styled Premier, all of which use the clockwise 2165 movement.

If you would like to buy a Russian Code or any of the other Raketa offerings, check out Raketa.com and be sure to stop by at District Time Sponsored by NTH Watches, October 12-13, 2019, at the District Architecture Center, 421 7th Street, NW, Washington, DC. ♦



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