



The watchmaker:
Quality and good design are of utmost importance for Rainer Brand and his wife.

Modern Times in the Spessart

Prices ranging from 2400 to 5500 euros

The RAINER BRAND family business is independent, enjoys the luxury of building watches that suit the taste of its team, and does not seek to emulate short-lived trends. This has brought success as witnessed by Rainer Brand celebrating his company's 25th anniversary.

Text – Katrin Nikolaus **Photos** – The watchmaker

— Unlike the major luxury brands, now largely under the weather after indulging in an orgy of revenues these past four years, both Rainer Brand the owner and company are in excellent health and even better spirits. A tremendous amount of work awaits Rainer Brand and his wife Petra Anja in autumn and winter.

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This is when they travel to exhibitions and trade shows, visit their twenty or so authorized retailers, and is the season when they can show their new collection. The Grande Panama, Brand's classic three-hand watch with date display at six o'clock, has undergone an extensive lift: the »Panama take five«, as the model

is called and which has nothing to do with the jazz standard recorded by Dave Brubeck, is the absolutely purest result thereof. »We are seeing a strong retro trend among almost all the brands and even Bauhaus in high demand again. My new model clearly stands out from that crowd«, explained Brand. His »take five« belongs to the here and

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Panama thirty-six:
The successful
Panama take five
model's little sister
costs 2600 euros.

now. And indeed, Brand has succeeded in creating a very contemporary watch: with a diameter of 40 millimeters and a height of 11 millimeters, the »take five« is the sort of watch that can be worn by everybody for any occasion.

As with all his watches over the past quarter century, Brand invested a tremendous amount of time and effort into the development of the dial for this model as well. The dial is made from a 0.6-millimeter thick disc, the center of which has been turned 0.2 millimeters and is where the hour hands make their rounds, while the tips of the minute and second hands sweep across the slightly higher outlying surface. The typography of the digits is by the Portuguese type designer Dino dos Santos and – as a matter of course for Brand – is also used in the date window. Unlike earlier models, the digits are not riveted. Riveting is still the standard with Brand's classic line, such as the Panama Petite Seconde, which is rendered an elegant appearance by its golden indices and golden hands

on a galvanized white dial. The »take five« is powered by a movement from the Swiss manufacturer Technotime, which, as with all his timepieces, Brand has made according to his specifications. In this case, and thanks to its two barrels, the automatic movement runs a full five days long, which explains the model's name. Why not use a power reserve indicator to impart this? Brand considers it unnecessary. He also finds a tourbillon a joy to look at, but of no utility in the normal use of a wristwatch, which is why he would never build one.

Rainer Brand puts his faith in constancy, not trends

»I have never succumbed to short-lived sensationalism«, asserts the watchmaker from Heimbuchenthal, who attended the Pforzheim School of Watchmaking from 1977 to 1980 and started his own business together with his wife in 1992 following his training and journeyman years. Together, the two of them enjoy all the ups and endure

all the downs while prudently managing their small business. A watchmaker assists him in the workshop and an associate helps her in the office as they guide the company through the watch industry's typically restless times. Instead of pursuing the latest trends, Brand much prefers putting his efforts into creating a harmonious watch. This friendly and quiet watchmaker is a true perfectionist.

His wife and business partner, Petra Anja, lives entirely by this philosophy as well. The two are not the sort of couple where opposites attract, but rather a case of two heads being better than one. »We talk a great deal about new models and naturally, I will speak up when something just doesn't seem quite right to me«, reveals Petra Anja Brand. Still, she recognizes a clear line: »Rainer is the watchmaker and my role is the communication. That



Panama take five: The watch offers a power reserve of five days. 4900 euros.



Red Dot: Brand earned the design award in 2016 for the Panama take five.



The atelier: Rainer Brand has his workshop in Heimbuchenthal.

is a major distinction in terms of its importance for the company«.

A small business able to react rapidly to changes

The two live the watchmaking year together, travel extensively in the winter and busy themselves with their honeybee colonies in the summer. »Beekeeper would have been a good career choice too«, says Brand. These industrious little creatures fascinate the couple. »I just love how perfectly a bee colony functions. This is what I wish for our organization as well«, says Petra Anja Brand. The two of them come very close to this ideal with their superbly choreographed procedures. Still, anyone who has held his position

in the market for so long must be skilled at adapting to ever-changing challenges. »We do not have to bother with long-term production plans and coordination between the design and technology sides of the house«, explains Brand. To create a new model, he first sits at the computer to develop the design before fabricating the entire watch with case and dial as a virtual image. After that, specialists, such as Technotime, the maker of raw movements and Cardor, the dial

manufacturer, produce their initial samples »and then everything looks completely different and much does not work quite the way I anticipated«. Brand then works meticulously for as long as it takes until he is certain that »everything is just right«.

Movements, cases, glass, dials and hands are made in Germany and Switzerland to his exacting specifications and then shipped to Heimbuchenthal where Brand and his assistant assemble the watches. Then comes the final test before this

NO SENSATIONALISM

Rainer Brand makes some 400 watches bearing his name each year, most of which are in stainless steel. Brand and his team value purist, functional design and close relationships with their customers.



Handwork: Rainer Brand assembles his watches with the utmost care.

Grande Panama: This model with a date sub-dial at six o'clock costs 3900 euros.



Kerala Flyback: What turns your eye is the three-day date window. 5500 euros.

master watchmaker will deliver any of his timepieces: »I take the watch in my hands, close my eyes and feel all around it. Is everything smooth? Does the crystal fit flush with the bezel?« These are the fine points that only a small workshop can address.

Customers reward Rainer Brand with their loyalty. The Brands can see in the service directory that many of them have purchased new Rainer Brand watches over the years and now own several. »They value how approachable my husband is«, says Petra Anja Brand. Many longstanding fans come to their stand at exhibitions: Long discussions with watch lovers are an integral part of Brand's business model. The absolute authenticity of his timepieces is one reason why his regular dealers are so delighted to make them part of their

collections. »Almost 80 percent of the merchandise sold in German cities today are the same products, and therefore retailers then seek to find something original and out of the ordinary«, observes Brand. He has established a very comfortable position in this small niche. His workshop manufactures about 400 watches every year, the vast majority in steel. Every now and then, he will produce a small series in gold, but only when there is a market for it. »Right now that is clearly not the case«, says Brand. The market is still exhausted from the ongoing crisis. Things continue going well for this watchmaker in the Spessart and the same is true for his bee colonies. His clients may look forward to purist watches and healthy honey for quite some time. —

IN HARMONY WITH THEIR HOME

Rainer and Petra Anja Brand chose a stylized owl as the signet for their brand, which adorns the crown of each Rainer Brand watch. The couple associates wisdom, composure and sustainability with the owl. This motif allows them to express on every watch their solidarity with nature and the wooded mountains of the Spessart, where they make their home.

