

Richard Brown's

**REPLICA
WATCH
REPORT**

VOLUME 1

www.replicawatchreport.com

The below is the table of contents from the full version of this book.

Table of Contents

Prologue	3
Caveat	8
The Replicas Used in this Book	8
Introduction	9
Anatomy of a Watch.....	12
The Making of a Replica	14
The ETA Movement	15
The Manufacturing Process	16
The High End	17
Frankenwatches	18
Know Your Watch	20
Forum Etiquette	21
Search Engines	21
Watch Manufacturer's Web Sites and Catalogs	22
Replica Dealers Online	22
Buying Replicas	23
The Value of Replicas	24
Genuine Manufacturer's Take on Counterfeiting	25
Spotter's Tips.....	26
Picture Quality	26
The Tools	26
The First Glance	27
Top Ten Replica Flaws	30
Buying Watches Online	34
Warranties	34
Buying from an Auction	34
Non-Auction Purchases	39
Selling Watches Yourself	40

Replicas and Retail Don't Mix	42
The Upstanding Businessman	42
The Solo Artist	45
Lessons Learned	46
Using This Book	48
Frequently Asked Questions	50
General Questions	50
Movement Questions	53
Rolex Questions	57
Other Brand Questions	59
Spotter's Guide	60
How to Use This Section	60
Audemars Piguet	62
Jules Audemars	64
Metropolis	68
Royal Oak	70
Breitling	72
Cartier	74
Divan	76
Roadster	80
Tank Francaise	84
Omega	86
Seamaster Professional	88
Seamaster Professional 007	92
Speedmaster "Replica"	94
Speedmaster Broad Arrow	98
Officine Panerai.....	100
Luminor Base	104
Luminor Marina	108

Patek Philippe112
Calatrava Ref. 3919 116
Nautilus 120

Rolex122
Daytona (Modern) 138
Daytona (1980's) 142
Daytona "Paul Newman" 144
Submariner 146
"Red" Submariner 148
"Double-Red" Sea-Dweller 150
Sea-Dweller 152
"Anniversary" Submariner 156
Day-Date (President) 158
DateJust 160
Yachtmaster 162
Explorer I 164
GMT Master II 166
Explorer II 168

Tag Heuer.....170
Monaco 172

Vacheron Constantin174
Malte Grande Classique 176

Summary180
ChronoSafe182
Colophon.....184

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Spotter's Tips

There are a variety of common flaws and mistakes that permeate the counterfeit market. This chapter will look at these in detail, and will show you things to review when you need to quickly evaluate a watch. Even the replica watches not included in the Spotter's Guide later in this book will probably exhibit some of these flaws, enabling you to categorize risk when deciding on a purchase.

While the focus of this book is on Internet purchasing, all of the information provided here should be helpful when buying watches at flea markets or estate sales. Use this book as a study guide to prepare you for what to look for when you're interested in purchasing.

Picture Quality

First, we have to establish a level of acceptable picture quality when attempting to evaluate a watch. Some people post tiny grainy pictures, with little light, and try to sell watches worth thousands of dollars. Honestly, how someone thinks people will be willing to part with their hard earned cash from some postage stamp-sized fuzzy image is beyond me.

My advice on all of these sales is to pass them by, no matter how good the reputation of the seller or how good the price. The odds are not with you when you can't evaluate the watch before the purchase. Either ask the owner for better pictures or just assume the watch isn't worth the money. Read the chapter on eBay buys for more information.

Look for auctions with large pictures taken from several angles. This will allow you to validate several aspects of a watch you may have missed from a single picture.

The Tools

Everyone interested in buying or collecting high-end watches should invest in some simple tools. All of these can be purchased over the web from sources like eBay for a total investment of less than \$50. These can be used when you have an opportunity to inspect a watch in person.



Jeweler's loupe – A jeweler's loupe is a great way to inspect various parts of a watch up close. 2.5x magnification loupes are the least expensive, but I would recommend spending a bit more and get the 10x loupe. These loupes can be found typically for around \$5 to \$20 dollars, and are probably the most valuable tool you can buy.

A loupe is a magnifying glass designed for inspecting details up close. They are used by jewelers and photographers to look for flaws and imperfections that the eye by itself can't spot.

Spring bar tool – If you're interested in verifying the serial number on a Rolex, the spring bar tool can help you (or the person selling the watch if they require) carefully remove the band. You need to do this to reveal the serial and model numbers between the lugs. A spring bar tool is typically \$10.

Ruler – A cheap plastic metric ruler can be used to verify sizes of cases and strap widths. Also, the thickness of many replicas is greater than their genuine counterparts (Patek Philippe is an example of where this is common), so knowing what the thickness should be will greatly aid in evaluating suspect watches.

Pocket flashlight – Want to test the luminosity of a watch? Shine a flashlight directly onto the surface for a few seconds and cup your hands around it to see the results. Some replicas have flawed dials or bezels that don't glow brightly enough (or at all) in comparison to the original. Don't rely on sunlight or the room lights to give you an accurate accounting of the luminosity.

An even better option are the small locket LED key chain lights that are being sold today. These tiny lights fit in your pocket yet produce a very bright and intense light; more intense than any bulb flashlight its size can produce. I've found by holding one of these lights to a crystal of a watch I can instantly charge the dial's luminosity and watch the decay as I turn the light source off. It's a small yet handy device to use during your inspection.

Polishing cloth – A decent jewelry polishing cloth can be used to remove fingerprints and other contaminants and allow you to look at the actual surface of the watch. You can use this to look for scratches, cracks, and other flaws that may have been masked by dirt or smudges.

This book! – Bring this book as a reference along with you as you're browsing. It's easy to forget simple things to look for if you rely on your memory.

Place all these tools in a small bag or carry them in your briefcase. You'll be glad you had them along at some point during your shopping trip.

The First Glance

When you're evaluating a watch, either in person or via photograph, the first thing you should do is step back and view the watch from a mental distance. Look at the "appearance" of the watch. Does it look like it's of a good build quality? Does the crystal have scratches or appear to be dull (possible indication of glass)? Does the crown look screwed in evenly into the case? Examine the band, does it look cheap or feel light? Are there pins in



the band holding the links together on a Rolex for example? Brand new Rolexes have a brilliant, "gem-like" appearance.

You can eliminate many of the lower end counterfeits simply by looking at the watch with an eye that expects to see quality. Rolexes, for example, are made exceedingly well and don't have sloppy dial printing or glued-on parts. Don't expect a Patek Philippe to look cheap; use your common sense. If the watch doesn't look like quality then it probably isn't. The one exception to make here is to give some lee-way to vintage models. 25 year-old Submariners will have a bit more variance than a new one.

If you have the opportunity to hold the watch (This is something which I recommend strongly. Never make a purchase in person without being able to closely examine the merchandise) feel the weight of the watch. A real stainless steel Rolex weighs on average about 140 grams. The band should feel substantial and not "tinny" or lightweight. Look at the watch objectively as if you were purchasing it for your boss, with his money...

Whenever possible try to examine any paperwork and receipts. The paperwork should match the serial number engraved on the watch. If it doesn't match then be very wary. Receipts are good to have; it proves when the watch was purchased, as well as where. This becomes important whenever you need to prove the watch's pedigree in the future. Always ask for all accessories (boxes, hang tags) and paperwork (warranty, receipt, owner's manuals) whenever buying a watch, new or used. You never know what a future owner might be interested in (I had a buyer get excited because I had the plastic bezel protector that ships with the watch).

Top Ten Replica Flaws

So you found the watch of your dreams. The seller doesn't want an arm and a leg for it either! What can you do to quickly check for counterfeiting? We're not talking an in-depth review, just a few things that are obvious "tells" that will alert us we're looking at a replica watch. I've categorized ten things that are always dead give-aways whenever I look at a watch or a photograph. Review these and apply these tests to a watch your examining:

1. The Crystal: Look for Reflections

Some manufacturers such as Panerai, Zenith, Corum, Girard Perregaux and Breitling (unfortunately not Rolex) use a thin coating on the surface of the crystal to reduce the effects of reflections. This tends to give the crystal a slight blue tint but can render it near transparent at most viewing angles. If the watch you're inspecting is any one of these brands and not a vintage model, be concerned if there are a large number of reflections from the crystal at varying angles.

Modern high-end watches use an artificial sapphire for the crystal, as opposed to the treated glass that many low-end replicas use. The surest way to test for sapphire is to take the watch to a reliable watch repair shop. Sapphire is nearly as hard as a diamond and a true sapphire crystal would be resistant to scratching. Some people rely on misting water on the surface to look for beading, but I consider this an unreliable method. Typically sapphire is very transparent with sharp refractions while glass tends towards a greenish tint at the edges with undefined refraction.

“
Rolex watches don't have exhibition backs.
”

2. The Case: Exhibition or Display Back

Where most replicas fall short is when the original watch has a see-through case back allowing the viewing of the movement. These watches tend to be hand-wound or automatic and have decorative effects such as polished gears and a Côtes de Geneve (wave-like patterns) finish on the movement. Most genuine manufacturers make their watch stand out with a truly beautiful presentation from this exhibition back.

Counterfeit watches, which rely on inexpensive unfinished Swiss or Asian movements, which have no decorations, are at a distinct disadvantage here. These watches reveal a very plain movement with little or no detail. The pieces of the movement look like they have been stamped from sheet metal (which is pretty much the case. These movements are highly mass-produced). One glance

at the exposed movement will reveal the watch as counterfeit. Even attempts to dress up the plain movement with gold-tone plating and engraving fall short of the original.

The one notable exception to the rule with exhibition backs are the new replicas coming onto the market that use movements similar to the original watches. The Omega Speedmaster Professional, for example, uses a modified version of a Lemania 861 movement which looks beautiful behind an exhibition back. Several counterfeit watch makers are using this base movement to replicate the look of the original Omega with good success. Panerai, with their use of the Unitas 6497, is also vulnerable to copycats using the original base movement.

3. The Crown: One Piece or Fake

Cheap replicas (typically Rolex copies) might have the logo actually glued to the end of the crown. These watches have so many other flaws that this won't be your first indication of problems. Make sure the crown shows no sign of glue or uneven edges. Also, the watch should wind smooth and free, without the feel of the movement moving in the case.

Some replicas emulate the engraving at the end of a crown with laser etching. Laser etching has no depth to it (if you run your fingernail over the surface it doesn't "catch" in the grooves of the letters like it would for true engraving) and is rarely used on genuine watches. Laser etching has a "frosted" appearance.

Finally, some watches have jewels embedded in the end of the crown (Cartier comes to mind). On genuine watches this jewel is usually a precious or semi-precious stone like a sapphire or ruby. This stone will "sparkle" and have depth to the surface when examined. Replicas typically use a glass or crystal stone to copy the real thing. It normally can be picked out by its dull color or "glassy" appearance.

4. The Band: Cheap and Tinny?

Watches come with either leather/rubber/carbon fiber straps or metal bands. Straps are easy to replace and customize to the owner's taste. That means a cheap department store strap takes 2 minutes to put on a genuine Patek Philippe if the owner wants it that way. When it comes to bands, ask if it's original and look at the lining. Quality watch bands are padded or have a soft leather inner section. Just because it's stamped with the manufacturer's name does not mean it's original.

Metal bands, on the other hand, are harder to duplicate. Most counterfeit watches with metal bands fall into two categories: cheap and tinny, or fairly close. A few of them, though, have nearly the same quality of build that the genuine watch has.

The cheaper bands are made of low-grade stainless steel or are even made of inexpensive pressed sheeting. They typically are held together with pins instead of the screws that most genuine manufacturers use (note that Omega does use pins in their bands). They are very light and are easily identifiable as not of the quality that a multi-thousand dollar watch should use.

The more expensive replicas use aftermarket replacement bands that are sold for the legitimate model, or are used on related models of that watch. They are of higher-quality steel and use screws in the band as does a genuine Rolex. There is still a difference in weight if not appearance. These replacement bands feel stiff and a bit flimsy when compared to a real Rolex band.

Some of the Omega counterfeit bands are very close to the original, and have accurate pins when compared to the genuine issue bands. They are harder to tell apart from an initial inspection. On such models focus on other issues such as the case back and dial when trying to identify replicas.

5. The Dial: Fuzzy Printing?

Here's where that jeweler's loupe we told you to buy earns its money. Look closely at the dial and date wheel (if present) through the loupe. The printing should be sharp and defined, not fuzzy around the edges or bleeding between letters. A genuine dial with sloppy printing would be rejected at the factory during inspection. The odds are that, unless the watch has been redialed, if it has irregular print quality it's a counterfeit.

There should be no dust on the surface of the dial, and absolutely no fingerprints. Contaminants such as hairs have been known to be found under counterfeit crystals. There's no quality control in the replica factories; each watch can exhibit a variety of subtle differences, including such things as contaminants and print quality.

6. Bezel Pearl: Inset or Ant Hill?

For Rolex sports models (Submariner and Sea-Dweller) the bezel pearl should be inset and luminous (glows in the dark). Current counterfeits have the bezel pearl applied so that it protrudes like a small ant hill; it also does not glow. Newer replicas have a bezel pearl more similar to the original yet it still does not sit flush to the bezel as a genuine bezel pearl should. Note that some people have replaced their replica bezel inserts with genuine ones (for a cost of around \$100) which can eliminate this flaw.

7. General: Spell Check!

Many of these counterfeit watches are made in the Far East by people whose first language is not English. Because of this, several spelling errors have slipped into the final products and make determining if a watch is counterfeit very easy. Read carefully the dial and the case back. Check the spelling; don't assume that it's correct. We've seen spelling errors like "Eigtheem Jewels," "NIMITED EDITION," and "Made in Swiss," which make it obvious that the watch is not genuine.

These tips will help you quickly spot some obvious flaws in watches. Never rely on just one indicator that a watch might be counterfeit. Use your common sense and your specific knowledge of the watch to aid in the evaluation.

8. Sub-dials: Functional Chronograph?

When examining a chronograph, always try and work the pushers and examine the sub-dials in action. If a watch has a stopwatch function to and instead when you press the pusher it simply advances a hand by a tick it's probably really just a day/date/24-hour movement. All Rolex Daytona that should pass this test: when you press the top button the center second hand should begin to move. It shouldn't move unless the stopwatch function has been engaged.

Know how the genuine sub-dials is labeled: If you see a watch that has sub-dials labeled incorrectly then it may be a replica. An example of such a replica is a Rolex Daytona that has sub-dials with the days of the week.

9. Quartz Movements

Most high-end manufacturers don't use quartz movements on a majority of their watches. It's important that you research and find out which models they do make quartz versions of; it could save you a lot of money. For example, there are no quartz versions of Roadster made by Cartier. If you see one with a ticking second hand then it's a replica (and probably a poor one at that. Most quartz replicas use inexpensive materials in their construction).

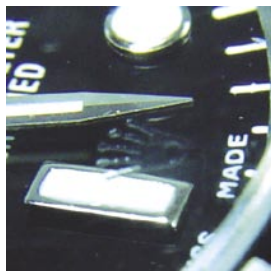
Be aware that Cartier does make quartz versions of its Divan model. Know how to tell the difference (automatic Divan's are labeled "Automatic" on the dial, quartz models have no such label). Knowing the product line can aid in your evaluation of a watch.

10. Luminosity

Most modern watches use a substance called LumiNova to provide the glow to the dial and hands that allows you to read the time in darkness. Replica watches normally have a poor quality luminous material applied compared to a genuine watch. The replica won't glow as brightly or as long when charged and viewed in a low light situation. It's also common that replicas will have missing luminous materials and not glow at all. Use a flashlight to "charge" a watch and observe the brightness of the dial and hands in the dark.

11. Bonus: Engraved Crown

Replicas are now attempting to emulate the engraved crown found at 6 o'clock on some Rolex models. Normally this crown is invisible to the naked eye (and is difficult even to spot with a 2.5x loupe). On some replicas the crown is so big it's easily spotted even from arms length. If you can see the crown then it's a replica.



Replica with fake crown.



Rolex

www.rolex.com



Daytona (Current)



Anniversary "Green" Submariner



Daytona (80's)



Day Date



"Paul Newman" Daytona



DateJust



Submariner



Yachtmaster



"Red" Submariner



Explorer



"Double Red" Sea-Dweller



GMT Master II



Sea-Dweller



Explorer II

Rolex is probably copied more than any other watch brand in the world. The brand is always in high demand and brings in a great deal of cash from the secondary markets. This means there is a never-ending source of customers for Rolex products.

The counterfeiters capitalize on the fact that Rolex seldom changes their models, and on the large replacement parts market to produce some very good replicas of original Rolex models.

Rolex has countered the replica threat in the last couple of years with a few security features in their latest offerings. Rolex currently etches a very small (invisible to the naked eye) crown at the 6 o'clock position on the watch crystal.

Recent Rolex models seen at the 2004 show in Basel have shown watches with the name "Rolex" engraved on the dial sides under the crystal. Since neither is consistently used across the current product line it remains to be seen how effective these measures will be.

Even with these new anti-counterfeiting methods in place, there still is a huge market of pre-owned Rolex watches that are vulnerable to being confused with the higher-end replicas.

The models that seem to get copied the most are: Submariner, Day Date (President), DateJust, Sea-Dweller, Explorer II, GMT II, and Daytona.

Note that the trend currently in Rolex counterfeits is to produce replicas of "vintage" models. That means replica "Double Red" Sea-Dwellers and counterfeit 1980s-style Daytonas using Poljot movements. Always be suspicious of a 40-year old watch that looks brand new.

Rolex Replica Grades

Many replica sellers try to confuse the issue on the quality of their goods by referring to "A++" or "Category 1" watches. When it comes down to it they break down into simple categories:

Poor – No observant person would ever confuse these examples with the real watch. They are cheap and flimsy, made out of poor quality pot metal and in some cases plastic.

The band links are secured with pins instead of screws, and may even have see-through plastic case backs that show off the cheap Asian movement. These also sometimes use quartz movements which result in a "tick" in the movement of the second hand.

Average – The average Rolex replica would pass the "Sleeve" test (viewed on the wrist from a distance), but would fall flat on closer examination. They have incorrect bezel inserts and date wheel fonts. Watch for poor magnification from the cyclops on Submariners.

High-end – The better quality counterfeits still suffer from bad bezel inserts (particularly the bezel pearl, which is not inset), but the task of picking them out becomes much more difficult with the ability to fit genuine parts to these examples. More than one replica submariner is floating around with a genuine bezel. The easiest way to identify these watches is to look for the correct cyclops magnification and the right font on the date wheel. This will be examined in detail in this section for each model.



Achilles Heel: The Band

One of the weak points of all Rolex replicas is the metal band. The quality is usually poorer than a genuine model.

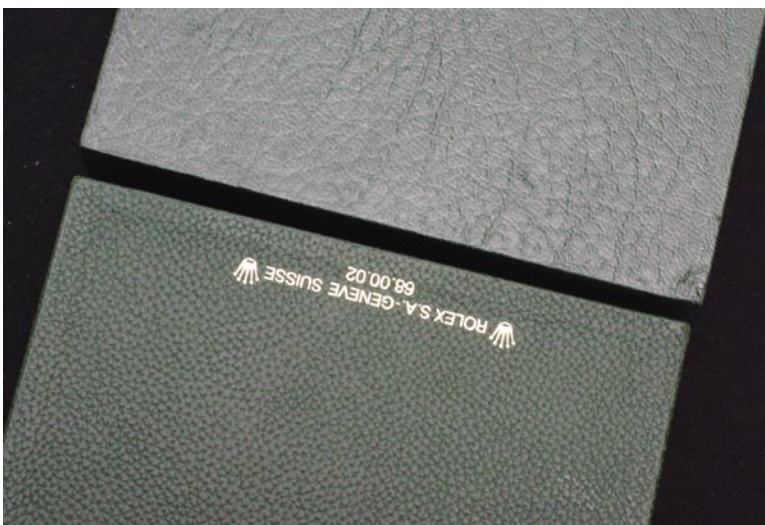
Most notable is the light weight and cheap feel of most replica bands. Also look for screws attaching the links instead of pins that some low quality counterfeits use. Note that Rolex did use rivets and folded links in some older (vintage) models.

Rolex Accessories



There are several versions of Rolex boxes that have been in production over the years. The example here (LOWER box) is from a 2003 DateJust. Notice the Rolex crown on the box. Some Rolex boxes use an embossed crown instead.

The replica box (UPPER box) is slightly larger and has the crown and logo. Also notice the difference in texture. The Rolex box is covered in leather, while the counterfeit box uses a vinyl surface.



The bottom of the genuine Rolex box shows more gold stamping. The upper box, which is the counterfeit, does not have this detail.

Rolex Accessories



The top box is another replica. The printing on the box is rough compared to the genuine box at the bottom of the picture.

Rolex quality is consistently high. If there are flaws or irregularities in the printing or quality, it usually points to a replica.



The box on the left is a genuine Rolex outer box. Notice the bright gold embossed letters and the "OYSTER" text. The counterfeit box on the right has the Rolex logo printed with the surface as opposed to being embossed. It's really yellow instead of gold.



The Rolex box on the left has a built-in watch stand. The replica box on the right is still using the pillow-and-wrap interior that Rolex once used. The materials for this wrap are thin and cheap.

Genuine Rolex boxes of this style have the Rolex logo imprinted on the wrap.

Rolex Serial Numbers

Rolex serial numbers are numbered consecutively as the model year progresses. Unfortunately Rolex takes liberty with their numbering schemes, which makes it difficult at times to determine the actual year a watch is manufactured. Below is a rough guide that will give you an idea of when a particular watch was made.

In order to find the serial number you must remove the band. It's engraved between the lugs at the 6 o'clock position. Some rare vintage Rolexes, like the COMEX Sea-Dweller, have the serial number engraved on the case back.

Serial Number	Year
F xxx,xxx	From February 2003
Y xxx,xxx	From April 2002
K xxx,xxx	From August 2001
P xxx,xxx	From April 2000
A xxx,xxx	1998 - 2000
U xxx,xxx	1997 - 1998
T xxx,xxx	1996 - 1998
W xxx,xxx	1995 - 1998
S xxx,xxx	1993
C xxx,xxx	1992
N xxx,xxx	1991
X xxx,xxx	1991
E xxx,xxx	From January 1990
L xxx,xxx	1989
R xxx,xxx	From August 1987
9 xxx,xxx	From July 1986

Rolex Movements versus ETA



This is a Rolex 3130 Movement, used in previous models of Day Dates. Notice the gilt engraving on the movement. Other trademarks of Rolex are the Red and gold gears, and the slotted rotor.



Here is an ETA 2836, used in a Rolex Submariner replica. It has a gold-tone finish, compared to the polished steel look of a genuine Rolex movement. It lacks the slotted rotor and red gears that a genuine Rolex movement uses.

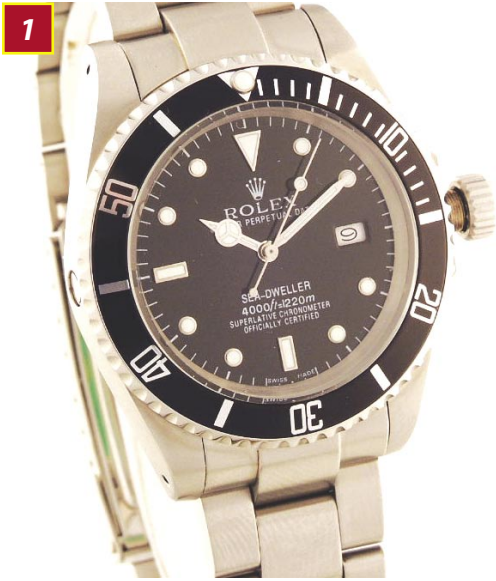
Note the rotor states "25 jewels." A 3035 movement, which the genuine Rolex Submariner uses, has 31 jewels.



This is an ETA 2892-A2, used in a GMT Master II replica. The notable thing about this movement is that it emulates the GMT hand of a genuine Rolex correctly. Unlike earlier GMT Master II replicas that had a fourth hand that functioned like a 24 hour hand, this movement can actually perform like the genuine.

ROLEX

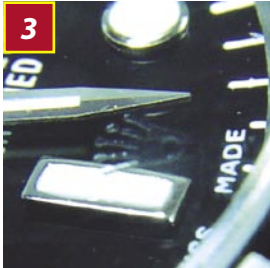
Sea-Dweller



The Sea-Dweller is most notable for its lack of cyclops. On this example the bezel pearl is definitely not genuine.



[2] This model has a rubber gasket on the crown stem.



[3] Note the over-large etching on the crystal.



Another example of a modern Sea-Dweller counterfeit.

Spotter's Tips

The Sea-Dweller replicas have many of the same flaws that the Submariner has. Read the profile on the Submariner; most of these flaws apply to the Sea-Dweller.

The case back on the Sea-Dweller differs from that of the Submariner in several key ways. First of all, it should have a 45 degree slant giving it a deeper stance. Also, there is engraved text on and around the case back on modern models.

At the 9 o'clock, on the case side, is a brushed steel gas relief valve. Counterfeit Sea-Dwellers tend to get this incorrect by making the valve too small or by not making it brushed steel against the polished case.

As with most Submariner variants, the bezel pearl is a good way to quickly determine potential authenticity. Recent updates from counterfeiters and the ability to replace the bezel insert with a genuine one means other indicators are necessary.

DANGER

Most Dangerous

Newer, more accurate, bezel pearls on replicas make the ETA examples more accurate. Check the dial printing and the quality of the band.

Variants

Watches based on ETA, Japanese, and Asian movements are known, with correspondingly lower levels of quality (typically).

There are no genuine two-tone or solid gold versions of this watch. This is a tool watch, with no variations from the factory.

Sea-Dweller (Modern) Major Counterfeit Flaws

Genuine	Counterfeit	Flaw Description
		<p>Case Back The Sea-Dweller is the only current sports model with writing on the case back. Also the case back has a 45 degree slope to the design, which is greater than a standard Submariner.</p>
		<p>Gas Release Valve Genuine Sea-Dwellers have a large brushed steel valve at the 9 o'clock position on the side of the case. Replicas have a variety of types of false valves, none of which have the matte appearance of the original. The replica valve is also only for show; it doesn't work.</p>
		<p>Bezel Pearl Most replica Rolex sport watches have an incorrect bezel pearl. It protrudes from it's metal surround instead of being inset. Note that this can be corrected by installing an authentic Rolex bezel insert.</p>

Comparison Photographs



Other Counterfeit Flaws

- ◆ Dial printing is suspect on replicas. It ranges from decent to extremely poor. Use your loupe if possible to examine the printing up close. It should be sharp and defined.
- ◆ The crown should be one piece, meaning the logo should not be glued to the end of the crown.
- ◆ When you unscrew the crown there should be a black rubber O-ring around the stem on current models.
- ◆ The date wheel font should have "closed" "6"s and "9"s. This means there should be no gap in the numeral.
- ◆ Watch for mis-printing on the dial. Fuzzy printing is a good indicator of a replica.
- ◆ There should be a rubber O-ring on the crown stem.
- ◆ The bezel turns clock-wise only. There are 120 clicks in a full revolution of the bezel.

Sea-Dweller



Note the poor bezel pearl on this replica. It's a quick way of spotting a counterfeit.



Make sure you check closely the quality of the dial print on any watch you are examining. Rolex dials are sharp and defined with no blunt, fuzzy edges.



The replica here has an O-ring on the crown stem like a genuine Sea-Dweller, but if you look carefully you can tell it's missing the "groove" that the O-ring should sit in. This O-ring is simply placed over the crown stem.

Sea-Dweller



This replica has an open "6" on the date wheel, which is incorrect for the current Sea-Dweller. The current model has a closed numeral font.



Note the circled crown etched on this replica's crystal. This crown is much larger than the etched crown on a genuine Rolex. If it's visible to the naked eye it's not genuine.



This Sea-Dweller replica has the model number incorrectly engraved on the case back.

ROLEX

Buy the Full Version

Visit www.replicawatchreport.com to buy the full version:

Save yourself thousands of dollars by being able to spot replica watches!

Thinking about buying a high-end watch? Don't go shopping without knowing the pitfalls. We teach you how to avoid being taken to the cleaners by sellers peddling counterfeit goods. This book includes:

- **500+ COLOR Photographs.** We show you comparison shots between replica and genuine watches.
- **In-depth watch reviews.** We show you what's hot and why replicas are so dangerous.
- **Articles on how to buy watches online safely.** Learn how counterfeit watches are made, and how they get into the country.
- **Retail Jewelers beware:** we show how you can get scammed! Learn these secrets before you become a victim.
- **Frequently Asked Questions.** We answer basic watch questions as well as show you the lingo of the replica industry.
- **Nine different brands reviewed.** While other books focus solely on Rolex replicas, we cover major brands such as Cartier and Panerai.
- **184 Pages.** The largest single source of counterfeit watch information anywhere!



Can you spot the flaws on this replica?