



Ulysse Nardin



Was Ulysse Nardin Crazy To Unveil Straw Marquetry and Osmium Dials?

Ulysse Nardin has always been on the cutting edge of watchmaking. So when the company recently unveiled four new limited-edition Executive Free Wheel watches – each with a highly unusual dial material – I wasn’t surprised. But I did wonder if the brand hit it out of the park or was way off base. Here, we take a look.

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Qui suis-je ?

Lecture : 3 min

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I remember back in the early 1980’s when I met the then-owner of Ulysse Nardin, Rolf Schnyder, for the first time. He was incredibly passionate about watches and even more so about what the recently revived brand was going to achieve. He also recognized the need to be on the forefront of technology and pushed the boundaries time and again. In fact, Ulysse Nardin was one of the first watch brands to experiment with silicium.

Over the years, the brand has created proprietary materials for use in movements, components and even watches. Today, it remains a pioneer – working with breakthrough materials and unveiling innovative watchmaking achievements.

A Continuance of Daring

With its newest Executive Free Wheel watches – sporting new dial and barrel materials – Ulysse Nardin continues to demonstrate its commitment to being daring and different. The Executive Free Wheel watches, first unveiled to the world last year, feature seemingly free-floating movement parts on the dial side for a creative architecture that is three-dimensional sort of “in your face” wow. Not quite a skeleton watch – because there is a dial and only certain elements are visible – the Free Wheel is powered by the UN-176 caliber that was several years in the making and relies heavily on the brand’s Silicium technology.

A work of masterful watchmaking and engineering, the Free Wheel was, unfortunately, somewhat overshadowed in its infancy year by other Ulysse Nardin innovations, including the Marine Diver, the Freak Vision and an extensive erotic collection. By adding these four new and exciting dials to the series, Ulysse Nardin deftly brings the attention back to the Free Wheel.

Ulysse Nardin Executive Free Wheel Osmium



Executive Free Wheel Osmium © Ulysse Nardin

By turning to Osmium, one of the world’s heaviest metals, Ulysse Nardin defies the concept that lightweight watches are better. The incredibly rare metal – rarer than platinum – is also very dense and therefore highly stable, often used in to strengthen materials. (To date, only Hublot has used osmium in its timepieces.) The best part about this metal, though, is its incandescence. It has an incredible crystallized form that lets it shine like zillions of tiny diamonds – but in a beautiful pale blue hue for a mesmerizing total effect.