

# Watches Under Water - Submariner

## Greetings Watch Guys (and Gals).

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Hmmmm, the Doxa Sub 300 T (*the orange-faced watch that Clive Cussler put on the wrist of Dirk Pitt*) is pretty well-known just now, then there's the "new" James Bond watch, the Omega Seamaster.... Nope, when it comes to a dive watch, the Rolex Submariner is still what most people think of.



Rolex was no stranger to watches-under-water in the early 1950s. After all the Rolex "Oyster" had already been around for something like 30 years. The diving world was gaining popularity with the adventures of people such as Jacques Cousteau, Auguste Piccard, and even Lloyd Bridges (*star of the "Sea Hunt" television series*). As it happens, one of the Directors at Rolex (*R.P. Jeanneret*) was an amateur diving enthusiast and was instrumental in the creation of watch with a diving theme that was also an elegant dress watch.

Rolex has enjoyed a history of successful marketing ventures and the Submariner was no exception. In September of 1953, Professor Piccard and his son descended to a depth of 10,335 feet below the ocean surface in a bathyscaphe capsule with a Rolex attached to the outside. Talk about an attention-getter. In 1954, Rolex debuted the Submariner (*model reference 6204*) at the Basel Watch Fair. The design was based on the existing Rolex Turn-O-Graph and over the following ten years or so, developed into the watch we know today. The Submariner became both an instant success and a true classic.

The success of the Submariner is not, of course, solely due to wise marketing. The technical aspects of the watch had to live up to the promises that the sales campaigns made. The innovative technologies needed in taking a watch down to over 10,000 feet were applied to the "civilian" watches. The design features of the Submariner were

intended for use by those who actually made their living under water. The rotating bezel enabled divers to keep accurate track of their time spent under the surface of the waves. The luminous markers allowed for good visibility in dark, murky water. The flip-lock clasp made for secure attachment to one's wrist and the hinged extension allowed the watch to be worn over a wetsuit. The movement was accurate and rugged, working well under the pressure and temperature rigors of diving. It may well be said that Rolex invented the business model for the watch world – he who is first to market with a new product wins. The “first” product doesn't even have to be perfect, design faults can always be dealt with by introducing new and improved products (*who knows, maybe Bill Gates picked this lesson up from Rolex...*).

The Rolex Submariner has undergone modifications and improvements over the years – changes to the face, the addition of “guards” by the crown, modifications to the shape of the case, and the bracelet itself has been improved. I believe that it is the particular combination of quality, design and marketing that has made the Submariner the classic that it is.



Quality of components and manufacture have always been a hallmark of a Rolex watch. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then the design of the Submariner may just be the most “flattered” watch in the world. The high contrast black dial and luminous hands and markers make for an easy-to-read watch. The countdown bezel works well and doesn't detract from the readability of the face. The “black and white” (*black and stainless steel... really*) looks good on just about everybody. Why do you suppose that formal wear is black and white? It looks good on everyone. The design WORKS, it does what it's supposed to do very well.

That leaves marketing. In the 1950s, scuba diving was a new, adventurous sport for the rugged daredevil to pursue. It only follows that the scuba diver's equipment would carry that same spirit to the civilian world. In the 1960s, the Submariner became the James Bond watch. In 1962's “Dr. No” Sean Connery wore a Submariner. Come on now.... A scuba diving British super-spy? Does it GET any more rugged and suave than that? By the 1980s, the Rolex Submariner was the “made it” watch in most businesses. I can clearly remember business meetings where just about everyone in the room had a Submariner on their wrist and a Mont Blanc pen in their pocket.

In 2003, Rolex released the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Submariner with a green bezel (*that's the Rolex colour, the hologram stickers on the backs of watches, the watch box, and the literature holders, all green*). I wasn't personally thrilled with the green bezel, but the fact that the basic design of the watch was 50 years old and still going strong really says something.

There are many, many watches that are based on the Submariner design. Invicta built their business on a sub-style watch with a Japanese automatic movement. St. Moritz, Oceanuat, Marcello C, the list could go on and on of watch brands that base their dive watch on the Submariner. A new Submariner is going to set you back about \$3,400. IS IT WORTH IT? As a way to tell time and occasionally get wet? No. A Titoni Cosmo King is less than \$500, is a true Swiss-made watch, and will get the job done. As an investment? Maybe. A Rolex is likely to hold it's value as well as any watch out there and several models have shown marked appreciation in value. As a badge of success? Almost certainly . Rolex is still the best known and most recognized "high-end" Swiss watch brand. As a piece of history you can wear? Without a doubt.

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