

Just a Minute



Its loud and barbarous and it takes the BR instruments into unknown territory. The Minuteur represents a departure from the no-frills Bell & Ross mould, but is this evolution or an anomaly?

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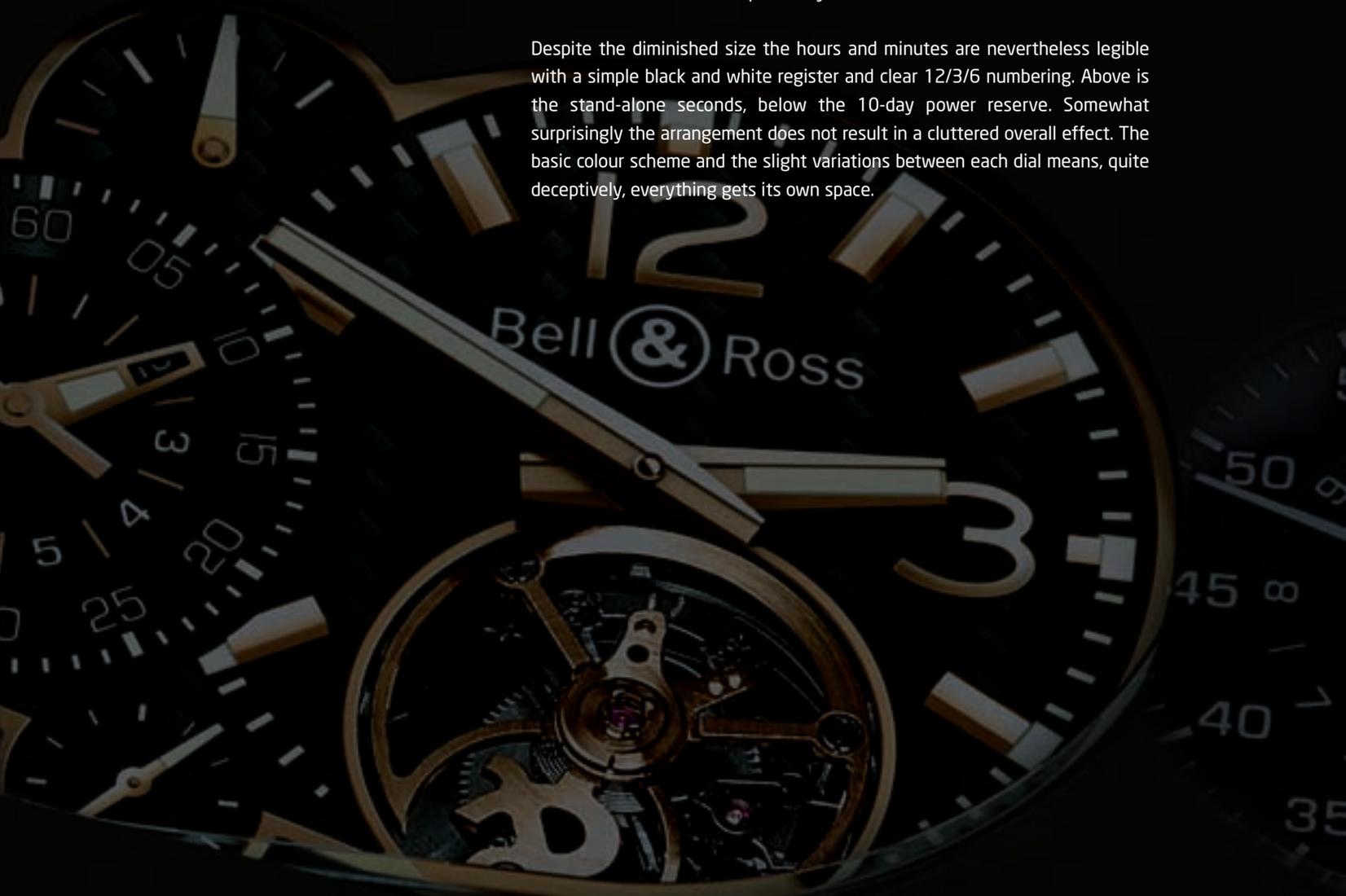
Left: BR Instrument Grand Minuteur, £30,000.
Right: BR Instrument Minuteur Tourbillon, £130,000.



There are two versions of the Minuteurs to choose from, the BR Instrument Grand Minuteur and the BR Instrument Minuteur Tourbillon; one has a dark and brooding Batman-chic, the other is opulent and brooding, a little like a gold-plated tank. Both exhibiting characteristics of the BR family - the four-screw attachments, the broad rubber strap - but here the cases have been stretched out and given their own angle rib structures, the dials have taken on an elliptical shape and the various subdials have been spliced together in an uneven formation.

The Grand Minuteur is the one that best typifies the Bell & Ross style. It is stark and imposing and painfully cool, with a matt black aluminium body that has been hardened in excess of a preposterous 4000 vickers, thanks to a DLC (diamond like carbon) coat. The large dual-scale timer takes up the majority of the dial area, so much so that it eats into the space allotted to the other three counters, which then jostle for position in the remaining right-hand quarter. The chronograph, with its rapid flyback system, includes two concentric rings, the outer gradation covers 60-minutes, the inner 10/10ths of an hour, with two distinct hands that help identify their different functions.

Despite the diminished size the hours and minutes are nevertheless legible with a simple black and white register and clear 12/3/6 numbering. Above is the stand-alone seconds, below the 10-day power reserve. Somewhat surprisingly the arrangement does not result in a cluttered overall effect. The basic colour scheme and the slight variations between each dial means, quite deceptively, everything gets its own space.





The Minuteur Tourbillon, however, pays little credence to 'no frills' simplicity. An expanse of sumptuous pink gold accentuates the angular shape of the case and draws out the amorphous dial arrangement, making more explicit the conjoined arrangement of the counters. Again there is the prominent chronograph with the same outer minutes and inner 10/10th of an hour circles, though now this is second in command to the much larger hours and minutes dial. The tourbillon is likewise lavishly dressed in gold with the Bell & Ross ampersand turning in orbit around its centre.

The Minuteurs, with their size, scope and extravagance, adds a monstrously enjoyable new pair to the BR stable. The brazen and bulky excess is like a BR01 on steroids, a watch that was more than adequately pumped up by itself. But while the macho grandeur of Bell & Ross was perhaps permissible in the earlier models, when they stuck to their guns and provided just the basic service, the Minuteur's ambition detracts from the tried and tested formula. It is great to see Bell & Ross do not intend to be a one-trick pony, but the Minuteur, particularly the gold version, looks a little bit like a parody of their former self.

Further information: www.bellross.com

