



Technical Specs

Model: DOXA SUB 300T

Movement: 25 Jewel ETA 2824-2; manual winding or bi-directional self-winding mechanism; 28,800 vph

Functions: Hours, Minutes, Seconds

Water resistance: 300 m



Rado: Original Diver (£795)

One of the few diving watches that could be dubbed 'sleek', Rado's Original Diver has a life beyond the diving community. Its longevity is due to a shape that must have seemed like science fiction back in 1962, but the appeal is more than aesthetic: the Rado Original Diver is - literally - tougher than steel. The super-tough case is virtually impossible to scratch, fashioned, as it is, with a proprietary scratchproof finish that the company calls 'hardmetal'. A faceted scratchproof sapphire crystal, two screw-down crowns, a screw-down steel case back with Rado's stamped 'Seahorses' medallion, a rotating bezel under the glass and water resistance down to 300 m ensure its underwater credibility - don't let the gorgeous looks fool you. But fashion mustn't be denied, so you can match this to your wardrobe with dials in blue, red, silver/white or the new and seductive black. At £795 on a bracelet, this is the biggest wet-watch bargain of them all.



Breitling: SuperOcean Heritage (from £1,960)

Breitling doesn't make much noise about its diving watches, though there has always been a Superocean of some sort amidst all the pilot's watches. For 2006, though, Breitling has gone back to the Superocean's roots, to the joy of the marque's devotees. Precisely 50 years ago, Breitling issued the first Superocean, a rugged, highly-legible watch that found instant success with professional divers. Its 'monohull' case and thick glass ensure water resistance to 200 meters, while the oversized winder and bezel - very much in the Submariner/Fifty Fathoms mould - can be gripped even when wearing gloves. To mark the anniversary, Breitling has reissued a replica with variations including black, blue or bronze dials, leather or rubber straps, or a stunning period mesh bracelet. The Superocean Heritage 46 is 46 mm wide, with sweep seconds and a date window at 6 o'clock; the 38 mm-wide Superocean Heritage 38 has a small seconds dial at 6 o'clock and the date at 3 o'clock.

Further information: www.breitling.ch

Modern Classics: DOXA SUB 300T Professional Diving Watch

Ken Kessler

Few watches merit a single book devoted to their saga, but those that do are generally milestones, and generally famous. Cartier's Tank, the Jaeger-LeCoultre Reverso, Hamilton's Ventura, the Omega Speedmaster Pro 'Moon Watch' - you get the drift. But to the great delight of connoisseurs, a rarely acknowledged diving watch has joined those ranks with its own book in 2007: Doxa's iconoclastic SUB 300T.

Let's put this into context. Although it's nowhere near as renowned as, say, Rolex's Submariner, there isn't a single serious watch collector, especially of sport watches, who isn't aware of the DOXA's importance. At the very least, the SUB 300T is credited with being the watch that, 40 years ago, put the orange dial on the map. As of the Noughties, orange is ubiquitous, from full dials to just numerals, from the *uber-cool* Seiko 'Orange

Monster' to Orises to Chopard's and, well, just about every house with a diving watch.

Despite this important role in alerting the diving community to the suitability of orange as the colour of choice for legibility down below the ocean waves, DOXA is not a name that features highly in many horolophilic conversations. And a reason for that is another DOXA initiative: against the common sentiment of the Swiss watch industry, which immediately recognised the pitfalls of on-line watch sales and deemed the web a no-go zone, DOXA decided to grab that particular beast by the horns. The latest edition of the 300T and its variants - now up to 1000T status, indicating the depth in meters to which it will survive - are only available directly from DOXA via their website.

That's no bad thing, if you can succeed using that method. Which DOXA clearly can because they only make finite numbers of SUBs, and it also exploits reverse psychology: instead of internet sales thrusting the DOXA into a free-for-all, it makes the watch seemingly more exclusive because you can't simply wander into a store and buy one. You have to wait for the postman to arrive.

But it's worth it: the DOXA is as impressive now as it must have been at its debut, at the 1966 Basel watch fair. It was DOXA's

response to the growth of sport diving, as opposed to serving the existing professional and military markets. In 1964, then-Commercial Director Urs Eschle set up a team to create an affordable alternative to the Rolexes and Blancpains preferred by the pros - French diver Claude Wesly, a protégé of Jacques Cousteau, was a part of the team of watchmakers and professional divers who would create the form.

In retrospect, the results were simply spectacular. Obviously, reliability and legibility were priorities, so an oversized steel case - 42 mm was considered formidable back then - with easy-to-grip bezel were mandatory, but the signature feature was the choice of dial colour.

As Eschle recently told an interviewer, Lake Neuchatel handily served as a testing ground for the dial colours, the team experimenting with a variety of hues including red, yellow and turquoise. But orange emerged as the victor, enhanced by bold luminous hands and indices, including an extra-fat minute hand; which is of far greater concern to divers than hours.

Its unidirectional bezel and scale were developed with the US Navy decompression table as its model, resulting in a patent for DOXA. Once the watch met the approval of the US Divers Company research team, credibility was assured.



(Left) Philippe Cousteau wearing the DOXA 300T. (Centre) DOXA SUB1000T Sharkhunter (US\$2,290.00), 42.2 mm, water resistant to 1000 m and has a patented bezel with non-decompression dive table. (Right) DOXA SUB750T (US\$2,490.00) reissued in 2005 for the Dirk Pitt edition, to coincide with the release of the film version of Clive Cussler's *Sahara*.

That alone should have been enough to ensure the watch's status as future legend. It worked beautifully, cost less than a Rolex, addressed the needs of the era (300 m was then considered a sufficient depth, just as Blancpain was able to 'make do' with 50 fathoms a decade earlier) and it looked... sensational. Other innovations assured its appeal, including clever bracelet details, a helium release valve (before Rolex's SeaDweller) and other evolutionary refinements. But something unexpected happened, now the norm but then a rarity, which truly sired the watch's celebrity.

Product placement is a double-edged sword, especially for watches. It's one thing for Elvis to wear his own Hamilton in a movie, or for Sly Stallone to fall in love with Panerai, such that he bought them in the hundreds. For the most part, though, we know that endorsements are, well, contrived: the wearers are *paid* to don whatever you see on their wrists.

Not so for the DOXA SUB 300T. Best-selling thriller/adventure author Clive Cussler fell for the DOXA unbidden, wearing one on

over 60 expeditions since 1968 and, most visibly, arming his fictional hero Dirk Pitt with one.

Doxa repaid the favour, producing a special 'Dirk Pitt' edition of the SUB 750T Professional, timed to coincide with the release of 2005's *Sahara*. They call it a 'reinterpretation' of the original, endowed as it is with impermeability to 750 m, and a case size 2 mm larger than the 42 mm of the 1967 original, with a flat sapphire crystal 'to provide a more modern look and feel.' The dial is gloss orange, with 'classic white superluminova' for the markers and hands. It differs from the regular SUB 750T only in that it features engraving on the back, commemorating the film, and identifying its number within a series of 5000.

If purism isn't your weakness, the extended SUB family can entice you with yellow, black or silver dial variants, chronographs, GMTs, a COSC-certified chronometer and other editions with evocative names like Sharkhunter and DivingStar. But for US\$1,969 - that's £977 - the plain vanilla, er, orange SUB 750T is a steal. In steel. 