



The Voldolaz, meaning literally "diver" in Russian, is a massive deep-water watch with the traditional 3133 Russian chronograph movement. At 49mm across and 14mm thick, this 100-meter water-resistant watch with removable rubber cowl is imposing on the wrist.

Russians in America

BY CHESTER HOPKINS

Bobby Thompson smacked his "shot heard 'round the world" to take the National League Pennant; the United Nations unveiled its new headquarters, in New York; the Rosenbergs stood convicted of espionage with the Soviet Union.

All this occurred in 1951, the same year Vladimir DenissoV first put his name on a Russian watch.

In the fifty-five years since, the DenissoV name has secured itself a place of honor among Russian watchmakers. Today, under the direction of his son Ilya, the company is producing some of the most striking, even over the top, Russian watches on the market.

When Vladimir DenissoV began his work at the First Moscow Watch Factory, he started a lifelong

journey in an industry that would in many ways mirror and encapsulate the geopolitical evolution of his motherland. He witnessed the collapse of communism and subsequent dismantling of Soviet watch giant Poljot, where he had toiled so many years. And, he eventually saw the love of watches he had instilled in his son grow into a worldwide brand carrying his family name.

"We are working to carry on what my father started and loved so much," says Ilya, through a translator, of the legacy he inherited. "Our goal today is to create highly collectible, limited-series watches that reflect our heritage and stand out among our competitors."

Like many Russian watch companies, the brand's lineup represents three facets: air, water and land. However, with so many strong Russian brands already dominating the aviation

watch market, the bulk of the DenissoV line focuses instead on water and land.

The Vodolaz dive watches have considerable nautical elements and the Enigma sports models highlight auto racing. The balance of the company's offerings focuses on Russian history and politics (the Coalition collection) or do take to the air with the Aeronavigator.

Solid casebacks

One element that sets DenissoV apart from other watchmakers is that they have shunned the popular feature of an exhibition caseback.

"We prefer the art of the etched or sculpted case," says Ilya. "We want to be known for highly detailed and crafted cases that give the wearer a sense of history for the watch they are wearing."



The latest DenissoV design, the Aeronavigator, is an amped-up aviation model with cockpit-inspired case and dial work. Retailing at \$1,199, the watch sports IP black coating (see next page) and the etched caseback style preferred by DenissoV.



The back of the new Aeronavigator

The “new” Denissov has been producing watches for just a few years. However, to demonstrate the uninterrupted family connection, it has created the “1951” logo. Today, the firm’s catalogue is small, with only a few thousand watches produced a year. Their goal, according to Ilya, is quality and not quantity.

In fact, unlike many compa-

nies that release multiple new models in a given year, Denissov will only develop between two and four new models at a time. The company’s best-selling model, the Barracuda, will see a major redesign in 2007, with additional plans for a carbon fiber dial. Russian watchmakers have not as yet, to any great extent, embraced carbon fiber, but Denissov

sees it as perfect fit for its hulking 47mm Barracuda model.

The Barracuda is a stand-out watch among nautical-themed models. It’s oversized, with a seafaring military look and feel bracketed with a true shark skin strap. The most dramatic element is an example of their desire to have highly detailed case-backs. The Barracuda is nearly a



The Denissoff Barracuda, the company's bestselling model, will undergo an extensive re-design in '07 ('06 model pictured) including a version with a carbon fiber dial. The shark-skin strap and bas-relief case back are slated to stay, however. Retail: \$969

bas-relief 3-D design reminiscent of a captain's wheel and sculpted waves, among other elements.

Their latest model, the Aeronavigator, takes the Aviation chronograph and amps it up into a new stratosphere. The four polished screws covered with red enamel, which tie case ring and back cover, are the lynchpin of its unusual design. The screws are fixed on special overhanging eyes. This combination enables the watch to have 100-meter water resistance. Moreover, the polished stainless steel with red enamel against the black matte case background makes a bold statement.

In the heart of the watches, the firm used a mix of Russian and Swiss movements, though Ilya says he plans to lean more on the Russian movements in the future.

"The Russian movements are what set us apart," he says. "And as more and more technical developments are made, the need for Swiss movements will diminish and Russian ones will serve all of our, and our customers', needs."

Ilya refers to the fact that Russian movements still lack a

quick-change date function—a drawback in the Western marketplace—and as of 2007 there was no automatic Russian chronograph. However, these are advancements currently in the works among the movement makers in Russia—largely Vostok in Chistopol and Maktime in Moscow—that should be available in the relatively near future.

Denissoff watches now have representation in North America through the Détente Distribution Group (formerly Revolutions in Time) based in Connecticut. ☺