

## LIMITED TIME

# GERMAN SIMPLICITY

Two contemporary watchmakers situated in very different regions of Germany master the art of sublime simplicity.

BY ELIZABETH DOERR

### RAINER BRAND RB 13 PANAMA

Though **Rainer Brand** is probably not a common name in watch circles outside of Germany, he has been a staple of the Teutonic watch scene since the early days of the mechanical renaissance when he left his job at Chronoswiss to follow an inner voice and design his own timepieces.

This man of few words with a watchmaking degree earned in Pforzheim loves harmonious, simple designs. The proportionate watch styles he produces are characterized by their easy attention to detail: Understatement, precision, perfection, and aesthetics are top priority in the quiet world of this watchmaker located off the beaten watch path in the Spessart region, the geographical center of Germany.

Brand founded his own workshop in 1992, at a time of flourishing horological economics. The Panama model, initially christened Havanna, was his first, and the automatic Panama has become a classic staple of his collection, performing both entry-level and best-seller duties.

Twenty years later, the Rainer Brand collection contains several Panama styles in updated, contemporary versions. The **RB 13 Panama**—the anniversary model celebrating 20 years of this solitary watchmaker's atelier—whose stainless steel case has a contemporary yet classic 40mm size, is available in five color schemes for about \$4,800 each.

The Panama's solid sterling silver dial is available with gold-plated numerals, markers, and hands, or blued elements, but also in silver tone-in-tone or with a black dial and natural stainless steel elements or gold-plated elements. All markers and numerals are hand-applied and -riveted.

The Panama model is also available in other sizes, such as the 36mm RB 12, which comes in feminine color schemes and would function perfectly as a "partner watch" (about \$3,333). Brand is naturally quite amenable to customizing his models according to his clients' wishes by adding diamond-set bezels and the like.

In Brand's timepieces, form follows function, both set against a backdrop of purism, while the symbolic owl that forms the company's logo represents the wisdom and sustainability of the Spessart's natural surroundings.

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RB 13 PANAMA /  
RAINER BRAND



SCHLOSSBERG /  
DANIEL MALCHERT

### DANIEL MALCHERT SCHLOSSBERG

**Daniel Malchert** is more than certainly unknown, even in watch circles. It stands to reason: This 32-year-old watchmaker has spent most of his career working for Nomos in Germany's horological mecca, Glashütte.

Just a few years ago he gave up his leading position at Nomos, having advanced from apprentice to a master watchmaker working on the brand's most difficult pieces within the span of 11 years, to return to the city of his birth and continue his family's legacy.

Malchert was born in Quedlinburg, a small town located in Saxony-Anhalt in former East Germany. Malchert is the fourth in a line of watchmakers originating there, and returning to the shop that his great-grandfather established was a longtime dream for him.

However, Malchert is taking his creativity a step further: In addition to service and repair, he has begun a line of his own wristwatches, the first of which is named **Schlossberg** after the historical church made of local sandstone that towers over Quedlinburg. This church confirms its presence at every turn within the small city, and so Daniel Malchert's presence is slowly but surely being felt in the German watch industry, coming out from behind the shadow cast by the larger brand he once worked for.

The Schlossberg is driven by a base movement that is only available in one other place: It is a hand-wound Nomos Caliber Alpha. But if you think that it is the same movement by the time Malchert houses it in his 36mm stainless steel case, you would be mistaken. Almost each one of the 100 components making up this movement is finished by hand. Graining (also known as frosting) the movement gives it a matte visual, while gold plating makes it bright, beautiful, and luxurious. Looking closely, one also discovers that the edges have been precisely beveled and polished, while the jewel bushings, screw heads, and all other steel parts have been mirror-polished.

Then there is the unusual minute hand. "Looking around in my grandfather's spare parts box for pocket watches, I found a hand like this and I immediately fell in love with it," Malchert revealed. What will perhaps first register with the casual observer is the idiosyncratic circle at the end of it ensuring that the very clean dial will look very different at any given moment of the day. Malchert only makes a handful of watches per year, and this one can be ordered directly from him for about \$4,593.

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