

Urwerk's Last Stand

The avant-garde brand discontinues the UR-103 collection, its signature line of post-modern watches



Felix Baumgartner

Classics never go out of style – but can Urwerk's post-modern style of watchmaking possibly be considered classic? Though it is firmly rooted in classic horology, Urwerk's look can be described as no less than daring. Master watchmaker Felix Baumgartner and designer Martin Frei did what no one before them had dared: they imagined and realized fine watchmaking of the future instead of copying it from the past – though this is indeed where their inspiration came from.

Urwerk burst upon the high watchmaking scene in 2003 with the goal of creating a post-modern timepiece for the twenty-first century: the UR-103. It was presented for the first time at the A.H.C.I. (Académie Horlogère des Créateurs Indépendants / Horological Acade-

my of Independent Creators) booth at BASELWORLD in 2003 and was intended to be pure provocation against the established horological order. Its completely unconventional manner of displaying the time using four orbiting satellites instead of traditional hands transformed the watch into a sensory experience.

The UR-103 was groundbreaking as it was the first timepiece to feature both an incredible new complication and a totally new innovation: orbiting hour satellites on the front and a control board on the back. At BASELWORLD 2010, this line celebrates its seventh and final anniversary; Urwerk plans on discontinuing its production at the end of the year. "Entering its seventh year, our 103 collection has reached maturity," explains Frei. "It was Urwerk's first masterpiece, one of audacity and challenge. To my eye, it is the one that to this day symbolizes the perfect balance between elegance and technology – a fragile balance, but one we succeeded in preserving. This emblematic model deserves an end befitting its bold life."

The UR-103 was released as the limited edition Tarantula model with its spidery orbiting arms last year, and now makes its final appearance in the form of the Mexican Fireleg,

a UR-103T execution that seems almost aggressive and venomous with its racy orange luminescent markers. It comes in a limited edition of 60 pieces. The Shining T version, available only in a limited edition of 33 pieces, was inspired by the world of Manga and is transparent enough to reveal the secrets of its mechanism: an ARCAP P40 bridge, titanium Geneva crosses, an orbital cross crafted in ARCAP P40,

and hour satellites of transparent sapphire crystal.

Urwerk's latest model is called UR-CC1 and completely falls out of line with the other models utilizing the satellite display system: the CC1 displays the time in a linear manner using jump hours and retrograde minutes. Ten years of development were needed before this timepiece could be exhibited. (ed) ■ Palace, P05



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