



As collectors discover the Seiko 7016 'Monaco', prices are climbing – and fast

The vintage Seiko 7016 'Monaco' is a miniature marvel: a feature-packed automatic chronograph with a record-breakingly thin movement. And it looks seriously cool...

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Courtesy of Ben at [MusingsOfAWatchAddict](#)

The race to produce the first automatic chronograph is well-documented: Seiko was the first to get its effort to market (domestically, that is, rather than globally) in May 1969 with the Seiko 6139 Speedtimer. It is noteworthy, however, that by 1972 Seiko actually had three automatic chronograph movements to choose from and these were not just upgrades. The 6138 added an hour counter sub-dial, but it is the 7016A that is of particular interest here.

In 1959, [Seiko](#) was keen to supercharge the improvement of its watch R&D. To do this, the company separated its two factories, Suwa and Daini, with respect to parts and design, forcing them to compete with each other in quality and innovation. While Suwa has gained most recognition from collectors thanks to the 6139 and 6138 movements amongst others, the solutions from Daini were, in many ways, cleverer and more interesting.

Daini should not be considered secondary to Suwa. In 1967, the final year of Neuchatel Chronometer Trials, it was Daini that came second to [Omega](#), followed by Suwa in third. After Neuchatel cancelled all further contests, Seiko decamped to the 'Concours de Genève' in 1968 where Daini placed fourth – positions one to three

being taken by Swiss Beta 21 quartz movements! So, when Daini released its first automatic chronograph, it was bound to be something special.



A Seiko 7016 'Monaco'. Image courtesy of Ben at [MusingsOfAWatchAddict](#)

The 7016 appears, superficially, to be the same as the Suwa 6319, with day/date windows, a central chronograph seconds hand and a recording sub-dial at 6 o'clock. But it is the details that show the clever thinking. The chronograph is fly-back, meaning you can return the seconds hand to zero and start it again with one press of the bottom pusher. Try this on a 6139 and nothing happens (or you break it...). The six o'clock register is both an hour and a minute

counter with a co-axial display as found on [Patek Philippe's](#) 2006 5960P. Furthermore, the minute counter sweeps rather than jumping like the 6139. So to recap, the 7016 offers quick-set day and date in two languages, flyback chronograph and co-axial sweeping hour and minute recorders but wait, there is more... This long list was packaged into the thinnest movement ever, at 6.4mm high; a record that stood until 1987.

The 7016 movement appeared in a number of case designs, the most identifiable and sought after being the square-cased 'Monaco'. Depending on your taste and personal flamboyance, there will be a dial option to suit, whether understated silver or charcoal, or, my personal favourite, the cobalt blue with bright yellow minute track. Even the more sober options are often relieved by a pop of colour in the minute/hour counter. As with all vintage Seiko, double check reference examples from credible sources as after-market dials and hands are common and not always declared. Values used to trail far behind 6139s and 6138s but as more people discover these [miniature marvels](#), they are catching up fast. Prices range from £600-£1,000, but be prepared to pay more for a good running example with some kind of warranty, as watchmakers prepared to take these on are few and far between.