



# **This 1970s Rolex is a horological in-joke that watch collectors can't resist**

The Rolex Date 1530 looks like an Oysterquartz but isn't powered by quartz and fewer than 1,500 were ever made. No wonder it's so collectable...

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16 September 2021



CHRISTIE'S IMAGES LTD. 2021

It is my hope when penning these pieces that some readers may be inspired to add the featured watch to their collection. The [Rolex Oysterquartz](#) was covered in a previous article and I make no apology for my admiration of high-quality quartz movements. To be frank, even cheap quartz is pretty impressive in the context of horological history, democratising the correct time for everyone regardless of income. For some readers, though, the angular lines of the Oysterquartz, with its distinctive integrated bracelet, may have been appealing, but the idea of wearing quartz is just a step too far. For these mechanical monomaniacs, an alternative exists if they are willing to look that little bit harder.

In 1975, midway through the development of the Oysterquartz, [Rolex](#) produced the reference 1530. Strongly influenced by the design of the 5100 "Texan" from 1970 that housed the pioneering Beta 21 quartz movement, this was a slimmer, lighter case and bracelet that would eventually find use in the quartz-powered ref 17000. For a brief period of about two years, that case, in the guise of the 1530, would house a good old-fashioned automatic. Not just any automatic, this was Rolex's "Officially Certified Superlative Chronometer" grade calibre 1570.

The mechanism featuring a lever escapement, 26 jewels and beat at a rate of 19,800 BPH.

There are details to this watch that reveal its transitional nature. The case was built to house the quartz calibre 5035, which is thicker than the mechanical 1570. This creates a larger gap between the dial and the bezel. To mask this, Rolex installed a wider rehaut (the sloping section around the dial) and to mask the wider rehaut Rolex moved the minute track, complete with lume dots, onto this sloping section. This gives the 1530 a unique and distinctive appearance. Being a transition from the Texan to the Oysterquartz, the 1530 also shared a sapphire crystal – the first automatic Rolex to do so. The rest of the mechanical line-up had to put up with plexiglass for at least three more years.

On the launch of the Oysterquartz in 1977, the mechanical twin was discontinued. Over the two years of its manufacture, it is estimated that fewer than 1,500 examples were created, making this a rare, if unassuming, watch. If you are looking to buy one, prices are very much “catch-as-catch-can”. Auction results hover around £8,500 including premium. Dealer sales have concluded at £9,500, although an optimistic Hong Kong dealer has one listed currently for more than £24,000. A key detail to be aware of for maximum value is the bracelet. Along with other unique features, the 1530 has its own bracelet, numbered 96660. It is identical to the Oysterquartz bracelet, which is numbered 17000, so check that your potential purchase has not been chopped and changed.

Watch nerds are fond of a horological joke – something that you expect to do one thing, but then surprises you. The Rolex Tru-Beat is one, a watch you would expect to sweep, but ticks. This is another, a watch that on first sight you would swear should tick, but actually sweeps.