



Why a Google Alert for 'Seiko Izul' could be a money-maker

Chances are, you've never heard of 2007's Seiko Izul – it's bonkers, brilliant and seriously rare. Find one and it could be a good investment...

By **Adrian Hailwood**

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Seiko started out as a small business in late 19th-century Tokyo. Now, it is a global phenomenon. From affordable Seiko 5s to high-end Grand Seikos to rarefied Credors, its range is able to tap into every tier of watch buyer – and Seiko boutiques have spread across the world. But there are some things that Seiko likes to keep for its local customers. For those in the know, the letters “JDM” (Japanese Domestic Market) open up a treasure trove of models and designs that the rest of us rarely get to buy. Some of these are simply alternative colourways of well-known models, others are more unusual, fanciful or just intriguingly odd – but, as with all things Seiko, each piece always has a solid *raison d'être*.

In 2007, Seiko launched a new premium brand to sit alongside Grand Seiko, Credor and Galante, named Izul. Intended to be a range of high-spec chronographs based on the new spring-drive technology, Izul never quite found its feet and a mere two years later the line was discontinued, leaving behind some of the most radical chronograph watches you will ever see.



The Seiko Izul SDAA001

Take the SDAA001. This is a whopping 51mm in diameter and, thankfully for the wearer, cased in lightweight titanium. The first difference you will see is that the crown is either at the bottom of the watch or at the top – I say “either” because the case rotates. Look closely at the dial and you will see that when the Seiko logo is the right way up, the numbers on the chronograph sub-dials are upside down. This gives the watch two distinct modes. Turn the “Seiko” to the top and it is in time-telling mode, so you can ignore anything south of the meridian. Put the watch into classic bull-head configuration and it's chronograph-ready. Once the chrono is running, the observant eye will spot the seamless progression of the second hand. “Spring drive” means the escape wheel only moves in one direction, steadied by its quartz-controlled brake, with none of the tiny steps of even the highest frequency traditional escapements.

The dial was inspired by the official Olympic stopwatches used to time the 1964 Tokyo Games, not just the first Olympics in Japan, but the first anywhere in Asia. The running seconds at 12 o'clock

were taken from this watch, as were the little cubes used as hour markers (although these also hint at the more recent 1992 collaboration with Memphis Milano founder Ettore Sottsass in another wonderfully whimsical JDM collection).



The case of the Seiko Izul SDAA001

As with many short-lived creations, the Seiko Izul is hard to find and now highly sought-after. A trawl of all the web's forum, dealer and auction listings reveals not a single example currently for sale. With an original retail value of £4,500 and a recent auction price in Japan of £14,800, this might just be one worth setting a Google Alert for.