



Why this rare Seiko Spirit watch should be your 'mini grail'

The Seiko Spirit SCVE003 (AKA the 'Rising Sun') is a true cult watch. It was only released in Japan and sold out immediately – but it's worth hunting for. Here's why...

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Desirability in watches is hard to define. It could be the appeal of a long-standing historic model, the power of the name on the dial or sometimes a joyful quirkiness that catches not just your eye, but the eyes of a multitude of watch buyers – and then you have an instant cult timepiece on your hands. In this latter category, price is not a factor. An affordable cult watch can exert the same pull as an expensive one – more so, in fact, because you believe it is attainable. Except for when the watch is cheap, but limited – and then it isn't.

So it is with the catchily named SCVE003. It's part of the Seiko Spirit collection, which was designed primarily for the Japanese domestic market (or "JDM", to those in the know) and is a real mixed bag of designs, from the mundane to the cutting edge. It covers everything from mechanical to quartz to digital, but buried among the blizzard of references you'll find the model in question. The SCVE003 – a 40mm stainless-steel automatic – leaps out of the Spirit collection the same way that the pop of red in the register leaps out of the watch. The contrast between the sober brushed-silver main dial and the offset 24-hour indicator is so surprising that it brings an immediate smile.



The Seiko Spirit SCVE003 (AKA the 'Rising Sun')

The other details draw you in further: the sandwich construction of the date window, with the aperture lined in the same red as the sub-dial; the slim, elegant hands and hour markers, which are all in matching black for hours and minutes and vibrant red for seconds. The lugs, again, are unexpected for Seiko, being heavy wire lugs more Panerai-esque in design. The whole set-up is just so wrong... that it's right.



The automatic movement inside the Seiko Spirit SCVE003

The link between the red sub-dial and the Japanese flag is obvious (the watch's nickname is the “Rising Sun”, although it's also known more prosaically as the “Red Dot”) and it is no surprise that this one sold out first. But there were others: three other variants exist in steel, with either vibrant blue, yellow or orange colour accents, and four that matched the sub-dial to the main dial colour and case plating.

Launched in 2015, these models originally retailed for the equivalent of £150 but, as you could not buy it from Japan except via an intermediary, prices ranged from £170 to £200. As soon as the outside world discovered these watches, a buying frenzy ensued and within the year there were none to be found in any colourway. A trawl of the usual internet sources offered up a solitary blue-accented used SCVE005 selling for more than £600. It is likely that a red-accented example would nudge four figures – that is, if one appears.



The 'blue dot' Seiko Spirit SCVE005

Should you get bitten by the bug and be lucky enough to track one down, take a tip from Google images. Most examples you see in the wild have ditched the skinny steel bracelet and gone for a fabric pull-through strap. Do the same. It makes those wire lugs look so much better.

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