

THE REACTOR ION



Reactor has a rather straightforward goal: to produce the best built performance sport watches in the world. The company recently sent me several samples of a watch representing its latest step toward reaching this goal—the limited edition Reactor ION. The edition comprises watches in two sizes with or without diamonds for a total of four variations. The non-diamond versions are limited to 500 units in each size, with just 50 of each size available with diamonds. In order to fully appreciate the ION series, I was provided all four references for review.



brushed finishes applied throughout. The bracelet is secured with a Reactor-signed, pushbutton, flip-lock safety clasp—again, a feature that emphasizes the sport aesthetic of the Ion. Further adding to the security of the bracelet is the pinless band-to-case design. Reactor replaces traditional spring bars with stainless rods or a direct-to-case lug design that eliminates a weak point in the construction of most watches. The ION also features a screw-in crown that uses a triple O-ring system for improved water resistance, and the watches are depth tested to 100 meters. Olmes says, “To my knowledge, Reactor is the only company that water tests every watch twice. We test each watch for 100 meters with the crown screwed down and then with the crown unscrewed. We do this to eliminate the chance of water leaking into the watch during casual swimming, showering and so forth. We encourage the user to screw the crown down for extra water-resistance, but we warranty against leakage through the crown, unlike our Swiss competition.”

In the ION models with diamonds, the full-size Ion has 120 1.2mm stones, for which the watch is CNC precision-drilled and hand-set. The mid-size ION has 170 1.1mm stones set in the same manner, with the carat

Unlike the majority of luxury wristwatches I review, the ION series does not use mechanical movements, and for good reason. Reactor’s founder Jimmy Olmes explains, “Because Reactor is a sport performance brand, we wanted to stay away from intricate automatic movements, but we still wanted something special for this watch.” The decision was made to use an “autoquartz” movement—a quartz movement that uses an offset weighted rotor—much like the winding rotor in a mechanical automatic—to charge a capacitor, which powers the watch for months at a time. For the Reactor ION, this provides a movement that has the sports durability of a quartz movement and eliminates the inconvenience of battery changes. In the full size ION models, Reactor uses a Seiko Kinetic movement; however, for the mid-size models, the 10.5mm movement proved too large. Subsequently, Reactor chose to use an ETA 204.901/911 Autoquartz movement. Both movements have 60-day power reserve when fully wound, and are visible via a mineral crystal display back in both the mid-size and full-size models.

In keeping with its guiding mission, Reactor has used top-quality materials and impressive design specifications. The cases and bracelets are surgical-grade 316L stainless steel, and the bracelet is comprised of completely solid (not hollow) links, with a blend of both polished and



weight on both models totaling just over 1.0 carat. The limited edition ION retails for \$1,000 without diamonds and \$3,500 with diamonds.

Despite the considerable heft of these watches (especially the full size models), I found all the ION models to be quite comfortable on the wrist, thanks in part to the contoured shape of the case. The ION series features a unique design, particularly in the shape of the mineral glass crystal covering the dial, which is made using the highest grade of Japanese hardened mineral glass. Reactor chose this material over scratch-resistant sapphire because the hardened mineral glass is more shatter-resistant than sapphire and offers considerable scratch-resistance. Instead of a



The logo-marked exhibition window of the ION's caseback and a wider view of the caseback, bracelet and signed clasp.

traditional domed or flat profile, the ION crystal has a rippled "wave" design—something I've not previously encountered in a watch. I was initially concerned that the shape of the crystal might obscure the dial and create legibility problems. It does not obscure dial visibility, but the undulations make for some interesting light patterns that serve to enhance the white mother-of-pearl dial, which is quite attractive. Real Swiss Superluminova is generously applied on all dial markings and hands—three applications of this luminous material is used to ensure high visibility in low light conditions (6–8 hours duration). In addition to the traditional hour, minutes, and seconds hand indicators on the dial, the ION also features a date display, located at 3.

Clearly, Reactor has abandoned conventionality in the creation of the ION series. The ION is a distinctive watch that will not appeal to every buyer. However, one cannot help but admire the considerable thought and effort behind the design of the ION, and its interpretation of the classic sport watch. Reactor is passionately and steadfastly working toward its goal of producing the best built performance sport watches in the world, and the ION is a clear manifestation of that work and a passion for excellence. ❖

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