

# Grand Seiko

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## Four New Grand Seiko Watches As A Tribute To Japan's Twenty-Four Seasons – Pick Your Favorite

Mention Grand Seiko to a group of watch enthusiasts and the tone of voice will immediately change. Suddenly, the discussion is not about investments or brand ambassadors anymore, but about watchmaking. The high quality and amazing finish of parts are being discussed with the utmost admiration and respect. I have witnessed this numerous times when attending a watch event or collector's gathering. Especially when there's a Grand Seiko watch to admire, it isn't very difficult to transfer this enthusiasm and respect to those who aren't familiar with these watches yet. Showing the amazing finish of the dials, hands and hour markers are often enough to start the fire. Spring Drive often needs a proper explanation, but that's what we are here for, we are happy to tell you about these special and highly accurate movements.

Thanks to two wonderful manufacture visits in Japan during 2015 and 2017, I discovered a whole new world of craftsmanship that is almost unheard of in traditional watchmaking these days. I immediately noticed the painstaking work that goes into finishing hands and hour markers on a level that only the finest Swiss competition is able to deliver. Then, there are the beautiful hand-crafted

dials using modern and traditional techniques. And, finally, there's the Zaratsu polishing that's a real hallmark of Grand Seiko's timepieces. Whether it is this mirror blade polishing technique, the caliber 9R Spring Drive movement or one of the mesmerizing dials found on these watches, Grand Seiko has become one of the main attractions in our online watch magazine Fratello.com.

Whenever we publish something on this magnificent Japanese watch manufacturer, the number of visitors' skyrockets. One of the most popular stories we published is actually about my journey to purchase the perfect (to me) Grand Seiko watch, which I finally did during the spring of 2018. This now leads me to the following, the four new timepieces of the Grand Seiko Heritage collection as a tribute to Japan's twenty-four sekki (Japan celebrates the twenty-four sekki, dividing each season into six for a total of 24). There are four beautiful watches: *Taisetsu* (The Deep Snow of Winter), *Shunbun* (The Vernal Equinox), *Rikka* (Early Summer), and *Shubun* (The Autumnal Equinox). The *Shunbun* and *Taisetsu* are powered by Grand Seiko's 9R65 Spring Drive movement while the *Rikka* and *Shubun* are equipped with the Hi-Beat (36,000vph) 9S85 movement. Besides the movements, what sets them apart are the beautiful dial colors. With these four new watches, in their 62GS-style cases, the journey has become even tougher to pick a favorite. Although it took me about a year to decide on the perfect Grand Seiko watch for myself, with these four new beautiful pieces I've started to feel that horological itch again.

Oh, and don't worry about some of the typical Grand Seiko terms and names, this will all become familiar by the time you've finished reading this magazine.

Enjoy!

**Robert-Jan Broer**

Founder & editor-in-chief  
Fratello Magazine





# Grand Seiko

## *Celebrating The Nature of Time*

WRITTEN BY MICHAEL STOCKTON

*The term mono no aware, in Japanese, refers to transience and the passing of time. Studying the words and their meaning more deeply, it also refers to a quiet sadness related to the fact that nothing lasts forever and that the world is passing us by. But mono no aware also tells us to recognize the importance of the events happening around us during the year and within a given year, we have four distinct seasons. In order to mark the significance of these distinct seasons, Grand Seiko has released four new Special Edition models that, unlike these fleeting periods on the calendar, are meant to be quite permanent indeed.*

Four new models are available in the United States and each has been beautifully crafted to remind us of the most symbolic themes within each season. Using cases based upon the modern reinterpretation of the 62GS, these 40mm models fit within Grand Seiko's Heritage Collection. The timepieces are made from either stainless steel or high-intensity titanium. The original 62GS is an icon for several reasons; it was the first automatic Grand Seiko and contained an elegant bezel-less interface between the crystal and case.

These newest Grand Seiko models respect both the original's case design and the use of self-winding movements. Specifically, two of the seasonal models are powered by the modern masterpiece 9R65 Spring Drive movement and two use the brand's renowned 9S85 Hi-Beat automatic.

### Winter & Spring: Powered by Spring Drive

The beginning of every year is marked by winter. Bright white snow is a constant reminder of the stillness and silence of the world as it restfully awaits a spring awakening. With the *Taisetsu* (reference SBGA415), Grand Seiko brings us a brilliant model with a textured white dial that signifies the snowy landscape. Highlights include diamond-cut indexes and hands that show off Grand Seiko's incredible attention to detail. To provide subtle contrast, the applied Grand Seiko "GS" logo has been added in gold and the seconds hand finished in blue.

For certain, one of the most momentous occasions in Japan, but also in other parts of the world, is the blooming of the Sakura or cherry tree during spring. The stunning pink blossoms contrast with both the vivid blue sky and bright green grass. And while these blossoms remain for only a short while, they attract crowds of visitors who marvel in their beauty. Now, with the Grand Seiko *Shunbun* (reference SBGA413), admirers of the Sakura can remind themselves of one of nature's most alluring spectacles. With a textured light pink dial, the *Shunbun* Special Edition evokes the petals of these fragile blossoms, but unlike the actual flowers themselves, the dial of this watch will last a lifetime.

Both the *Taisetsu* and *Shunbun* Special Editions are 40mm in diameter with a length of 47mm. With a height of approximately 12.8mm, this makes for perfect daily wearing. These models are >



*A dark, textured blue dial signifies the sky and is paired with silver indexes and hands that remind us of moonlight*

constructed from high-intensity titanium and are equipped with a 21mm bracelet inclusive of a tri-fold clasp of the same material. With box-shaped anti-reflective sapphire crystals, these Grand Seiko pieces are water resistant to 10 bar. Inside both the *Taisetsu* and *Shunbun* is the incredibly modern 30-jewel 9R65 Spring Drive movement. This marvel is produced by Grand Seiko in its Shinshu Watch Studio, which is located in Nagano Prefecture. Furthermore, the 9R65 boasts 72 hours of power reserve, as seen on an indicator on the dial, and accuracy of  $\pm 15$  seconds per month. Owners of either model can view the beautifully finished movement through a display case back. Both the *Taisetsu* and *Shunbun* retail for \$6,300.

### Summer and Autumn: The Hi-Beat Automatic

If a color had to be chosen to represent summer, it would undoubtedly be green. Whether considering the grass or the trees, this is the time of year when all flora are at their fullest. With the *Rikka* (reference SBGH271), Grand Seiko has created a model with a rich dark green dial that symbolizes the color of summer. It's paired with gold applied indexes, logo and hands that evoke the warmth of the sun during this magical period of long days.

### *The stunning pink blossoms contrast with both the vivid blue sky and bright green grass.*

As the year progresses, summer gives way to autumn. With shorter days, longer and darker nights move into focus. It is here with the *Shubun* (reference SBGH273) that Grand Seiko recalls the deep dark sky highlighted by autumnal clouds. A dark, textured blue dial signifies the sky and is

paired with silver indexes and hands that remind us of the stark, white moonlight that often comes into view during this period.

Whether the *Rikka* or *Shubun* is chosen, these 40mm Grand Seiko Special Editions are fashioned from stainless steel. Dimensionally, these watches are 47mm in length and approximately 12.9mm thick. Like their Spring Drive counterparts, these watches also come with a matching 21mm width bracelet with tri-fold clasp. Inside, though, the Hi-Beat automatic 9S85 is employed and viewable via a display case back. The 9S85 is created at the Shizukuishi Watch Studio in Iwate Prefecture, contains 37-jewels, has a power reserve of 55 hours, and runs with -3 to +5 seconds accuracy per day. Here again, the watches have a useful 10 bar of water resistance. The retail price for either model is \$6,300.

Grand Seiko is well-known for its leading levels of overall finishing and these four new Special Edition watches will not disappoint. The box-shape sapphire crystal sits near 2mm tall above the case on the *Rikka* and *Shubun* Hi-Beat models, and near 3mm tall on the Spring Drive powered *Taisetsu* and *Shunbun* models.

In addition to cases and bracelets that will surely impress, Grand Seiko has also raised the bar in terms of dial design. When taking into consideration the brand's use of color, texture and the precision of ancillaries such as hands and indexes, there are few companies offering so much at such an approachable price. Technically speaking, these four new pieces offer potential owners the choice between two fantastically accurate and modern movements. The passage of time through the year may bring a sort of melancholy to some, but with these new watches, Grand Seiko has given us a reason to be excited for each and every season.





# Grand Seiko 62GS History

WRITTEN BY MICHAEL STOCKTON

*The four new Grand Seiko models featured in this magazine are certainly special and contain distinctive styling. The elegant, yet angular cases in combination with a finely finished and highly legible dial make these new pieces at once beautiful and highly useful. And while the newest additions to Grand Seiko's Historical Collection are certainly innovative, these Special Editions take their inspiration from a legendary and historical Grand Seiko model: the 62GS.*

The 62GS is one of the most well-known Grand Seiko models in history. When it was first released in 1967 as reference 6245-9000, it became the first-ever automatic Grand Seiko model. At the time of its introduction, the Grand Seiko brand was already 7 years old, but had focused solely on high-quality manual wind movements. But with the watch industry in full transition to automatic movements, a change in movement and the debut of the 62GS made sense.

Inside the 62GS was the aptly named 6245 caliber, a 35 jewel movement with date function and a frequency of 19,800 beats per hour. And while this may not sound so unique, it was this movement that ushered in Grand Seiko's new standard in timekeeping. With accuracy promises of -3 to +5 seconds per day, these 62GS models actually bested their Swiss-based competition at the time.

Style-wise, the 62GS was and is a masterpiece. Instantly recognizable as a Grand Seiko, this piece that is now over 50 years old still manages to look extremely current. Much of that has to do with innovation. The 62GS is well known for its lack of a bezel, for the crystal meets the case directly. This unique construction allows one to view the lovely silver dial in all its glory with little to no obstruction.

Regarding the case, the 62GS brought unique styling that features Grand Seiko's legendary Zaratsu polishing. This polishing helps to create the multi-faceted and highly mirrored surfaces found on the case in stainless steel. At 36.5mm in diameter and 40mm lug to lug, the watch is extremely wearable under a shirt sleeve. One notable characteristic on the case of the 62GS is its diminutive crown at 4:00. During this period, automatics were cutting edge and Grand Seiko was keen to show off the fact that its newest watch no longer required winding and, therefore, decided to obscure the crown (the self-winding mechanism was magic lever which was highly efficient so manual winding was omitted). On the reverse side of the 62GS, the watch is adorned with

a gold "GS" medallion.

The 62GS was only made for a short time with its last year of production coming in 1968, but Grand Seiko came with a faithful reissue in 2015 for its 55th Anniversary. The limited-edition models came with the 9S65 Hi-Beat automatic and in stainless steel and three flavors of 18K gold: white, yellow and rose.

After the short production period of the original 62GS in the late 1960's and the limited-edition set of reissues, it was time for Grand Seiko to give fans of this legendary style a limited edition option. In 2015, Grand Seiko announced a modern reinterpretation of the 62GS and these models formed the basis of the four new models reviewed in this magazine. The designer of the modern 62GS is Shinichiro Kubo, who is also responsible for the design of the (already) iconic Snowflake, the Grand Seiko Divers, and the chronographs. His very first design was the Grand Seiko GMT (SBGE201).

Kubo's mission was to design and create a modern sized Grand Seiko, with a more three-dimensional look than the original 62GS design. The result is a case with more angular sides instead of the flat ones on the original 62GS. Also, he achieved to have a slimmer case back on the modern 62GS despite the relatively large movement.

With slightly larger 40mm cases with a more three-dimensional focus and highly angular case sides (where the vintage is flat), the models contain Zaratsu polished cases and bezel-less construction. Grand Seiko has chosen to equip these newest 62GS timepieces with materials like high-intensity titanium and innovative movements such as Spring Drive. As you'll see in this magazine announcing the four newest additions to the 62GS lineup, the thoughtful and relevant updates have simultaneously managed to preserve history while creating it.





# The Twin-Peaks of Grand Seiko: *Spring Drive and Hi-Beat*

WRITTEN BY MICHAEL STOCKTON

*The four new special edition Grand Seiko Heritage models come with two different movements: the Hi-Beat caliber 9S85 and the Spring Drive caliber 9R65. The Winter (Taisetsu) and Spring (Shunbun) models are equipped with the Spring Drive movement while the Summer (Rikka) and Autumn (Shubun) have the Hi-Beat movement.*

## 10 beats per second

The Hi-Beat movements aren't new to Grand Seiko. Already in the 1960s, Grand Seiko has been using these movements that tick at 36,000 vibrations per hour (~5Hz). The 9S caliber though, was only introduced in 1998 and this 9S85 is an evolution of the movement introduced over twenty years ago.

A higher frequency, in this case ten beats per second, can give a greater accuracy and demands the highest performance from the movement parts. It also decreases the power reserve of the movement. Grand Seiko has been developing new components and even new materials, to ensure the highest precision and longevity of these Hi-Beat movements. Innovations have been made to the mainspring, hairspring and escapement, for example. Not only by design, but also by using new alloys, like Spron 610. This alloy is used for the hairspring of the movement. This Spron 610 hairspring is more resistant to magnetism compared to previous used alloys and is better capable of handling shocks. Another development Grand Seiko has made to support the high frequency movement, has to do with the escape wheel and pallet fork. These parts are crucial for reliable and accurate functioning of a high beat movement as the caliber 9S85. To make these components lighter and less bound to friction issues, Grand Seiko developed a technology called MEMS (Micro Electro Mechanical System) to produce them with a precision of 1/10,000 of a millimeter. The caliber 9S85 also needs a mainspring that can support the high ticking number of 36,000 vibrations per hour. By developing a new alloy for the mainspring, called Spron 530, it is able to deliver five more hours of power reserve compared to its >



SBGA413

SBGA415

SBGH271

SBGH273

predecessor. In total, the caliber 9S85 movement has a power reserve of 55 hours. Some of these innovations took years of development by Grand Seiko's engineers and watchmakers.

## Shizukuishi Watch Studio

The caliber 9S85 movement has an accuracy of -3 to +5 seconds a day. Each movement has been tested for 17 days before it leaves the manufacture in Japan. In the Shizukuishi Watch Studio in the Iwate Prefecture, the movements have been adjusted and assembled by hand, by the very best watchmakers. Not only do these self-winding Hi-Beat movements deliver outstanding results, they are also aesthetically very pleasing and can be admired through the transparent case back of the watch.

*The movements have been adjusted and assembled by hand, by the very best watchmakers.*

When holding the *Rikka* (reference SBGH271) or *Shubun* (reference SBGH273) watch close to your ear, these movements are easily to be identified as Hi-Beat due to the smooth-running second's hand that increases by ten beats per second. A pleasure to listen to.

## Smooth Operator

When accuracy is of tremendous importance to you, Grand Seiko offers the *Taisetsu* (SBGA415) and *Shunbun* (SBGA413) with a Spring Drive movement. Grand Seiko assembles this movement in their Shinshu Watch Studio, located in the Nagano Prefecture.

It took Seiko's engineer Yoshikazu Akahane nearly 20 years to develop the Spring Drive technology.

In 1999, the first Spring Drive powered Seiko watches were introduced to the market. However, for Grand Seiko, additional developments were necessary to ensure a long power reserve and a higher winding efficiency which took another four years of development.

## Spring Drive

Spring Drive can be seen as a hybrid escapement system or mechanism solely powered by the mainspring. The mainspring is wound by the oscillating weight. It does use a quartz crystal though, which already gives away the type of precision we are talking about here. The Spring Drive mechanism uses an electric speed control mechanism instead of a traditional escapement (like the previously discussed 9S85 Hi-Beat caliber has, for example). The escapement mechanism, known as the Tri-Synchro Regulator, generates electricity by using the power of the mainspring. This electricity is not being stored (hence no battery) but consumed immediately by the IC. The IC generates a reference signal that steers the electromagnetic brake controlling the speed of the wheel train. A Spring Drive movement basically uses the best of both worlds, a mechanical movement with quartz precision. It is incredibly accurate and as you can see, looks very similar to a mechanical movement and can be enjoyed through the sapphire crystal, just like the caliber 9S85 movement.

## Highly Accurate

Although precision already isn't an issue with the 9S85 Hi-Beat movement, the 9R65 Spring Drive caliber takes it to a whole new level. With an accuracy of +- 15 seconds per month (on average), it is easily defeating any of the traditional mechanical movements on the market. Offering such high precision in combination with a power reserve of 72 hours, the caliber 9R65 movement is able to fulfil the requirements of the most demanding watch enthusiasts.



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