



NAUTISCHE INSTRUMENTE
MÜHLE
GLASHÜTTE/ISA

GERMANIKA

24

60
40
20
Sekunden

12
3
6
9
Stunden

MADE IN
GERMANY



New-Plate Special

*We test
Mühle's Germanika I,
the first chronograph
to incorporate the
German brand's
own plate into its
movement.*

BY ALEXANDER KRUPP

The “off-the-rack” folding clasp does not match the high quality of the crocodile-skin strap.

M

ühle’s Germanika I, which debuted in 2008, is a neatly designed chronograph. At first glance, it appears to be emphatically classical, free of superfluous details and unusual features. But closer examination reveals certain attributes that testify not only to this watch’s individuality, but to its elaborate craftsmanship. For example, despite its typical Valjoux-7750-style arrangement and its simple color scheme of matte black and white, the dial has some appealing details: the high, applied hour-indices are polished and the square five-minute markers bear circular luminous dots. The hour hand is clearly distinguishable from the others, but it’s a bit too broad and doesn’t quite match the other, narrower hands.

The lengths of the hands are well chosen, making it easy to read both the time of day and the elapsed time on the chronograph. The pure white luminous material on the hands gleams with a bluish hue in the dark, rather than with the more conventional pale green found on most watches. As with several other Mühle watches, the date display has been shifted downward from its usual position at 3 o’clock but the repositioning is less disturbing than one would expect because the window and the number are oriented vertically rather than diagonally, and the indicator is quite unobtrusive because of its small size.

The case continues the same high standards of quality and distinctive idiosyncrasy. Many other brands strive for

SPECS

MÜHLE GERMANIKA I

Manufacturer: Mühle Glashütte GmbH, D-01768 Glashütte

Reference number: M1-38-03-200-LB

Functions: Hours, minutes, small seconds; chronograph with counters for 30 elapsed minutes and 12 elapsed hours; date display; stop-seconds function

Movement: ETA Valjoux 7750 “Elaboré,” automatic, chronograph; 28,800 vph; 25 jewels; Incabloc shock absorption; Mühle’s own plate, automatic bridge and woodpecker’s-neck fine adjustment mechanism; 48-hour power reserve; diameter = 30 mm; height = 7.9 mm

Case: Stainless steel with domed, non-reflective sapphire crystal; fully threaded back with pane of sapphire; water-resistant to 10 ATM

Strap and clasp: Crocodile-skin strap with safety folding clasp of stainless steel

Rate results:

(Deviations in seconds per 24 hours)

Without/with chronograph switched on:

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Dial up | +16 | +14 |
| Dial down | +12 | +13 |
| Crown up | +13 | +11 |
| Crown down | +8 | 12 |
| Crown left | +13 | 18 |
| Crown right | +9 | 12 |
| Greatest deviation of rate: 8 | | 7 |
| Average deviation: | +11.8 | +13.3 |
| Mean amplitude: | | |
| Flat positions | 295° | 276° |
| Hanging positions | 269° | 244° |

Dimensions: Diameter = 42.4 mm, height = 15.6 mm; weight = 126 g

Variations: With silver-colored dial; with stainless-steel bracelet (\$3,699)

Price: \$3,599

Pros

- + High-quality case
- + Elaborately modified movement
- + Good legibility

Cons

- Sharp edges on the clasp
- Drastic rate gains

slim, elegant forms, but the appeal of the Germanika I is its bulky case with a narrow flat bezel and a tall middle piece. The former holds a domed, nonreflective sapphire crystal; the latter provides a home for an easy-to-grip crown, user-friendly shaped push-pieces, and screwed strap lugs. The caseback boasts an inwardly domed sapphire crystal that improves the wearing comfort. However, the case is still somewhat top-heavy because of its stately height of 15.6 millimeters.

The well-upholstered crocodile-skin strap is comfortably supple. It has a neatly machine-sewn seam, fully rembordered edges and an affixed second loop. Only the somewhat sharp-edged, off-the-rack folding clasp detracts from the wearing comfort.

THE GERMANIKA I'S signature characteristic is hidden beneath the automatic subassembly and under the chronograph mechanism: Mühle's three-quarters plate, introduced in 2008. In the company's quest for new ways to upgrade its watch movements, master watchmaker Pierre Heinrich and his team added the new plate to the Swiss chronograph caliber Valjoux 7750 that Mühle ordinarily uses. It joins the familiar woodpecker's-neck fine adjustment mechanism with uniquely shaped counter spring, the rotor that Mühle manufactures in-house and the brand's own automatic bridge. The new plate provides three distinct functional advantages:

1. Improved vertical play of the crown wheel, which transfers the winding energy from the crown to the barrel, minimizing friction between the wheel and the plate.

2. A so-called "Glashütte ratchet" to prevent the locking wheel (positioned atop the barrel) from turning backward during winding. The special shapes of the locking spring and pawl facilitate smoother winding than conventional ratchets and reduce the pressure on the locking wheel, thus reducing wear.

3. A removable escape-wheel bridge speeds the process of dismounting the escape wheel. This allows a watchmaker to easily remove the entire escapement, which makes servicing easier.

The new bearing for the crown wheel is not visible through the pane of sapphire crystal in the back, but with a bit of effort an observer can see the Glashütte ratchet along the rim of the movement. If Mühle had chosen a narrower frame for the glass in the back, the outer parts of the movement would have been completely visible.

On the other hand, nothing obstructs the view of the removable escape-wheel bridge. It consists of a small, round, double-screwed plate with a jewel positioned in the middle. Its three colors make this not only a functional sub-assembly, but also a visually appealing highlight. The bridge, which was designed by Mühle's engineers, as well as the pawl and the locking spring, are made by local suppliers; the fine manual processing and the task of fitting the movement are performed by Mühle's own watchmakers. Other parts, including the plate, the automatic bridge, the balance cock and the rotor, are produced entirely on the premises.

The technical changes didn't increase the height of the Valjoux 7750: its original thickness of 7.9 mm remains unchanged. The new plate doesn't quiet the typically loud no-load running of the unidirectionally winding rotor, which sometimes causes the case to vibrate.

The technical modifications are significant, but the embellishments are unfortunately less eye-catching than on other Mühle chronographs. The Germanika I uses the same distinctively shaped rotor with engraved patterns, milling and riv-

Compared to the Valjoux plate, pictured below it, Mühle's plate has an improved bearing for the crown wheel (the round milled indentation at the upper right), a Glashütte ratchet (the spring and pawl at the upper left) and a removable escape-wheel bridge (round plate at lower left)



The burly case contributes to the rugged good looks of the Germanika I



SCORES

MÜHLE GERMANIKA I

Strap and clasp (max. 10 points): The fully rembordered crocodile-skin strap is well crafted and has a second loop; the safety folding clasp is off-the-rack merchandise. **8**

Operation: (5) The crown is easy to grip, but the button on our test watch didn't click neatly into place and it wiggled in its extracted position. The shaped push-pieces have good pressure points. **3**

Case: (10) The elaborate, robust case has a domed crystal above the dial, an inwardly domed crystal in the back, and screwed strap lugs. **9**

Design: (15) The dial is sleekly simple, elegant, and very well balanced, with the sole exception of the hour hand, which is a tad too wide. The case has a distinct shape and artfully alternating processing on the surfaces. **13**

Legibility: (5) All hands are precisely the correct lengths and the time is legible at night. The date display has been kept small, in keeping with the aesthetics of the design, but the smallness isn't a problem. **5**

Wearing comfort: (10) The case has softly rounded forms, but it's somewhat top-heavy. The clasp pinches the skin on the inside of the wrist. **7**

Movement: (20) Mühle significantly upgraded the base movement; the adornments are appealing, but they're less eye-catching than the embellishments on other Mühle models. **14**

Rate results: (10) The daily gain is very large, but the differences among the positions are somewhat smaller. **6**

Overall value: (15) The high-quality case, the modifications to the movement, and the sophisticated design justify the price. The clasp could be more solid and the rate could be more accurate. **12**

TOTAL: 77 POINTS



Mühle has upgraded the Valjoux 7750 by adding a new plate, the brand's own regulating mechanism, automatic bridge and rotor, various decorative engravings and blued screws.

ets, as is used, for example, in the brand's 29er Chronograph, but instead of putting circular graining on the automatic bridge, the plate and the area under the balance, Mühle chose to adorn its surfaces only with very understated patterns. There is circular graining on the balance cock, but it is scarcely noticeable under the woodpecker's-neck fine adjustment mechanism. A welcome addition of color is provided by the many blued screws, which attract attention in both the Germanika I and the 29er Chronograph.

As far as the accuracy of its rate is concerned, the watch we examined showed an average daily gain of 12 seconds (six seconds on the wrist) and a maximum difference of eight seconds among the several positions (both values were determined with the chronograph switched on), which was less precise than expected.

Operating the new watch is easy thanks to the large surfaces of the shaped push-pieces and the screwed crown, which can protrude quite far from the edge of the case. Unfortunately, the crown wiggles a bit in its extracted position and doesn't click as neatly into place as we would have hoped.

All in all, the Germanika I is a solid companion for everyday use, boasting numerous visual and technical refinements and only minor shortcomings. The high quality of the processing combined with the thoroughly modified movement justifies its price of \$3,599. Some good news worth noting: Mühle plans to gradually equip all its chronographs with its new plate, which is, according to managing director Thilo Mühle, an intermediate step along the road toward the development of Mühle's own movement. ○