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**WATCH RELEASES**

# HYT Skull Maori Watch

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**W**hile there have been plenty of good things both said and written about **HYT**, one of the most frequent and widespread criticisms of those who just don't "get" the brand is that their new releases are little more than updates on an already existing model. This opinion will no doubt greet the unveiling of the **HYT** Skull Maori watch, which is an update of one of **HYT**'s most gimmicky offerings.

Personally, I think this criticism is a little unfair for two reasons, one industry-wide, one inherent to the company itself. Firstly, **HYT** produce an indication system that is genuinely unique. There are 19 different variations of the **HYT**, and although that is a lot for one watch, those 19 versions account for every single one of the market-wide options. This isn't the same as **Rolex** churning out hundreds of three-handers to compete with rivals in their thousands. The aesthetic assortment offered by **HYT** represents the entire catalogue of watches with a liquid indication.



With the release of the **HYT** Skull Maori watch, the brand moves in a new direction. For the first time, we see the brand including traditional decorative techniques. The skull, which has been retained from the previous models in the **HYT** Skull collection, is now brought to life by intricate engraving in a Maori style. We're used to seeing **HYT** do something bonkers whenever they début a new piece – including sand from an exclusive beach in the composition of a bezel; installing a wind-up generator to bring electricity to a mechanical piece; creating a case out of cigar leaves and Polyepoxide (obviously) – but this is offbeat in a different way.

The **HYT** Skull Maori feels a little more culturally yearning – its design has its roots in an ancient culture not often referenced in luxury Swiss watchmaking. It also seems less self-aware than previous models. Now, it's fair to say I've been a big fan of this controversial company from day one. I love the concept and adore the execution. I would wear an **HYT** on my wrist above a lot of similarly priced pieces because it is different and brash in a kind of geeky way. But the **HYT** Skull Maori watch is far more tempered in its appearance. It should be the brashest of the brash, with an enormous golden skull still dominating the face, but the engraving softens the image, giving it the personality its forerunner sorely lacked. This is a fusion uncommon to the brand, and an extremely exciting development for them.



Okay, you might not love the HYT Skull Maori watch; you might even think these frequent re-imaginings are lazy. But I think it's bold in a way HYT have never been bold before. By choosing the Skull collection as the base model, HYT have transformed their most in-your-face creation into something almost genteel. At 51mm wide, it's still a behemoth, but it has a certain gentlemen's club suave the previous wrist-giants left at the door. The laser-engraved strap is awesome: with the Maori symbols continued on the tan-leather band, this looks and feels like the HYT Skull Maori watch is tattooed with its own experiences. Again, this adds a bit of life to a normally tech-heavy design brief.



So what's technically significant about this HYT Skull Maori piece? Well - and this might raise a few eyebrows of those unfamiliar with the original HYT Skull collection - HYT have elected not to add a minute indicator to this watch, meaning the fluid-filled hour capillary is the only way to read the time. It's a great technical achievement to have mastered the expansion and contraction of the "bellows" at six o'clock to ensure a smooth transit of the fluid around the sharp edges and curves of the skull shape.



The seconds can be read by scrutinising the left eye, which contains a barely-visible running seconds disc. The right eye darkens as the power reserve diminishes. That's a pretty neat trick, but it isn't as useful as a minute indicator would be. But does it really matter when we're dealing with a piece that is all about style and science operating in harmony? If you can afford one of the 15 pieces that will be released, you can probably afford to be a bit hazy on the exact time. It's always hard to defend the watches that reduce their base function on philosophical grounds, but the HYT Skull Maori is at least an aesthetic triumph, a huge improvement on the original Skull collection, and an extremely promising fusion of old-world techniques and modern inventiveness.

Priced at **US\$120,000** (CHF115,000; €115,000), the HYT Skull Maori is, in my opinion, a bold and potentially rewarding step for the future diversification potential of the classic HYT aesthetic. With the floodgates opened to the possibility of future models in this vein, I'm excited to see what comes next. [hytwatches.com](http://hytwatches.com) **ABTW**

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