Nest’s co-founder helped design this crazy concept smartwatch

Luxury watchmaker Ressence has a new prototype watch it’s showing off at the SIHH 2018 watch show (Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie, in case you were curious) called the Type 2 e-Crown Concept, as reported by *Hodinkee*. While it’s not quite a retail product just yet, it looks like the company may have figured out how to bring the disparate worlds of mechanical watches and smartwatches together.

Ever since smartwatches first became popular, traditional watchmakers have struggled to adjust to the new internet-connected landscape that devices like the Pebble, Apple Watch, and Android Wear created. We’ve seen a variety of approaches over the years to try to bridge that gap, with things like Montblanc’s e-Strap idea that stuck a smartwatch screen on the bottom of the strap, the Chronos disc that stuck to the back of mechanical watch faces to add smarts, or the current wave of hybrid smartwatches that try to achieve some sort of middle ground.

Image: Ressence

The Ressence Type 2 e-Crown Concept is in theory similar to many of those hybrid watches, offering a traditional watch in the vein of Ressence’s other hyper-modern, rotating dial style, but with Bluetooth and a companion app for some additional smart features. (Tony Fadell, one of the lead designers on the iPod and founder of Nest, served as a “tech coach” for Ressence on the Type 2).

Tony Fadell served as a “tech coach” on the Type 2

To be clear, the Type 2 is still meant to appeal to mechanical watch aficionados that are looking to add a bit of smarts to their collections, instead of as a replacement for something like an Apple Watch. You’re only getting the most basic of smart features from the Type 2 e-Crown Concept, limited to setting the time automatically, adjusting for daylight savings time, and switching between time zones. In other words, don’t expect fitness tracking, notifications, or apps here.

In fact, given that there’s a breed of mechanical watch fan that takes particular delight in setting the time for themselves, the Type 2 e-Crown Concept actually offers three different modes: one fully controlled by the app, accurate to the second; a semi-automatic mode, where users set the time themselves by hand and the e-Crown adjusts it to the minute; and a fully manual mode, where the time is set completely by hand.



Image: Ressence

Despite the Bluetooth connectivity, though, you won’t have to keep track of some kind of charging cable for the Type 2. The watch is powered entirely by a self-winding rotor for the automatic movement and a combination of a kinetic generation and solar power for the e-Crown side of things. The solar part is particularly clever, with 10 micro-shutters hidden on the face of the watch that will automatically open to charge the watch when the battery is low or can be controlled manually through an app.

Just a prototype for now
Unfortunately, the Ressence Type 2 e-Crown Concept is just that – a prototype concept meant to illustrate Ressence’s idea of how the future of the smartwatch will look. The company has said that a production version of the Type 2 should be hitting the market later this year in June, though, so you hopefully won’t have to wait too long.

That said, Ressence’s watches tend to cost somewhere between $15,000 to $35,000, depending on which model you’re looking at (and other factors, like how limited the specific color or style was). So sadly, even if the Type 2’s hybrid concept does make it to market, chances are it’ll be out of most people’s price range.

https://www.theverge.com/2018/1/15/16893262/ressence-type-2-ecrown-concept-mechanical-smartwatch-prototype-bluetooth