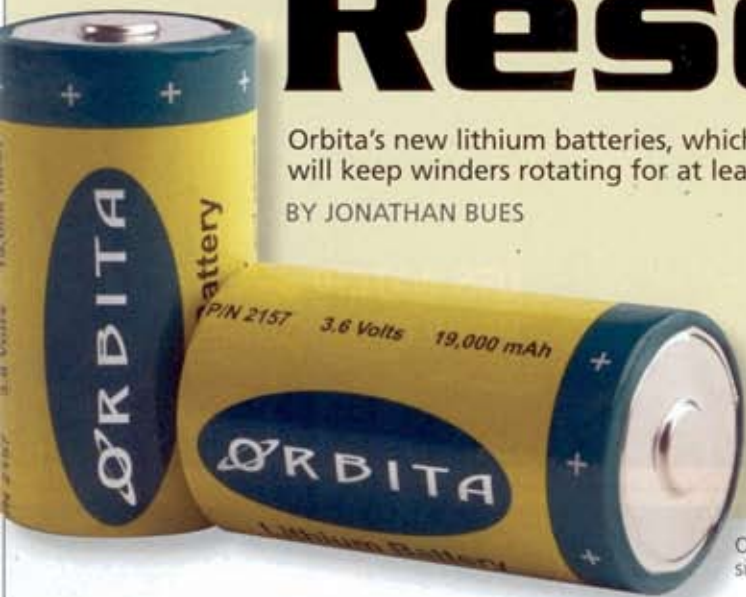


# Power Reserve

Orbita's new lithium batteries, which have the shape of standard D batteries, will keep winders rotating for at least five years—on a single charge

BY JONATHAN BUES



Orbita lithium batteries are the same size as D cell alkaline batteries.

**S**o you've got a few (or more) automatic watches; you're even in the habit of traveling with more than one. Single watch rotators can be convenient for use on the road, but often they run on alkaline batteries, which, like the ones in quartz watches, have a tendency to die at the most inconvenient times. It's a hard irony to accept if your love of mechanical watches is at least partially predicated on their convenience.

Now Orbita, a longtime maker of high-quality watch rotators, has developed its own proprietary lithium battery for use in its Sparta line of watch winders.

According to Chuck Agnoff, the firm's founder, Orbita had been monitoring developments in lithium-battery technology over the past few years. The field has been a focus in consumer products of late, due in large part to the push for breakthroughs in battery life in laptop computers, as well as the need for more powerful batteries for hybrid automobiles. In the end, Agnoff decided to develop Orbita's battery internally because he wanted it to fit preexisting battery holder tooling.

The new lithium batteries provide the highest power intensity of any battery made anywhere, with an output of 3.6 volts, 240 percent of a standard alkaline

battery. The higher voltage means longer battery life. The firm backs up the claim with a full five-year guarantee on Sparta lithium batteries. What's most surprising to those unfamiliar with the cutting-edge technology is that these lithium batteries aren't rechargeable at all, making them some of the most sophisticated "disposable" batteries on the market.

Orbita promises they will provide at least five years of truly uninterrupted service, with no need for external wires or power supply. Depending on the number of winding "heads" a rotator has, it will use either two or four of the new batteries.



Orbita single watch winders from the Sparta collection

### Beta testing

A longstanding policy of Orbita is its beta testing program, through which the firm discounts a limited number of yet-to-be-launched products to volunteer product testers, who in turn promise to provide useful feedback to Orbita. According to Agnoff, the program serves to backup thorough in-house testing. No Orbita line is sold for retail price until the beta testing is completed.

"We can't test our rotators with every watch brand all on our own," says Agnoff. "That's why we have our beta testing program, which we advertise on TimeZone [an online forum for



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The Wallsafe is designed to be mounted in a wall. No need for an electrician, however, as it works without external wires.

watch collectors]. It works so well because the participants are real watch collectors who often have twelve watches or more. Some collectors start testing the minute they receive the product in the mail. A few hours later, they're sending feedback. By the end of beta testing, we have useful information on around 500 brands."

In addition to single-unit

modules, Orbita is updating the entire Sparta line of watch rotators, which includes models that can wind up to six watches at once. The line's Insafe models make use of the new batteries in an unexpected way. Totally wireless and portable, these multi-unit winders are designed for collectors who keep their watches inside of safes, the use of which

would almost certainly preclude an electrical plug.

Another option for security-minded collectors, the Wallsafe, is a watch winder and safe in one, specifically designed to be mounted into a wall. It, too, has Orbita's new lithium batteries, so no external power source is needed.

The Sparta line is priced from \$295 to \$4,995. ©