



Watch Review: Szanto 1200 Series

By Red Hatchet · On January 22, 2016

Back to the Future: Classic Pilot Style Updated by Szanto

Manufacturer: [Szanto Time](#)

Model: 1201

Case Diameter: 46mm

Movement: Japanese Quartz 2-
Eye Chronograph

Price Paid: \$225 (under)



I have always been a fan of classic aviation style watches. There is something very appealing about olive drab canvas and a simple face—the style calls to mind the functional, nostalgic, and heroic images of WWII army gear. Much like the 1911 style pistol, classic field watches will always have a place in the heart of any historically inclined American. Like technology, fashions change. Since we thrashed the Nazi scourge, we may have gotten a bit full of ourselves. Popular watches got bigger, packed with more features, and perhaps a bit gaudy. This may well reflect American

society since the second world war: we've been steadily becoming more decadent, tech reliant, and... softer? Don't get me wrong, I love modern watches. One of my daily wearers is an **Eco-Drive World Chronograph** by Citizen. I love a good meal, and I love a battery powered gadget as much as the next guy. I'm also quick to harken back to a day when iron sights got the job done, and you didn't need a damn GPS unit to go hiking. I think that Szanto was conceived in the same frame of mind, and I think that they've successfully accomplished their objective.



Air Power to the People

Szanto's designs are self-proclaimed military nostalgia: "Szanto designers were captivated by the beauty and simplicity of old military watch designs from the early 20th century." They're also dedicated to making the watches affordable, as compared to some of the other options on the market like **Hamilton**, **Tudor**, or **Filson**. They've reduced the price by adding Japanese quartz movements and moving production overseas. The primary changes that Szanto made to the true vintage field watch design are essentially movement and size. The 1200 series comes at a whopping 46mm, which is a solid 14mm expansion on some WWII era designs. The other major change is the shift to Japanese quartz. Pilot's watches in the '40s were mostly manual jewel movement designs. Mechanical movement is typically more expensive than quartz because of the tremendous skill and care with which they must be crafted. Quartz, while accurate and reliable, is battery powered and has fewer moving parts.



The 1201: Easy on the Eyes

Let me start by saying that this watch is gorgeous, and it comes in a gorgeous box that is designed to invoke the classic leather bound traveling trunk. Opening this bad boy was exciting, and the thing itself is an absolute jimmy-rustler in person. It's slim, large, understated, and invokes the Sherman tank with its olive drab band. The numbers on the face are delicate but bold, the hands absolutely jump out at you over the black, and the band feels solid. It's actually leather covered in cloth, which makes it much bulkier than the pictures might convey. The substantial band and case make the watch very comfortable to wear. It has a bit of weight to it- you won't forget it's there. Watch novices will have no trouble setting the date and time on the 1201, and can feel confident that they won't screw it up while wearing the piece- the screwdown crown makes sure of that. The chronograph is also very easy to use.

Chronographs: Use Them

The 1201 has a two-chronograph setup: one labeled for minutes, one for seconds. Let's be honest: when's the last time you used your watch's chronograph function? Well, you should. Here are a few ways to fully utilize your timepiece.

1. *The Classic Stopwatch:* Would you believe that it's actually quicker to press a button on your watch than it is to get out your phone, unlock it, and find the app? Watch chronographs are also ad-free.
2. *Multiple Time Zones:* If you know exactly how far ahead or behind you are, you can start your chronograph on the nose of the change and effectively have two watches!
3. *Reminders:* Set the chronograph to some point in the future, and when the minute hand arrives at that spot, it's time to go.



So Where Doesn't it Shine?

In the dark. The illumination (or lume) is pitiful. Hannah somehow managed to capture the Szanto compared to my Citizen and some Sig night sights by locking herself in a pitch black bathroom. Don't let the pictures fool you: this watch ain't bright. I admit that I'm nuts for the 1201, but I can barely make out the hands in dead darkness. Szanto used brushed steel, canvas, mineral quartz movement, and produced in China; would it have been too much to just put a bit more spark on the hands? Another problem with this watch is that the holes in the band showed immediate wear when I tried a few different sizes out on my wrist. It seems that the buckle draws out strands of canvas when used. It should be noted that this also happened where the case attaches to the band. In my opinion, these are minor complaints for a beautiful watch at a great price point.

Red Hatchet Says... If you're in the market for a modernized field watch that doesn't break the bank, go for it (provided you don't spend a ton of time reading your watch in the dark.)

