

About Time

*Function and **Fashion** for the Wrist*



SZANTO

TIME REDISCOVERED

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Italian Style
You'll go Gaga for Gaga

Second Time Around
REC Watches Use Vintage
Morris Mini Metal

Reach For The Stars
SEAH Signs Of The Zodiac

Fashion Forward
ALOR Own's Elegance - and
Now You Can Too.



By Jonathan Bues

RECALLING A BYGONE ERA



SZANTO'S NOSTALGIC NATURE
WILL HAVE YOU LIVING HAPPILY
IN THE PAST

If you've leafed through the pages of popular luxury watch magazines lately, you probably know that "vintage-style" timepieces are a formidable trend. Marques such as IWC, Jaeger-LeCoultre, Omega, and Zenith routinely pay homage to designs of decades past, while Bell & Ross, a relative newcomer compared to these firms, has grown a successful business by designing original product lines based on a vintage aesthetic.

The popularity of these luxury brands is undeniable. But the fact remains that today's high-end watch pricing excludes the consumer of average means, for whom a \$4,000 watch purchase isn't really an option. We know this situation all too well. That's why *AboutTime* exists—to highlight the diverse, high-quality and, quite frankly, cool offerings that can be had without breaking the bank.

Enter Barry Cohen, a longtime watch-industry veteran who founded and continues to run the popular Luminox line of Swiss-made timepieces, and Jennifer Leonard, whose tenure includes working with Gucci Timepieces, Montblanc and Ebel.

Over the last few years, Mr. Cohen noticed a powerful and persistent marketing message coming from quite a few of the luxury watch brands.

"So many of the ads and articles I see are promoting vintage-style luxury timepieces as the watches to buy," says Cohen, "But data analysis shows that less than 1/10th of one percent of the population can actually consider this price range for watches."

Cohen decided that an affordable range of vintage-inspired timepieces would be well received by consumers as long as its designs and construction were executed at a high level. He began drafting plans for just such a brand, Szanto, which is focused on placing vintage-inspired watches within the reach of regular guys. So how





does Szanto fit in with Cohen's existing and quite successful brand? He offers: "I've always admired the timeless beauty of vintage watch designs that will be in style forever. And although I certainly did not want to compete with my Luminox business, I was comfortable that developing Szanto would complement, rather than compete, with my existing brand."

When most people hear of Szanto, they want to know about its unusual name. It was one of the first things we asked Cohen when we spoke to him recently.

"After considering about 50 different possibilities for a name brand, I ultimately felt most comfortable choosing an old family name," Cohen told us. "The name is somewhat unusual, spelled with a Z in it, although the Z is silent (pronounced Sahn-tow), yet simple enough for all to pronounce and only two syllables, so not too long."

Drawing on eight years of experience making private label watches for companies including Orvis, Eddie Bauer, and West Marine, Cohen decided to manufacture Szanto watches in Asia with Miyota Japanese quartz movements, which are known to be robust. As a watchmaking executive with experience in both Switzerland and Asia, Cohen also has a very good understanding of what to expect from today's Chinese factories.

"One can find everything in China from inferior makers of products up to exceptional suppliers," says Cohen. "By visiting China each year, we have unearthed some fantastic factories and deleted the ones that did not pass muster. One of these is as nice as I've seen anywhere, including Switzerland, and that's where we chose to have most Szanto watches crafted."

All Szanto watches are conceived and designed in California before they are manufactured in the Far East. Cohen and a longtime design partner, who has worked on Luminox as well as TAG Heuer and other prominent brands, find modern inspiration in vintage watches that were manufactured decades ago.

While the look and feel of the timepieces are indeed vintage as can be, certain concessions to modernity make them more appealing to today's watch consumer. The petite sizing that prevailed in the watches of the 30s, 40s, and 50s gives way to the larger proportions that make sense in today's watch market. Dependable and durable quartz movements—a technology that didn't even exist before the late '60s—allows Szanto to manufacture a highly accurate watch without passing on a high cost to consumers. The line starts just south of \$200 and tops out at \$350.







4003

4200 Dress Watch Line



For spring and summer 2014, Szanto has expanded its product line beyond the launch collection of six series that premiered last fall. (For more on Szanto's first collection, see *AboutTime* issue number 4, December / January 2013-14.) The new collection features six vintage inspired cases: two dress watches (one rectangular and one round), two pilot styles, a deep dive series and a motor sports chronograph offering. All are constructed from high-quality 316L stainless steel, and in certain versions these cases are decorated with an ion plating, including a wonderful aged looking burnished bronze finish.

DRESS WATCH

One can immediately sense the quality, design and construction that go into the new Szanto 4200 Dress Watch line. The first rectangular timepiece from Szanto, and the least sporty by far, the 4202 model features a dial that looks like it could be on your grandfather's heirloom watch. Meticulous attention to all of the small details can be found in several aspects of this watch, from the aforementioned dial, to its Breguet-style hands and its "distressed" antique gold plated

case. Like the entire series, this watch really feels like it served an owner generations ago. To complete the dressy and vintage look, the 4202 comes on a glossy faux alligator strap with pin buckle.

BEHIND THE WHEEL

Another highlight is the 4100 series, which recalls a period that many consider to be the golden age of chronographs, the late '60s and early '70s. The 4100's rounded tonneau-style case was a prominent design expression of the era, when TAG Heuer ruled the racetrack and the silver screen on drivers and actors such as Jo Siffert and Steve McQueen. All of the 4100 series timepieces feature two-register dials and tachymeter bezels, which enable drivers to track their speed and time their laps at a glance. A particularly attractive model within this range is the 4103, which features a faded brown dial reminiscent of the aging dials that have emerged from this era as well as modern luminescent materials in a color that recalls the time-faded original lume. Other small details also caught our attention, including the consistent use of crowns signed with the Szanto logo, which in fact can be found gracing most Szanto watches.



4103

TRAVEL TRUNKS

A few years prior to founding Szanto, Barry Cohen visited the world famous Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, where a striking antique auto caught his eye. This particular car had no trunk, but rather a rear shelf onto which its owner could strap their trunk from home, and off they'd go. When contemplating the product packaging and display concept for Szanto, Cohen immediately recalled this car, and how it represented the golden age of travel, when one might pack a large steamer trunk with belongings to travel on trains like the Orient Express, or boarding an ocean liner.

Along the way, trunks collected customs or destination (hotels, cities, etc.) stickers from exotic locales. Travel in this era took place at a statelier pace; slower, more luxurious, and far more romantic than it is today. Realizing that the feeling evoked by vintage luggage and bygone travel customs dove-tailed so nicely with his vintage-watch-design concept, Cohen incorporated the trunk as Szanto's presentation packaging. Inside

the mini trunks, the Szanto watch rests on a period-correct twill-covered pillow. It's nice enough to keep and the Szanto owner can not only use the box to store and travel with his watch, he can also remove the pillow and use the trunk as a dresser top catchall for loose change, keys and the like.

Even the hang tags and instruction booklet sustain the vintage heritage theme, rendered in a buff tan color and intentionally stained and aged in appearance with the tags themselves attached to the watches with old-style twine.

The vintage ethos that runs through displays, packaging, collateral material, and of course the watches themselves, has been fully integrated from all angles. And now the majority of the population can enjoy wearing beautifully conceived and executed vintage-designed timepieces without breaking the bank. Szanto will no doubt appeal to a wide and receptive audience.



2601





2401



2402



► continued from page 20

OFFICER'S CHRONO

One particularly elegant timepiece that appears to be something of a transitional design between a pilot's and an officer's chronograph is the 2400 series. It's gently curved case, nicely integrated chronograph pushers and prominent onion crown will likely appeal to consumers looking for a work-week / weekend bridge watch. Available in two versions, each with a case in polished stainless steel, the 2400 can be had with a black dial featuring a prominent cream colored subdial, or in an opposite configuration in which a single black subdial stands out against a cream colored dial. Here, Szanto's designers are evoking another of the highly collectible "Panda" type dials (black sub-dials on white – or the reverse) that many of the top chronograph producers manufactured in years past.

DEEP DIVE

Szanto will continue to round out its dive offerings with the addition of a 500 meter deep dive series. The new 5100 series will launch with three dial colors (Black, Sunray Blue, Gray) and sports a waterproof leather strap in black or dark tan. Superior illumination will guide the

wearer in the dark or below the surface. Plans include the addition of Szanto's first solid link bracelet on this dive model.

WHO'S WRIST?

As *AboutTime* readers know, good design can be found across a wide range of price levels and, of course, in virtually every product category. Some of the real icons of design are mass-produced consumer goods from companies like Apple, Ford, Polaroid and, of course, Swatch, perhaps the ultimate democratizer of watch culture. The notion that a watch has to cost a lot to look good and perform well isn't true. High cost is merely one of the factors leading to the perception of exclusivity, which can be critical for an industry that seeks to foster customer-collectors.

"We see Szanto as a watch for the younger, predominantly male customer, in their 20s up to late 40s, in or entering the workforce and seeking watches that make a personal statement about them and their tastes," says Cohen. "Often such younger customers don't yet have the funds to spend many thousands on a watch, and Szanto brand watches offer them the opportunity to own 'the look' for far less."

