

THE TIME BUM exploring the world of watches on a budget

Szanto 1103

Today, The Time Bum brings you another offering from Szanto, the new watch company from Barry Cohen, co-founder of Luminox. Like all models in the Szanto line, the 1103 re-imagines early 20th century time pieces into a modern design at an affordable price.



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The 1103 is similar in many respects to the model 1002 I reviewed previously. They both have a black dial (a green dial is also offered) and a black IP coated stainless steel case on a canvas strap with a nicely engraved buckle. Inside, a Miyota quartz handles time keeping duty. They share a similarly decorated case back and a flat mineral crystal. Water resistance is 100m. The price is identical as well, both listing for \$225. After that, their paths diverge as the 1103 eschews its cousin's more spartan design and trades it for a bit of flair.

The case is decorated with a deeply fluted bezel and an engraved, bun shaped crown. It is not often that you see these dressier features rendered in black, but I like it. It gives the watch a sinister edge, like it might be up to something. The lugs are relatively short in relation to the case and meet the barrel at a hard angle, creating a square-shouldered look. At 42mm diameter, the 1103's case is larger than the 1000's 40mm, but as you can see in the photo, the difference is not dramatic. Rather, the element that jumps out at you on the 1103, and which changes its personality most significantly, is the size of its markers.

The watch has a 24-hour dial with central seconds, and all three of its hands are off-white. Oversized grey numerals through 12 are accompanied by far smaller digits indicating hours 13 through 24. A raised chapter index surrounds them both. After soaking up plenty of sunlight, those big



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numbers pop with lume, as do the baton minute and hour hands. This was a surprise, as darker luminous paint tends to provide a lesser glow, and I found the khaki markers on the 1002 to be somewhat difficult in low light. It won't burn all night, but it provides a sufficient boost for most low light situations, and the size of the numbers helps considerably.

A white-on-black date complication peeks through a white framed window at 3 o'clock. The window replaces both the 3 and the 15 on the dial, thereby avoiding what I consider one of the unforgivable sins of watch design, a date that cuts into or awkwardly crowds out a numeral.* The fact that is a black disc behind a black dial also appeals to my sense of symmetry and the white printing coordinates with the hands. It is an all around attractive and legible dial. The 22mm strap is made of grey canvas that matches the numerals. Its pronounced texture and slightly washed color give it a hard-working character that suits the retro aesthetic. Like other Szanto straps, it is 75/125mm, leather backed, and secured with an engraved buckle. It was a shade long on me, but that is to be expected when you have wrists the size of pencils. The watch head itself fit comfortably on my wrist and under most shirt cuffs.

I would consider the 1100 series to be a casual watch, but not too casual. With 100m water resistance, it could certainly handle a bit of mud, but there are plenty of rough-and-tumble watches suited for sports and yard work. With its coin edged bezel, the 1103 is too nice for that. I'd wear it where folks can appreciate its handsome details. It will work just as well with jeans and t-shirt, as with an oxford and blazer, but I'd suggest leaving it behind when you put on a suit and tie. The dial is too sporty for business wear, even if you were to swap out the canvas strap for something more polished.



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The 1100 series does not look like any one particular style or model of watch. Rather, it appears to be more of a pastiche. When I asked Szanto's Barry Cohen about the design, he agreed, describing it as "a melding of design elements from a bygone era that we combined to arrive at the proper feel for the design." This emotional reaction is essential to the creative process at Szanto. "We work from feel for the design development used in Szanto timepieces," he continued. "It is really no different from how I've worked on Luminox for almost 25 years. I always go with my gut on design, and thankfully it usually seems to work out well in terms of how he finished product ends up looking."

The 1103 certainly captures a feeling. The dial has the 24 hour layout we might associate with military watches but also railroad watches. In fact, the large grey numerals look as if they might have been borrowed from an old railway clock. The fluted features would normally dress up a watch, but on this one they are doused in a wicked black, then paired with rough textured canvas. All around, there is a bit of coal fired steam engine in this piece, and maybe something a bit rakish as well. This does not strike me as your grandfather's watch, more like his dashing ne'er-do-well brother who gained and lost a fortune before running off with his mistress.

Alright, maybe I got carried away, but you get the picture. The watch has character, and character with wearable proportions and useful specs for \$225 makes for a pretty appealing package.

Pro: May inspire you to conjure fanciful tales.

Con: May inspire you to grow a handlebar mustache.

Sum: A handsome watch with a villainous streak. The Time Bum approves.

* *J'accuse, Hamilton Khaki Field Titanium Automatic! Both offenses on the same watch.*

