

THE TIME BUM exploring the world of watches on a budget

Szanto 2601 Pilot's Chronograph

The Time Bum has been on a bit of a Szanto kick lately. I like their approach of taking 1930s and 40s watch designs and reimagining them as affordable modern timepieces. Today's subject is the recently released SZ2602, another take on a pilot's chronograph. Like the Szanto 1200 series I reviewed in May, the 2600 series is based on the classic German

fliieger. Although they draw inspiration from the same place, the two series execute the design in a very different way. Where the 1200 re-imagined the fliieger as a modern watch, the 2600 reinvents it as a chronograph with all its vintage styling cues intact.

The first thing you notice on the 2600 is the huge black dial that nearly fills the entirety of the 46mm case. The layout hews closely to the classic Type-B navigator's watch, with Arabic minute markers on the more prominent outer ring of the dial, the hours clustered towards the center, and a

triangle flanked by two dots at 12 o'clock. The original fliegers were not chronographs, but the 2600 combines the two designs seamlessly, deleting the 3, 6, and 9 from the hours to make room for the three sub dials. All hands and markers are a pale gold color reminiscent of aged radium. It is rather handsome against the black background and sets the proper vintage mood. The actual lume is limited to the primary pencil shaped hands, and the arrows of the sub dials. It glows bright green and although the tiny sub dial hands are of little practical use in the dark, it is a cool effect. The only element breaking the mood is the 4:30 date window, a small porthole revealing a bright white disk. If there were other white elements on the dial, the window would not be so jarring, but left on its own it just seems out of place. It also seemed a touch undersized, crowding the date once it reached the 20th.



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The brushed 316L stainless steel case is round with flat sides and tapered lugs. It has a large push-pull onion crown and simple pushers for the chronograph functions. The slim, angled bezel rises to meet a domed mineral crystal, bringing the overall height to 14mm. Taken together, it has the no-nonsense, overbuilt look of a classic fliieger, but with a bit more of a sophisticated edge. Water resistance is 50 meters. Like other Szantos, the case back is polished and decorated with the "SZ" logo. The movement is a three-eye Miyota OS20 quartz with registers for minutes, seconds, and 24 hours. The pushers provide a firm click when depressed. The small second hand is always engaged, and the large second hand handles the chronograph function.

The 24mm strap has a cracked strap similar to the one on the 2002 I reviewed previously, but while the aged effect on that one was a pattern, this strap has a pronounced texture as well, making the weathering all the more convincing. The surface is medium brown with a tan under layer peeking through the cracks. It is stitched in contrasting beige and tapers to 22mm at its signed, square framed buckle. The leather is firm, but not overly stiff, and had ample adjustment.

On the wrist, the 2600 s undoubtedly large, but appropriately so. Fliegers are supposed to be big, and this is not a watch you would ever wear with a suit. It is strictly a casual watch and a bit of a statement piece at that. This watch will get noticed on any wrist, but for the right reasons. The prodigious dial has been put to good use, with no wasted space. To my eye, the 2600 nails the vintage look with three key elements: the aged

radium colored markings, the domed crystal, and the cracked strap. Any one of them would have been a nice addition to the design, but the three together firmly establish the intended retro vibe. The watch is also available in a gunmetal case with a black dial, and a brushed case with a white dial. While I love the look of the black dial, the date wheel would not be as obvious on the white version.



I confess, as I prepared to write this review, I was thinking of ways to re-hash my story about how small watches used to be, and how Szanto has up-sized those designs. Then Hodinkee posted a picture of a magnificent pair of 1940s Universal Geneve chronographs on Instagram. Just like the 2600, these ancient beauties have have 46mm (!) cases, and three sub dials under domed crystals. Hmmm... Perhaps the folks at Szanto are staying truer to the originals than I thought.

Pro: Captures some of my favorite vintage styling cues...

Con: ...except that date window.

Sum: Another lovely nouveau classic from Szanto.

