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## Szanto 1202 and 1204 Chronographs



The Time Bum loves an aviation themed timepiece. I am not a pilot, but the no nonsense look of a flight instrument cannot be beat, so I was excited to get my hands on not one, but two variants of the Szanto 1200 series aviator's watch: the 1202 with a black dial and tan markers, and the 1204 with a mossy green dial and black markers. When you examine the 1200 series, you might spot some IWC Miramar Top Gun in the vertical sub dial layout and three-day date window, and maybe a bit of Bell & Ross Vintage WW1 Heritage, particularly the color combination of the 1202. What is interesting about these other watches, is that they are not the least bit old. They are new designs for modern watches, intended to evoke a vintage feel. Sound familiar?

The \$325 1200 series is not a homage to either of those watches, but it takes the same approach that they have by imagining what the pilot's chronograph might have looked like had it been released in 1940, and then updating that image. A good place to start this exercise would be an original German B-uhr navigator's watch, or flieger, such as the Type B with its prominent outer chapter ring that pushed the hour markers to the inner part of the dial. These watches were enormous beasts, generally worn strapped over the sleeve of a flight jacket. To facilitate operation while wearing gloves, they had onion crowns large enough to garnish a Gimlet. They were impressive instruments, but not what one would call user friendly outside the cockpit.

Szanto's approach with many of their designs has been to take an existing style and scale it up. With the 1200 series, they scaled it down from a 55mm wrist clock to a more wearable 46mm diameter and 54mm lug-to-lug length. The case is black IP coated stainless steel with long, tapered lugs. Unlike many pilot's watches, it has a screw down crown and a

rather useful 100m water resistance. The cylindrical crown does not match the Brobdingnagian girth of the first fliers, but it's in proper proportion to the case, easy to grip, and screws in smoothly. The case back and crown are both engraved with the Szanto logo. The dimensions convey the presence and heft of the original B-uhr, but they are far more manageable. The 1200 is by any measure a large watch, but not absurdly so, particularly if you have a larger wrist. The overall proportions are significantly aided by a relatively svelte 11.7mm height, including the flat mineral crystal.

The movement is a Miyota OS11 quartz chronograph with two sub dials oriented vertically on the dial: minutes on top, seconds on bottom. The large second hand operates with the chronograph function. This is solid and straightforward unit, used many watches including some that cost more than twice as much as the Szanto. The pushers depress with a firm, mechanical click. The Time Bum hates a squishy pusher, and the 1200 provides the positive tactile feedback I crave.







The dial is clearly inspired by the original Type B, but reverses the layout, placing numerals 1-12 on the outer ring of the dial, and the 5-55 inside. The hands are the traditional losangé shape typical of fliers. They are black, lume filled, and long. The minute hand extends fully across the expansive dial to brush the index ringing its outermost edge. A date window on the right side of the dial displays the white-on-black disc beneath in a cut out resembling an aircraft altimeter. The Szanto name balances it out on the left. Just about every bit of available real estate on the dial is occupied, but while it may be busy, it does not appear cluttered. True to its military aviation roots, it is a clean and logical arrangement. The high contrast 1202 gets the nod for overall legibility over the pale green 1204,

which gets a bit tricky in low light. In darkness, the two dials are surprisingly close, as the black markers on the green dial (left) glow with only slightly less intensity as its sibling's tan markers (right).

Both versions are handsome watches with a 1940s feel. They are strictly casual, with a rugged look enhanced by the same 22mm, leather backed canvas straps we have seen on the previous three Szanto's reviewed. The popular black and tan motif of the 1202 is the sharper of the two, but the milky green dial on the 1204 has a cool, moody look that is far less common.

If you are looking for a vintage inspired flight chronograph, then you should buy an IWC Miramar Top Gun. It has a remarkable manufacture movement, a lovely ceramic case, and a price tag of nearly \$13,000. As Ferris Beuller said of Ferrari, "If you have the means, I highly recommend picking one up." On the other hand, if you have more of a Bum's budget and would like a great looking watch with its own unique take on vintage military, then you should consider the Szanto 1200 series.



The only drawback to these watches is also one of their defining characteristics: their size. I find large watches to be a bit of a challenge. I love the look, but I am not a terribly big guy and my wrists are, quite frankly, tiny. The "proper" size for a watch is largely a matter of personal taste, but when the case exceeds the physical limits of your wrist, it's time to scale it back. On my arm, a 52mm lug-to-lug is the maximum I feel comfortable wearing. The 54mm length of the Szanto is just a shade too big for me. If your wrist is closer to 7" or more, you should be able to wear it without issue.

Pro: Big, bold, and beautiful.

Con: Did I mention big?

Sum: Huge presence without a huge price tag. The Time Bum approves.

