

**sduford** 

Member



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Location: Cartagena, Colombia  
Posts: 2,058

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My new Szanto 1202 Pilot Chrono

Back in July I won The Time Bum's monthly giveaway of a Szanto 1202 Chronograph watch. Because I'm temporarily living in Colombia it took over a month for the watch to get to me. I have now had a couple of days to get to know the watch and I thought I would do a quick review (sorry for the cell-phone pics, don't have my camera on hand).

First of all, when I won this watch I was actually researching quartz chronos with the goal of purchasing one. I wanted a quartz because I believe that in the sub-\$500 world they make more sense than cheap automatics and are more reliable and accurate than most if not all of the Chinese chrono movements. I also wanted the watch to have a casual/sporty look and have at least 100m of water resistance. So this watch actually ticked



nearly all of my boxes except for the crystal which is mineral where I was looking for sapphire. But beggars can't be choosers so at the great price of \$0 a mineral crystal will do.

On to the watch: Szanto is a new American brand that was started by Luminex owner Barry Cohen. The Szanto 1202 is a pilot-style chrono powered by a Miyota OS11 quartz movement. It has a

46mm diameter which worried me a bit as I did not own any watches larger than 42mm. But given its reasonable 54mm lug-to-tug distance and svelte 11.7mm thickness it wears surprisingly well on my 7.5" wrists.



This has given me the confidence to explore some 44-45mm watches in the future. This watch definitely has a lot of wrist presence but it doesn't look ridiculously large on me and it is very comfortable to wear.

It came in a cool vintage-looking box.

The case is black PVD coated 316L stainless steel and the 22mm strap is a leather-backed canvas with a PVD coated and signed buckle. The tan-coloured strap is very comfortable and really looks great next to the black case and vintage-lume on the dial. A well balanced combo. The watch has a screw-in crown and as mentioned previously 100m of water resistance. The screw-in caseback is stainless steel and has a nicely engraved logo.



(BTW, the right-side pusher is not mottled, it's a reflection of the rock)

The dial has some definite resemblance to the IWC Miramar with the two vertically-oriented sub-dials and the date window showing 3 days in a way reminiscent of an airplane's altimeter display. The large and lumed fliieger-style hands look great and are very legible. However, I find the 1-12 numerals a bit small and lacking contrast in low-light, making the watch hard to read in a darkened room while watching TV. I would have preferred if they removed the inner ring and 5-55 numerals in favor of larger 1-12 numerals like the IWC. The vintage lume is only OK. While the main hands glow nicely and are readable for about 6 hours, the numerals are quite dim and disappear in about an hour.





I'm not a big fan of date windows and I thought this triple-window would bother me, especially since the font is white and thus doesn't match the other numerals on the dial. But the triple display and white numerals actually help me read the date without using my glasses, as long as there is good light. They also help when the large hands are obscuring part of the window. The chrono sub-dials are nicely recessed providing depth to the dial, but for me they are a little hard to read if the light is not great and are often hidden by the very large flieger hands.

The chrono pushers have a very nice and solid feel to them and the large seconds hand (chrono only) is just a bit off the markers but it is consistent around the whole dial. When resetting the chrono the hand flies forward very rapidly. The signed screw-in crown is a nice size and easy to grasp. It offers a middle-position for quick-setting the date and the movement hacks in the outer-most position.

The leather-backed canvas strap is nice and thick and a bit stiff but it looks very good on this watch and wears quite comfortably. I feel no need to change it at this time although this watch begs for a nice leather NATO. The signed tang-buckle appears very sturdy, in keeping with the look of the strap.

As seen in this next photo, given its thin profile and curved lugs this watch wears really well on my 7.5" wrists and doesn't look like a 46mm watch. You can also see the flat mineral crystal in this shot.



Now, given that I didn't pay for this watch I am obviously very happy with it. But would I pay \$300 for this watch?

That's a tough question. I think the watch offers really good value for money if you're looking for a black pilot chrono with a quartz movement. It is well built, has a very nice strap and it looks fantastic. However, at \$325 retail (\$300 on Amazon) I would have liked to see a scratch-proof sapphire crystal. Given that this will be my casual sport watch, I will probably end-up beating the crystal quite rapidly, but only time will tell.

Overall I'm quite impressed with the value, looks and quality of this watch. And thanks to Loren at the Time Bum for this giveaway!



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