



The New Pilot's Watches from IWC

## A Family of Individualists

by Rüdiger Bucher

Pilot's watches have a long tradition at IWC. The first models of the "Special Watch for Pilots" were shipped out of Schaffhausen as long ago as 1936. These early models established a tradition that continued with the Big Pilot's Watch in 1940, the legendary Mark 11 and today's models. The Mark 11, constructed for the Royal Air Force in 1948 and worn by the British for decades thereafter, combines clean design and superlative legibility in a watch that is not only avidly sought by collectors, but is the archetype for most timepieces currently manufactured and marketed under the appellation *pilot's watch*. IWC evolved its Mark 11 and created the Mark XII and Mark XV, which was launched in 1999. (The jump from the numeral XII to XV was due to the unlucky connotations of the number 13 in Europe and North America, and to the similarly inauspicious significance of the number 14 in Japan.) IWC in Schaffhausen also created a line of pilot's watches bearing the Mark name: the Quartz Chronograph (1988), the famed Double Chronograph (1994), the UTC (1998), with its second time zone, and the gorgeous Big Pilot's Watch (2002).

All of these models have helped establish the modern pilot's watch genre. Though these timepieces are no longer essential for aviation, they're without a doubt steeped in the spirit of the early pioneering aviators. Their design typically features a black dial, good legibility (also at night, thanks to the strongly luminous coating on the hands and numerals or indices), a triangle at the "12," and lucid, no-nonsense styling.

The pilot's watches that IWC has built during the past two decades have all been genuine individualists. IWC designers sometimes flanked the triangle at the "12" by a pair of dots; they sometimes placed the triangle at the top





Mark XVI, Midsize model, and the  
Big Pilot's Watch

## The face of the "Big Pilot's Watch" now looks tidier and clearer

of the dial instead of an index; or else, they positioned it directly below the uppermost index. Most models had bar-shaped hands; however, alluding to the hands used on the historical Big Pilot's Watch of 1940, the UTC and the Big Pilot's Watch are equipped with *feuille* hands. These last-mentioned timepieces use a different typeface for the numerals, and the "1" lacks a little serif at the top. The most recent debutantes are the Spitfire models, with textured dials in either black or a lighter version.

IWC's rugged individualists have now grown into a large family and their faces instantly reveal a strong family resemblance. The similarity of their features makes their genetic relationship more obvious now than it was in the past. This family is divided into two lines: the Classical and the Spitfire models. The Classical models rely on black dials and a more minimalist design. Their faces are distinguished by a clearly structured minute-circle, around which there is nothing to distract one's attention. bold indices mark each minute (and second). Wider, longer indices appear at the five-minute intervals and strongly accentuated indices identify the "3," "6" and "9." The "12" needs no index because this important reference point is unmistakably distinguished by a white triangle flanked with a pair of little dots. The numer-

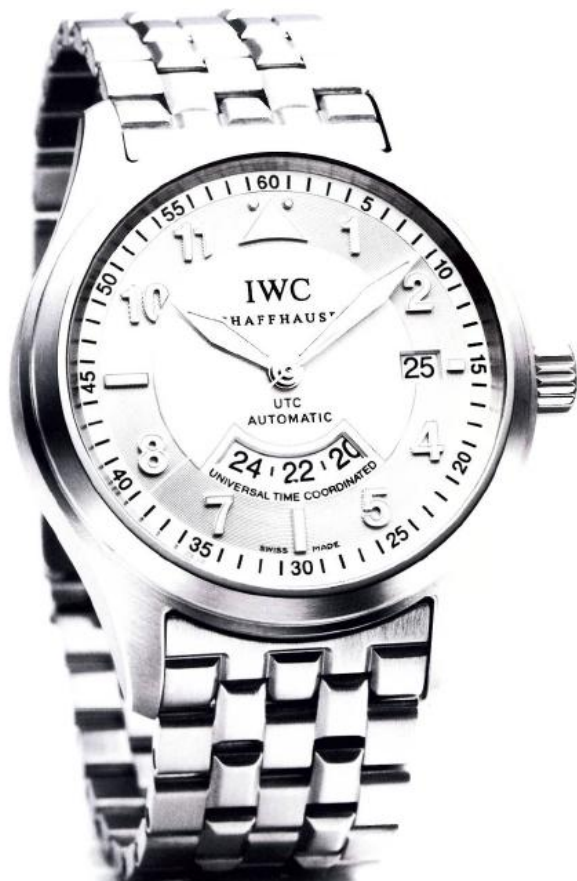
The Automatic Chronograph and the Double Chronograph in a ceramic case as a limited edition



als are in the “English style”—that is, they have a sans-serif “1.” The black dial is flat. The indices are printed and the hands are coated with luminous material. This line also includes the classical pilot’s watch, now known as the Mark XVI, which is available in a larger men’s version (a diameter of 39 mm, enlarged over the previous one of 38 mm) and a smaller (34-mm) Midsize model. The Automatic Chronograph has likewise grown to a stately 42 mm from its previous diameter of 39 mm. The Big Pilot’s Watch is only available with a black dial. The Double Chronograph is a special item: now 44 mm against its earlier diameter of 42 mm, it has a special ceramic case and is delivered with a soft wristband. Only 1,000 specimens of this watch will be constructed.

The Spitfire models comprise the second line. They’re named after the classic British fighter plane from the 1930s—a flying machine whose mention quickens the pulse of pilots to this day. Spitfire watches are characterized by a sculpturally accentuated dial with a raised center, and by riveted-on numerals and indices. The minute-circle is less obvious than it is on the Classic models, as smaller numbers are positioned at every fifth index. Both the large and the small numerals differ from those on the models with black dials (the





The Spitfire family: UTC, Midsize,  
Automatic Chronograph and Mark XVI.

“1” has a serif at its top). The Spitfire line also offers the Mark XVI, the Mid-size model and the Automatic Chronograph. The UTC is solely available in the Spitfire line. The arc-shaped window for the display of the time in a second time zone has been shifted downward on the UTC’s dial. No longer beneath the “12,” this curved aperture is now located above the “6,” giving the impression that the watch is wearing a reserved smile.

There’s also a third group of special models in the family: wristwatches dedicated to the famous French author and pioneering aviator Antoine de Saint Exupéry. Their brown dials and wristbands recall old-fashioned leather flying helmets; their backs are engraved with a portrait of Saint Exupéry; and a subdial at the “6” is adorned with the aviator-author’s initial A in his own cursive handwriting. These watches are essentially limited editions of the Automatic Chronograph in stainless steel (1,630 specimens), rose gold (250 units), white gold (50 watches, available only in IWC boutiques), and in a platinum model that will be auctioned to raise money for the Vol de Nuit/Vuelo Nocturno Association, an organization dedicated to caring for un-



The new collection  
is divided into  
classical pilot's  
watches and  
"Spitfire" models

derprivileged children in Argentina. The total volume of the limited edition – 1,931 watches – recalls the year (1931) when Saint Exupéry published his novel *Vol de Nuit* (*Night Flight*). Incidentally, Saint Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince* (*The Little Prince*) trails only behind the *Bible* and Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* as the world's third most frequently sold book.

All pilot's watches in the new generation share the common denominator of Arabic numerals at the 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 11 positions only. The cardinal points at the "12", "3", "6" and "9" are identified by a white triangle (at the "12"), wider indices, or a date window (at the "3"), thus creating something like an imagined crosshairs. When a person who is familiar with the older watches sees these new models for the first time, he or she might wonder what has become of the "9". Its absence, however, gives these dials a clearer and tidier appearance. This impression is further enhanced by the shorter length of the indices and the now frameless scale of the power-reserve display. The black date disk on the Classic models is a marked improvement over its white predecessor.



Homage to the great poet and pioneering aviator: the Antoine de Saint Exupéry edition



	Big Pilot's Watch	Pilot's Watch Double Chronograph	Pilot's Watch Chrono Automatic	Pilot's Watch Mark XVI
Reference no.	IW500401	IW378601/02	IW371701/04	IW325501/04
Caliber	51110	79230	79320	30110
Winding	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic
Power reserve	168 hours	44 hours	44 hours	42 hours
Case material	Stainless steel	Ceramic	Stainless steel	Stainless steel
Diameter	46.2 mm	44 mm	42 mm	39 mm
Height	15.8 mm	17.1 mm	14.7 mm	11.5 mm
Watertight to	60 meters	60 meters	60 meters	60 meters
Wristband	Crocodile leather	Soft band or buffalo leather	Crocodile or steel	Crocodile or steel
Variants	White gold (IW500402)	–	–	–
Limited edition	–	1,000 specimens	–	–



The platinum model of the “Saint Exupéry” was auctioned to raise money for a charity

The back of the “Saint Exupéry” is adorned with an engraved portrait of the poet based on the famous photo taken by his friend John Phillips

Pilot's Watch Midsize	Spitfire Chrono Automatic	Spitfire UTC	Spitfire Mark XVI	Spitfire Midsize	Antoine de Saint Exupéry
IW325601/04	IW371702/05	IW325110/12	IW325502	IW325602	IW371707/08/09/11
30110	79320	30710	30110	30110	79320
Automatic	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic
42 hours	44 hours	42 hours	42 hours	42 hours	44 hours
Stainless steel	Stainless steel	Stainless steel	Stainless steel	Stainless steel	Stainless steel
34 mm	42 mm	39 mm	39 mm	34 mm	42 mm
10.1 mm	14.7 mm	12.5 mm	11.5 mm	10.1 mm	14.7 mm
60 meters	60 meters	60 meters	60 meters	60 meters	60 meters
Crocodile or steel	Crocodile or steel	Crocodile or steel	Crocodile or steel	Crocodile leather	Buffalo leather
–	–	–	–	–	Red-/white gold/platinum
–	–	–	–	–	Total of 1,931