

# Anonimo Revisited: Tour of Duty

## pt. 2



While most watch companies offer more or less overtly macho designs under the rubrics 'Pilot's' or 'Diver's', they avoid direct associations with the military as too risky and not exactly glamorous. And when the military does do glamour the peacock colours of full regimentals rather outshines any wristwatch. But, as *QP* discovers, that particular square can be circled.

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(Right) The Dino Zei Nemo. Automatic chronograph with a modified Valjoux 7750 movement, the case comprises of three polished and satinated stainless steel components.

(Above left) Dino Zei Marea. Chronograph with three counters, 24 hour GMT central hand, flyback function and a decentralized window on back cover.

(Above right) Col. Dino Zei was head of the Weapons and Explosives Division of the Italian Navy during the late 1960s, before going on to head the renowned Florence based company Guido Panerai e Figlio, who manufactured and provided technical equipment for the Italian Navy.

Dino Zei, the éminence grise of Italian watchmaking has bought decades of experience to Anonimo, helping Federico Massaccesi's company to become one of the hottest brands of the moment. Zei's watches have so far been a counterpoint to the more aggressive 'Opera Meccana' line, a subtlety not entirely lost in the San Marco.

"Dino did not want his watches to be big," emphasises Massaccesi, "Sometimes as a military man you are on field operations for sure, but 95% of the time you are 'on duty', not on operations. And if you think about it, military men are the most formal men in the world: their dress uniforms must be perfect! You must look perfect, far beyond being in a tuxedo! So if you think about it, the only true 'formal' watch is a military watch"

Such formality rarely changes, so by their very nature Dino Zei's models will not be changing dramatically in shape or size. However, there is one achingly brazen watch from 2007's collection that pays little heed to medals and parade gloss, practically jumping off your wrist with fixed bayonet: the San Marco.

### Bedded in

In the Sixties, Zei headed up the Weapons and Explosives Section of the Italian Navy commandos and divers' HQ, as well as the ammunition section of the



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standing committee for experimentation on war materials. To adopt a fitting analogy, the real-life 007 to his Q was a man called Franco Zavattaro - Zei's man in the field. Commander of the combat frogmen force of the Italian Navy between 1968 and 1971, he went on to command the San Marco Battalion between 1972 and 1975 - the Italian Navy's elite amphibious unit, which earned its name by famously defending Venice against all odds during the Great War. Since deployed to almost every 20th-century theatre of war, is in tribute to this Italian SAS that Zavattaro and Zei collaborated once more under Anonimo's roof, almost 40 years on from comparing notes on semtex.

Resolutely catering for that 5% of the time when soldiers are actually on ops, the Dino Zei San Marco is a tough, military mission watch with 6-day countdown to 'D-Day' and 'H-hour' landing times. Even the name given to the hard tungsten case coating, 'wolframium', sounds aggressive. In a similar vein, there's also a sinister justification behind its colour-coded semi-diurnal arc.

"I asked Zavattaro why he insisted on the red and green day/night indication," recalls Giovanni Lozzi. "He said to me, 'OK Giovanni, let's see what happens when we spend a week together in a bunker without windows - do you think you'd know whether it's day or night after 5 or 6 days?'"

The San Marco's case is Anonimo's first monobloc construction, milled from a single block of steel (the movement drops in from the dial side). "Zavattaro requested this too," says Giovanni Lozzi. "I told him that stainless steel is probably strong enough, but he just said, 'I want much more!'"

### Fresh approach

Following his demands have resulted in something unique to both Anonimo and watchmaking in general, with behind-enemy-lines provenance that many brands would kill for. It is also a better watch for it and demonstrates how, occasionally, outside assistance can be healthy in order for watchmakers to see the wood for the trees. ☺