



Technical Specs

Model: PAM 00000

Movement: Panerai OP I calibre on ETA base; 21,600 vph; 56-hour power reserve

Water resistance: 300m

Case: AISI 316L polished steel; 44 mm

Strap: Black calf, supplied with a steel screwdriver and a second interchangeable rubber strap



Anonimo Millimetri

It is human nature to be sceptical of bargains, but allay your fears with Anonimo. This brand's roots lie in the manufacture of cases for the pre-Richemont Panerai's from the early 1990s. Further horological weight is lent by its recently forged alliance with Dino Zei, no less – the capo of Officine Panerai for many decades. Anonimo's entry-level, basic model is the Millimetri: a 42-mm diving watch with automatic ETA movement, satin-finish case, special patented strap (treated with a process called Kodiak, allowing for immersion in fresh or salt water for up to 24 hours) and a choice of dial colours. Anonimos are almost too cool to be true. And prices start at a meagre £1,350.



Bell & Ross BR01

Imagine the offspring of a Panerai and a TAG-Heuer Monaco. *Et voila:* the sensational Bell & Ross BR01 – a future classic if ever we have seen one. Bell & Ross fitted a 3-6-9-12-dialled automatic movement into a massive square case, and the result looks like it was prised from the cockpit of a WWII fighter plane. But then they went further. Thanks to the user-friendly strap-bar arrangement, you can turn this 46-mm brute into a desk clock by fitting it to a stainless steel stand. It is available with black or white dials, a black PVD case, as chronograph, power reserve or large date variants. But the time-only, base model BR01-92 is the funkiest. At £1,760, it is priced smack in-between the Anonimo and the Panerai. Hey, no-one said choosing would be easy!

Modern Classics: Panerai Luminor

i In nearly 30 years as a watch enthusiast, I have never seen anything quite like the 'smash hit' re-birth of Officine Panerai. Prior to the reappearance of the Florentine watch as a limited edition in 1993, Panerai's were known only to hardcore collectors of military watches and Rolexes; the latter due to the use of Rolex movements in an early model. It hit just the right note, with the mechanical watch revival well underway, and a market ripe for oversized timepieces like Panerai's contemporary, the revived IWC Portuguese. Italian collectors gobbled them up and 'pre-Richemont' watches are now rarely found outside of auction houses.

Ken Kessler

It was not just the 44 mm case that made the Panerai so distinctive. Like Rolex's Explorer, the Luminor employed large, easy-to-read Arabic numerals at the 3, 6, 9 and – unlike the Explorer – 12 o'clock positions, ensuring that it was an instant hit with Japanese collectors (who actually call such watches '3-6-9s'). Beyond the numerals, Panerai also boasted a patented feature that became its signature detail: a locking lever to hold down the winding crown, ensuring immunity to moisture. After all, the watch's original role was as wrist-wear for Italy's underwater commandos rather than fashion victims, so here was a military watch available to the public that had seen genuine service – not just a role in a movie.

Movies did, however, beckon. Panerai caught the eye of Sylvester Stallone, who commissioned the company to produce limited editions with 'Slytech' written on the dials and his signature on the backs. When Arnold Schwarzenegger wore a black-dialled Panerai Luminor for a screen-filling shot in *Eraser* (1996), the watch took off. Alas, would-be Panerai owners soon learned that the re-issues were made in severely limited numbers, had probably sold out and were gone for good.

Relief arrived in 1997, when the Vendôme Group (now Richemont) acquired Officine Panerai and set about turning the line into a viable, contemporary watch brand. Vendôme had the necessary

muscle to relaunch the brand as the must-have item for a booming market that included new-generation watch collectors, as well as the retro-fanatics who were breathing new life into LPs, valve audio equipment and other outdated wares. The 'Historic' banner was used for the classic Luminor Base and near-identical Luminor Marina with small seconds hand; the 'Contemporary' series added complications to movements housed in both Luminor and Radiomir cases (the latter without the locking crown). Quickly launched were chronographs, automatics, GMTs... even one horrible lapse into bling with diamond numerals. But we are concerned with classics here, not gimmickry. The iconic Panerai is the manual-wind, no-frills Luminor, on a leather strap. Leave the rubber to the fetishists.

Though it may be hard to warm to a watch now found on the wrist of every Z-list celeb in London, the piece does not deserve to be tarnished by such association. The cases are robust and genuinely impermeable to moisture, and the heart of the watch is the ultra-dependable Unitas-derived movement. (Panerai announced its own 'in-house' movement this year, so snobs with issues about 'manufacture' status can relax.) A Luminor Base Logo, now sporting the Officine Panerai emblem seen on the 1993-era watches, sells for £1,950; a sane price to pay for genuine history and a damned fine watch. **o**

Further information: Officine Panerai, 020 7961 1744, www.panerai.com