



Technical Specs

Movement: Calibre 23; self-winding; 25-jewel movement; 28,800 vph; 42-hour power reserve

Dial: Black, with white subdials

Crystal: Cambered sapphire

Water resistance: 30m

Case: Steel; 42 mm

Functions: Chronograph; bidirectional slide-rule bezel



Sinn Model 900

While you are forgiven for thinking that the Sinn Model 900 is simply a Navitimer wannabe, it is worth recalling that this German company actually does make watches for the military and emergency services; Sinn is emphatic that it is not a firm solely producing pieces for civilians who wish they were in uniform. This magnificent beast takes it a stage further than most Action Man hardware by being adamantly serious about function over form. It features the Breitling-style slide-rule around the dial, the date in a 3 o'clock window, and a fourth hand providing a second time-zone. What is more, the price is a mouth-watering €1,850. Sinn sells directly to customers, online, at www.sinn.de.



Fortis B-42 Diver and Cosmonaut Chronograph Alarm

Imagine a Navitimer or Sinn 900 minus the slide-rule, but with the latter's second time-zone and the extra function of an alarm. The latest offerings from Fortis' rugged B-42 range are just that: a brace of tough, no-nonsense chronographs with the credibility of a maker that counts the European Space Agency and the German Agency for Air and Space Travel among its clients. The Diver (white dial; €3,520) and Cosmonaut (black dial, pictured; €3,420) differ cosmetically but both feature the Valjoux 7750 automatic movement with Calibre F2001 alarm module and stitched and padded straps, *a la* the base model Navitimer. Fortis is also noteworthy for ridiculously cool packaging that usually includes a few handy tools, strap-changing devices and the like. More The Right Stuff than Star Wars, which is how we like it.

Modern Classics: Breitling Navitimer



1952 was a good year for births: the Omega Constellation, Bentley's Continental, the DC-7, and even yours truly. It was also the year that Breitling unveiled a chronograph that has stayed in production to this day; one that has spawned numerous Breitling variants, innumerable wannabes and the inevitable fakes. More importantly, if ironically, the Breitling Navitimer remains the definitive pilot's chronograph despite the obsolescence of its unique selling point: a built-in slide rule.

Some think that it made the watch too cluttered to be legible, but the supremely clever slide-rule circumscribing the dial was a boon to pilots for calculating everything from fuel consumption to rates of ascent to estimated times of arrival, or for converting nautical miles to kilometres. Prosaically, more than one civilian Navitimer owner doubtless uses the device for currency conversion or checking European vs US shoe sizes, showing that it even has applications for those whose idea of a joystick is something connected to a PlayStation.

So truly useful, useable and practical was the slide rule that the watch was given official approval by the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association. Hang around Heathrow or Gatwick long enough, and you will soon see a few of the more seasoned pilots wearing Navitimers instead of G-Shocks. Modern computers, fly-by-wire and even sub-£100 digital watches can do far more, but for those with more confidence in a rotating bezel than a fragile chunk of micro-circuitry, the Navitimer has never been bettered. It is a watch with total credibility, as opposed to one bearing the style but not the substance. The Breitling Navitimer is no pretender; it is the Real Deal.

Let us not mince words: although Breitling offers dozens of Navitimers in four series – Navitimer, Navitimer Heritage, Navitimer World and Navitimer Olympus (plus a 24-hour dial version called the Cosmonaute) – the one to buy is the 'plain vanilla' 101, in steel and on a strap, with black dial and white subsidiary dials. Its self-winding Calibre 23 movement is housed in a chunky case just a whisker under

42 mm in diameter. Navitimers have always been seriously butch watches, and the current standard bearer is no exception.

Naturally, the Navitimer has evolved over the last half-century, most notably with the addition of a date (in a small window), automatic winding, coloured dials, different dial layouts, a couple of different case sizes, logo and hand-shape changes and all manner of other detail alterations that fashion, ease of manufacture and customer demand tend to impose upon a maker. Then again, none of the current offerings purport to be exact replicas of the original masterpiece, with its curved crystal and manual-winding Venus movement. But this is fine: every classic evolves in one way or another, from the Montblanc Meisterstück pen to the Zippo lighter. Conversely and thankfully, none of the current models look like the grotesque Navitimers from the Decade That Taste Forgot: the octagonal monstrosities from the 1970s.

Just as this series' previous entries – the Omega Speedmaster Pro and the IWC Mk XV – helped you to find, respectively, a true astronaut's watch and a time-only watch with genuine military heritage at sane prices, so too does this Breitling allow you to taste horological immortality for a sensible outlay. If you can subjugate your bling tendencies and stick to the base model, the 101 will set you back £2,495; not a lot for something a real pilot would covet. On the other hand, if you have always dreamt of flying to Miami or Las Vegas, Breitling will gladly fit you out with assorted gold models on chunky über-bling bracelets. Just don't wear one of those when invited to view the cockpit. ⌚

Ken Kessler

Further information: Breitling UK, Tel: 020 7637 5167, www.breitling.com