

### Technical Specs

**Movement:** Calibre 37524/30110; 21-jewel movement; 28,800 vph; 42-hour power reserve

**Dial:** Black

**Crystal:** Sapphire; convex and secured against displacement by drop in air pressure

**Bracelet:** Stainless steel

**Water resistance:** 60m

**Case:** Stainless steel; 38 mm; inner case made of antimagnetic soft iron



### Bell & Ross Vintage 123

No brand has done a better job than relative newcomer Bell & Ross at translating the classic military look into a viable style for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Not just 'viable' but desirable: a recent newspaper feature on 'what's in and what's out' placed Bell & Ross at the top of the 'In' table. Cool? It is the ultimate choice for those opposed to mere bling. The company's Vintage 123 range (and its sister, Military 123) offers an entire family of military-styled delights with a selection of dial colours, cases and straps from a mere £1,000. Automatic, with small seconds, fluorescent hands and markers – even the ultra-butch strap is so *right*.

### Hamilton Khaki Field Automatic

If any brand has a legitimate claim to producing military watches, it is Hamilton. The name has graced many a US army watch's dial and even some for the British services. The Khaki line of new, military-styled watches was a stroke of marketing genius (some attribute it to Girard-Perregaux's Gino Macaluso) that foresaw the retro craze that took hold in the 1990s. It served the firm well when the blockbuster *Pearl Harbor* was released, since Hamilton made the watches for US forces in WWII (too bad someone outfitted the actors with quartz though). The Khaki range now encompasses a host of models, from time-only, to GMTs and chronographs, manual, automatic and quartz. The bad news? No UK distribution. The good news? The most authentic model – time-only, on a strap, with automatic movement – retails for a ridiculous US\$295 stateside. That is £165 to you and me.



# Modern Classics: IWC Mark XV



You want iconic? Are you after something so utterly immune to the whims of fashion that your great grandson will thank you for buying it in the first place? Amongst military watch aficionados, right up there with 1953 Omegas, the Longines Weems and pre-1970 Panerai's, exists a special niche for the 'Mk' series timepieces from IWC. The second instalment of *QP's Modern Classics* series profiles another eminently affordable collectible, and two close contenders.

Ken Kessler

There is no doubt about it: the definitive model – the one that reduces collectors at auction to squabbles worthy of two women fighting at a Manolo Blahnik sale – is the IWC Mk 11, which more than one watchmaker will tell you had the best manual-wind, hours-minutes-seconds-only movement ever made. With beefy case and a dial so clear and so truly...well...*perfect*, the watch has come to represent the definitive style of a post-WWII RAF or NATO wristwatch. It is as above 'tweaking' or alteration as a Zippo lighter or a pair of original Ray-Bans.

The Mk 11 was primarily military issue and was hard to come by until the Ministry of Defence dumped them as surplus. By the time the mechanical watch revival hit, the Mk 11 was a *bona fide* collector's item and an auction catalogue regular.

After a long run – 1948/9 to 1983/4 – the Mk 11 was retired. But IWC observed the Mk 11's climb in auction value and noted how collectors coveted this relatively obscure watch with a passion rarely shown for contemporary offerings. Following a brief period without replacement, the Mk XII filled the gap. (Note to anoraks: even IWC does not explain why the Mk 11's model number was shown in Arabic numerals, while all others – e.g. IX, X, XII and XV – are in Roman. Recent IWC literature, however, writes it as XI.)

The Mk XII enjoyed a relatively short lifespan and will soon prove to be a collectible, so grab one if you see it. While lacking the Mk 11's military credentials, it is a gem nonetheless.

Which brings us to 1999, and the launch of the Pilot's Watch Mark XV Classic. It is just about as desirable a military-style piece as any available today from new. Size-wise, it is perfect at 9 mm thick and 38 mm in diameter – 2 mm larger than the Mk XII. Large enough to satisfy today's wearer but small enough to avoid being grouped with the more bizarre oversized models hyped as 'military' by so many wannabe firms.

For a definitive 'Mk' series model without the aesthetic changes imparted by the new Spitfire range, opt for the reference 3253-01, in stainless steel with black buffalo leather strap. Its features include automatic winding, hacking centre seconds, an inner case of antimagnetic soft iron (what originally made the Mk 11 so special), screw-down crown and convex glass secured against variations in air pressure (remember: this is a genuine pilot's watch).

Personally, I cannot think of a better way to acquire a slice of history, with direct and genuine lineage for a sensible £1,950. No, make that a *bargain* £1,950. ◉

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