



FLIEGERS: 3 TOP AVIATION-INSPIRED WATCHES FROM GERMANY

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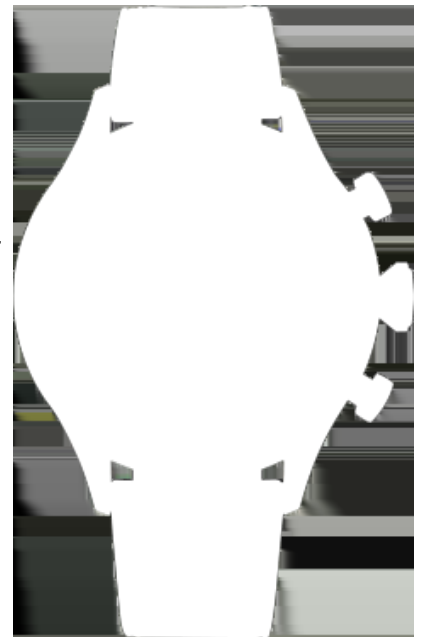
The key design elements of timepieces made for 1940s **German Air Force pilots** - legibility and a black dial face with white markings - have inspired countless watches since, but there's nothing to beat the real deal, writes Abid Rahman

High fliegers Like most sane, sensible and non-weird people, I like to google myself. Often. And after some expert googling I was surprised to learn that I've never written about flieger watches. As a devotee of aviation-inspired watches, I've been rather remiss in not discussing fliegers as they rank among the most iconic designs in watchmaking. Bah! We can't all be perfect, I guess.

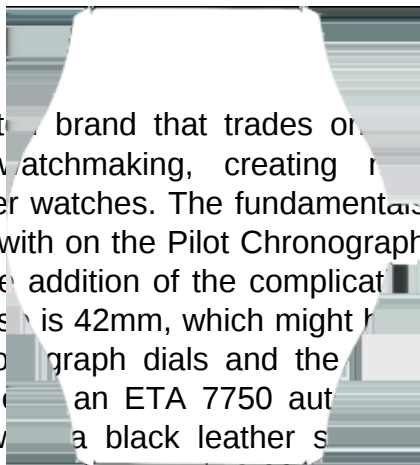
Flieger watches were designed in the 1940s for the German Air Force, and the key elements of the design were legibility and a black dial face with white markings. Even if you are a passing watch fan, you will recognise the design as it's been ripped off, altered and updated over the decades by watch brands the world over. However, a true flieger watch should come from Germany, particularly from a brand called Stowa, which was one of a handful of companies that were originally commissioned by the German Air Force to make watches for their pilots. Stowa makes a number of great flieger watches with variations on the original design it came up with in 1939 and my favourite is the Flieger Klassik Sport (bottom right), which blends old and new really well. The only deviation from the original clean and clear design of the dial is the addition of the Stowa logo, although purists can also purchase it without the branding. New elements are the case size, movement and strap. The case is a modern 43mm in steel and the dial is protected by sturdy and scratch-resistant sapphire glass. The movement is an ETA 2824-2 automatic, which can be seen through the glass case back and a nice touch is the industrial-looking Stowa rotor. The strap is a sporty rubber although a more authentic black leather is also available. Features have been kept simple, to hours and minutes, and the power reserve is a modest 38 hours. The Stowa Klassik Sport is priced at about HK\$9,000.



Another brand that was one of the original flieger makers is Laco, which has been designing excellent flieger watches since the 40s. The Pilot Watch Type B (top right), to give it its British name, is Laco's updated version of the classic Type B, which has minute numerals and a smaller counter marking hours. This watch is another blend of old and new, with the original design complimented with sapphire-crystal glass and a 45mm stainless-steel case that has been sandblasted, making it smudge free. Inside is a Laco-modified movement that's nothing special but is robust and reliable. The markings on the dial have been coated in Superluminova making it readable even in poor light. And, finally, the strap is made of black calfskin leather but can be swapped out quite easily for something like a Nato strap. The Laco Pilot Watch Type B should set you back about HK\$12,500.



Finally, we have a flieger from one of a number of companies who only recently started to make them. Archimede is a German watch brand that trades on the country's celebrated history in watchmaking, creating new versions of classic marine and flieger watches. The fundamentals of the design haven't been messed with on the Pilot Chronograph (above right, middle) but there is the addition of the complications and the three subdials. The steel case is 42mm, which might be a touch small to incorporate the chronograph dials and the logo, but that's a small gripe. Inside is an ETA 7750 automatic movement and the watch comes with a black leather strap. The Pilot Chronograph is priced at about HK\$10,000.



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