

Does Size Matter?

by Tejaswi Mellachervu



From the early 2000s onwards there was a growing trend for watches to get bigger in size. Spurred on by celebrities sporting larger than life watches on their wrists, the big watch fad had taken off and was here to stay. Even women started to wear men's watches & companies started to produce more fanciful designs that would generate attention whoever wore them.

Royal Oak Offshore

The first truly oversized watch was in fact launched in 1993, the Audemars Piguet Royal Oak Offshore. A luxury sports watch and hybrid of the original Royal Oak line.



The original 'Royal Oak Offshore' by Audemars Piguet. Greeted with shock & awe upon release. Not the biggest by today's standards at 'only' 42mm.

It became an instant hit and could be seen on the wrists of young affluent men everywhere. Its size back then was shocking, but it was beautifully made with its brushes and polished surfaces and elaborate movement finishing. The early 2000s saw a few limited edition offshores, starting with the 'End of Days' made specifically for Arnold Schwarzenegger in the movie 'End of Days'.

The most outlandish one was also made for Arnie to wear in the movie 'Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines'. This was a 48mm gargantuan timepiece made from titanium, with crown & pusher guards. It was made as a



Terminator 3 Royal Oak Offshore Limited edition watch by Audemars Piguet. To wage a war against the machines you might just need this watch!

limited run of a 1000 pieces only and is today highly collectable on the preowned market. The only problem with the Offshore, like so many other big watches, was that it didn't have an in-house movement, and many viewed it as simply having a standard sized movement in a larger case just for the sake of it.

IWC Big Pilot



IWC Big Pilot Ref 5002. A clock on your wrist!

In 2002 IWC released one of the largest watches ever made, and with good reason. The Big Pilot ref 5002 was a tribute to the pilot watches of the 1940s, which at 55mm were designed to be worn over the sleeve or jacket. They had a large 'onion' shaped crown to be able to be gripped even with gloves. The 2002 big pilot, although smaller at 46mm, was still very large, but its understated dial layout with vintage appeal meant it could be worn by those with smaller wrists.

The Big Pilot wasn't a watch that was large just for the sake of it. Inside the watch

ticked the largest automatic movement ever made, with a specially designed Pellaton winding system, which meant it could be wound from the crown in both directions, and the efficiency of the system meant it built up 'power' very rapidly. It featured anti-magnetic protection & a huge 7-day power reserve.

So there we have it. The battle of the giants. Although the race to make the biggest watch has long died down, big watches are here to stay. Currently, the trend is heritage watches that recreate the feel of watches made in the past, but that too will be a passing fad. Ultimately, as wrist sizes get larger and people do more activities with their watches, they expect a certain level of robustness from their watches, and large watches can deliver this in abundance. Bigger cases to protect the delicate movements inside, chunky buttons which can be activated during any sport or activity and water resistant to a good depth too.

For the purists out there, however, a gentleman's watch will be no bigger than 40mm and anything bigger is perceived tacky and gaudy.

Just sometimes, however, a watch comes along that goes against everything we know is right, and we hate to admit it, but it looks rather good too! ■



Hamilton Khaki Sub-zero watch as worn by Matt Damon in the movie 'The Martian' and Dwayne Johnson in 'Central Intelligence'. A 46mm 1000m water resistant behemoth.