



*Mido's
Commander
Chronometer has
a vintage look
and a COSC-
certified move-
ment. We take a
closer look at the
modern version
of this 50-plus-
year-old model.*

BY MARTINA RICHTER

PHOTOS BY ZUCKERFABRIK FOTODESIGN

COMMAND PERFORMANCE



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Chronometer
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CLOSE-UP

Mido Commander Chronometer

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he Mido Commander, originally called the Ocean Star, made its debut more than 50 years ago, but the watch's classic, timeless design has changed very little. Many of the watch's technical features, including the monocoque (one-piece) case and the special "Aquadura" cork sealing system for the crown, were used in earlier versions. The modern collection, however, now contains some models, like the one we review here, with COSC-certified chronometer movements. And in the Milanese-mesh-bracelet versions of the watch, the bracelet has been integrated into the case.

The Commander has a Hesalite crystal inscribed with the Mido logo.

Before slipping this watch onto your wrist for the first time, you'll need to adjust the two-part folding clasp on the bracelet. The bottom part has little notches on its underside that help it click into place when the wearer sets the length. (Despite the notches, it slides quite smoothly.) The upper part of the clasp can be inserted into the bottom part and flipped shut. Another bow ensures double security, and the construction as a whole guarantees that the watch fits neatly around the wrist. The supple, stainless-steel bracelet is designed so that even if the adjustable end of it extends very far,





The modern-day Commander looks much like its precursor of 50 years ago.

The Commander's movement is the automatic ETA Caliber 2836-2.

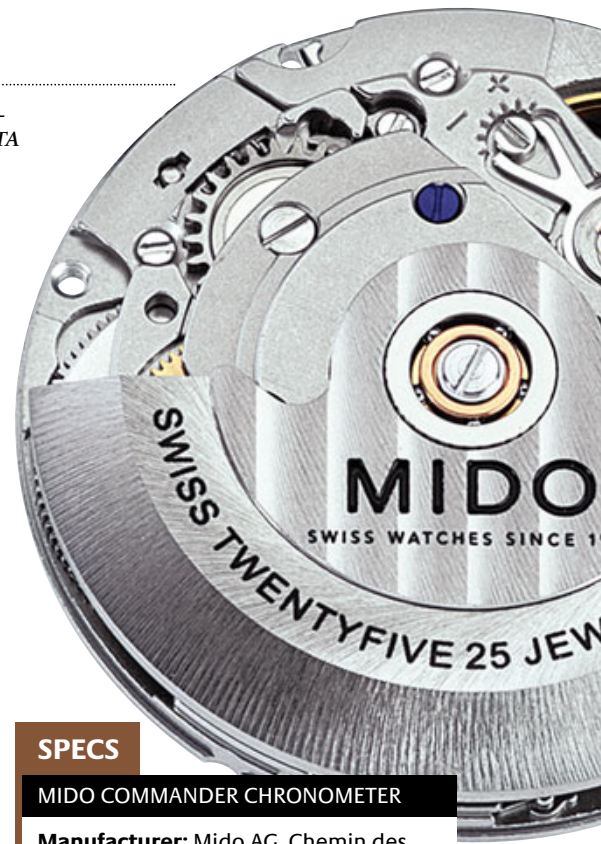
the other end will overlap it so that it's out of sight. Once fitted properly, the bracelet hugs the wrist comfortably: no pinching or pressing.

The bracelet is joined to the case by a special component that makes the bracelet especially secure. The disadvantage of this is that it's not very easy to remove the bracelet and replace it with another. Mido also offers the Commander Chronometer with a gold case and in strap versions.

Viewed from the side, the case looks a little like a UFO. Its back is slightly convex; a Hesalite crystal covers the dial. When Mido introduced this type of monocoque case on the Ocean Star in 1959, it was regarded as revolutionary because it eliminated the problem of making the caseback water-resistant. As its name suggests, a monocoque case is made from a single piece of metal without a removable back cover. (*Coque* is French for "shell.")

The absence of a removable back means that the movement must be inserted from above, and if a watchmaker ever needs to refurbish or repair it, he must first remove the crystal, the hands and the dial. The winding stem is divided into two parts so the movement can be lifted out of the case, and returned to it, from above. The outer part of the winding stem can be removed along with the crown.

The crown itself is very small — only 4.5 millimeters — and fits into an indentation on the flank of the case. When the crown is pushed in all the way, it essentially disappears into this indentation. This protects the crown and enhances the watch's appearance, but it makes the crown harder to use. You need strong fingernails to pull the crown out into its other positions — for quickly adjusting the date and day displays and setting the hands — and the job is somewhat clumsy. Winding the watch is also a challenge: you can't get hold of the crown, so you can only attempt to roll a fingertip along its rim. The watch is an automatic; it pays to wear it as often as possible so you will seldom need to wind it manually.



SPECS

MIDO COMMANDER CHRONOMETER

Manufacturer: Mido AG, Chemin des Tourelles 17, 2400 Le Locle, Switzerland

Reference number: M84294C111

Functions: Hours, minutes, seconds, date and day

Movement: ETA 2836-2, automatic; 28,800 vph; 25 jewels; Glucydur balance; flat Nivarox hairspring; Incabloc and Nivacourbe shock absorbers; Etachron fine adjustment; diameter = 25.6 mm; height = 5.05 mm; decorated with Geneva waves and satin-finishing; blued screws; COSC-certified chronometer

Case: 316L stainless steel, Hesalite crystal, water-resistant to 50 meters

Bracelet and clasp: Stainless-steel Milanese bracelet with stainless-steel safety folding clasp

Rate results

(Deviations in seconds per day, fully wound/after 24 hours):

Dial up	-1.0	-4.0
Dial down	+1.0	+1.0
Crown up	+1.0	+3.0
Crown down	+2.0	+1.0
Crown left	0.0	0.0
Greatest deviation	3.0	7.0
Mean amplitude		
Flat positions	295°	297°
Hanging positions	280°	267°

Dimensions: Diameter = 37 mm; height = 11 mm; weight = 80.5 grams

Variations: Leather strap

Price: \$850



The clasp is quite reliable. One part can be adjusted, while the other folds in and is secured by a bow.

Pros

- + Classic, clean design
- + Comfortable mesh bracelet
- + Easy to read in daylight and darkness
- + Rate results worthy of a COSC certificate

Cons

- Standard movement
- Crown is difficult to operate

Ever since the Commander debuted as the Ocean Star in 1959, Mido has used a sealing system that fits almost seamlessly around the winding stem and prevents water from entering the case, even when the crown is pulled out. This system, known as Aquadura, was first developed in 1934, but wasn't used until the Ocean Star's debut.

The material used for the Aquadura system is bark from the cork oak, which is finely ground, then pressed together with special glue and, finally, impregnated with sealing grease. Mido carefully guards the details of this special treatment, which gives the cork a slightly moist consistency that preserves its natural ductility and longevity. A cork seal lasts much longer than a rubber one.

The Commander's case is closed on the top by a crystal made of Heselite glass, a type of acrylic glass similar to Plexiglas (both are manufactured from polymethyl methacrylate) but harder. The disadvantage of watch crystals made of acrylic (rather than sapphire) is that they are more susceptible to scratches, but the

advantage is that they can be polished easily. Minor scratches can be treated with a special substance that slightly dissolves the surface of the crystal. If you apply this substance with a soft cloth, allow it to remain briefly on the surface and then gently polish the surface with the same cloth, the crystal will look as good as new afterward. Furthermore, crystals made of acrylic glass weigh less and are relatively resistant to shocks and blows. For water-resistant watches like the Mido Commander, they're given a so-called "armoring," which means that the base of the crystal is encircled by a metal ring that prevents it from shrinking or deforming due to pressure or heat.

The high-rising and slightly curved crystal, together with the sleek case, means the dial can be quite large: 34 millimeters in diameter. Thanks to its size and its simple design, it is easy to read. It is silver-colored and adorned with a sunburst finish. There are a dozen applied indices. Their black center sections contrast sharply with the indices' shiny, sloping facets and with the dial's matte surface.

The hour and minute hands have black lines, interrupted by Super-Lumi-Nova inlays, running down their middle. This makes reading the time easy even in poor light because the two hands gleam quite impressively, as do the 12 dots on the flange around the dial's perimeter. The flange is also marked with black indices for minutes and seconds, although they are relatively inconspicuous under the edge of the crystal. Using a watch-makers' loupe, you can see that they have been meticulously placed.

The loupe also reveals several other fine details, such as the reflection of the Mido logo, (inscribed on the inside of the crystal) on the shiny hands. Except for the seconds hand, which is tapered, the hands have an unmistakable, block-like shape that echoes that of the indices. Although the hands aren't quite as wide as the indices, they give the dial a kind of visual unity. The tip of the minute hand ex-

tends almost to the inner edge of the applied indices. The tip of the hour hand ends at the date window so it never eclipses it. The minute hand and seconds hand are the same length.

A framed window at 3 o'clock displays the day of the week (in a choice of two languages) and the date. The watch contains ETA's Caliber 2836-2. The watch's rate deviated by less than half a second in the course of two full weeks. It performed similarly well on the timing machine: in the individual positions, the watch ran between -4 and +3 seconds, and it ran slightly slower after it had been running for 24 hours than it did when its mainspring was fully wound. It did, however, consistently lose time in the "dial up" position, a slight blemish in the otherwise impressive rate picture.

The watch's chronometer status is denoted on the dial by an applied "Chronometer" label at 6 o'clock. The



The crystal and caseback are slightly curved.

manufacturer's name appears at 12 o'clock and also on the crown and the back of the case. The name "Mido" is derived from the Spanish phrase *yo mido*, which means, "I measure." And this Mido measures very well indeed. ○