

## FLY BUYS

**W**ORD THAT TOM CRUISE will return as Maverick in the long-awaited sequel to the 1986 hit movie *Top Gun* has provoked a dogfight among watchmakers. It started in January, when the Swiss luxury brand IWC declared 2012 “the year of the pilot’s watch”—and an ideal time to push its *Top Gun* collection. The company’s licensing deal with the U.S. Navy Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor Program (popularly known as TOPGUN) dates back to 2005, but with a *Top Gun 2* on the horizon, IWC expected the category to heat up.

And so it did. Breitling, another Swiss brand, shot back with a press release touting its limited-edition Chronomat 44 (\$10,135), which bears the official seal of the U.S. Navy Fighter Weapons School. “The real *Top Gun* watch carries the Breitling signature,” the release claimed.

Although Breitling, which sponsors a team of jet pilots, has solid aviation credentials, IWC quickly asserted its exclusive right to use the *Top Gun* trademark for watches. By April, on the eve of the Baselworld watch fair, the rivals had reached an agreement—Breitling would make no further mention of *Top*

*Gun*—and the matter seemed to be settled. Still, Thierry Prissett, Breitling’s U.S. president, managed a parting shot.

“They are movie pilots,” he said at the time, referring to Cruise and his cohorts. “We are in contact with real pilots.”

A slew of other watchmakers have since entered the fray. The Swiss brand Zenith recently unveiled three new watches in its Pilot collection, including the Pilot Montre d’Aéronef Type 20 (\$10,300), which makes a bold statement with its 57.5-millimeter titanium case. “The idea was to say, ‘Okay, a lot of brands do pilot watches, but nobody can claim the rights to it as loud and clear as we can,’” says Zenith chief executive officer Jean-Frédéric Dufour.

“We own the rights to the word *Pilot*,” he adds, noting the company has been producing Pilot watches for more than a century.

Hamilton, founded in the U.S. but now part of the Swatch Group, produced a watch worn by the first American airmail pilots in 1919. To underscore this heritage, the brand bills its new Khaki X-Patrol timepiece (\$1,695), as a “portable cockpit for navigating lifestyles.” Bell & Ross, for



From IWC’s *Top Gun* collection.

its part, is promoting three new limited-edition watches based on aeronautical instruments—including the BRO1 Turn Coordinator (\$6,000)—with the tagline: “From the cockpit to the wrist.”

Not to be outdone, Bremont, a 10-year-old British brand that makes exclusive watches for elite military squadrons, recently introduced the World Timer ALTI-WT (\$5,695), a chronometer geared toward civilians. Especially those who feel what Maverick famously called—and will no doubt call again—“the need for speed.” —JOELLE DIDERICH

Tailor  
Kathryn  
Sargent.



## Savile Row’s First Lady

**K**ATHRYN SARGENT is a self-professed “tailoring geek.” She’s also a pioneer.

The tailor has the distinction of having served as the first female head cutter of a Savile Row firm—the vaunted Gieves & Hawkes, where she worked for 15 years, climbing the ladder to the top cutter position in its bespoke department. “It’s quite a talking point,” she says with a laugh. “But I really loved the job. Years ago, I wouldn’t have had the opportunity—it was such an old-boy network.”

In January, Sargent left Gieves & Hawkes to launch her own business, Kathryn Sargent Bespoke Tailoring. But while continuing to break new ground, she maintains a strong sense of tradition: Her firm is located on Sackville Street, near Savile Row, where she shares the premises of Meyer & Mortimer, a bespoke company whose former clients included the 18th-century British dandy Beau Brummel.

Sargent notes that women have a long history of working on Savile Row, though they remained behind the scenes, not in a “client-facing role.” When she became a head cutter, she says, “most people were really welcoming,” but she did meet some resistance. A couple of customers refused to work with her, and she recalls an elderly woman who bluntly said, “A girl should not be doing this.” Sargent’s reaction: “I knew I had to do a bloody good job,

since there were people who were waiting to see if I could cut the mustard.”

Sargent views the bespoke process as a “creative collaboration” between herself and her client, which means working closely with customers to resolve fit and lifestyle issues. “It’s about getting to know people individually and tailoring to need,” she says.

Although based in London, she travels to New York and Chicago three times a year to measure and fit both men and women. The client chooses from thousands of British fabrics (“I’m biased—I think we make the best wools in the world”), Sargent personally hand-cuts each pattern, there are two to three fittings, and the garment is delivered within 12 weeks. Prices start at 3,200 pounds, or \$4,071 at current exchange.

As her business grows, Sargent hopes to add custom shirts and to expand her women’s offerings. “I would love to provide tailoring heritage to more people,” she says, adding, “I feel quite liberated.”

—J.E.P