



DIVINE DIAMONDS

AND THE NEWEST WAYS TO WEAR THEM

By **Melody Lesser**

Photos by **Bob Emmott**

Diamonds have always enjoyed a cachet that makes them the ultimate in gemstones. Worn in the past only by those whose blood ran blue, diamonds can now be owned by almost everyone. Through the centuries, the vagaries of fashion have had their way with the gems. Once used to embellish royalty regalia, today they're a testimony to undying love, accrued wealth and innate fashion sense. But how or why a diamond is worn, one fact remains constant: The stone is unparalleled in its beauty, elegance and ability to delight.

DIAMOND DATES AND DATA

The earliest descriptions of diamonds date back to India in the 4th Century BCE. Although as yet uncut and unpolished, diamonds were prized for their hardness, purity and brilliance. The gems were traded out of India with Mediterranean countries, and by the Middle Ages, were used as ornamentation in jewelry and clothing. During the 13th century, Louis IX of France decreed that diamonds were the exclusive provenance of the king. Diamonds may be a girl's best friend today, but it was about one hundred years or so before they were seen adorning European royalty and aristocracy of both sexes. By the 16th Century, with the advent of faceting, diamonds began to gain greater popularity and during the 17th Century, rich merchants announced their financial success to the world by wearing them. Previously used to accent other gemstones and precious metals, diamonds began to take center stage as the main ornamentation in jewelry. It was also at this time that

silver gained precedence over yellow gold as the metal of choice for setting diamonds.

It was not until the 18th Century that women really got their hands on diamonds, or, got to wear diamonds on their hands. Diamond production was flourishing, and rose and brilliant cut diamonds, set in silver, (but with a gold backing so as not to discolor the wearer's skin and clothing,) became more prevalent. Still reserved for the wealthy classes, diamonds were worn exclusively in the evening, as it was considered vulgar to sport them during the day.

With the discovery of deposits in South Africa in the 1870s, diamond production increased prodigiously, enabling those who could afford them to purchase and wear the ultimate gem. Diamonds were now seen adorning women and men who had the good fortune to have, well, fortunes. Fast forward some one hundred and thirty years to the present day when, happily, diamonds are widely available. No longer reserved for the rich and famous, diamonds sparkle from the digits, earlobes, wrists and even belly buttons of mere mortals who don their diamonds not only after the sun is down, but during the daylight hours as well. Perhaps the greatest evolution in the history of diamonds is that they are worn for everyday, all day. And, oh, the ways in which they are worn ...

SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW

Think of a diamond and you probably think of a white or colorless gem that holds within its depths, and gloriously reflects, all the colors of the rainbow. One diamond aficionada described wearing her heavenly two-carat sparkler as having captured a shining star and encasing it in metal. Indeed, one needs only to gaze into a white diamond to see a magnificent display of color and light. But white is not all there is when it comes to fashionable diamonds. Some of the most precious, and most famous, diamonds have been the most colorful, to wit: the radiant blue of the infamous Hope Diamond. In fact, colored diamonds are one of the most important trends in diamond jewelry today. Think pinks, blues, yellows and browns. Imagine the sophisticated

Center: A. Jaffe & Sons Platinum ring with a 1.17ct center princess diamond and two-side princess diamonds .80tw, \$14,000; Sam S. Yempell Jewelers, Haddonfield, NJ

Left: Platinum ring with 5.05ct fancy yellow diamond and two trillion diamond .99tw, \$190,500; Tiffany & Co., Center City & King of Prussia, PA

Right: Fancy yellow and white radiant cut diamond ring with baguette set in 18K yellow and white gold. 2.87ct tw \$27,900; Bernie Robbins Fine Jewelry

Top: Platinum ring with 2.42ct diamond and two .80ct side diamonds \$19,300; Jack Kellner, Center City, Cherry Hill, NJ & Haverford, PA

Bottom: Platinum ring with 1.36ct diamond and two fancy yellow side diamonds .72tw, \$8,750; Barry Sable, Center City

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Philadelphia Style

beauty of black and white diamonds, or the cutting edge look of a bracelet, patterned like snakeskin with black, brown and white diamonds. "Fancy (colored) diamonds are coming into their own," says Nan Kochanski of Bernie Robbins Fine Jewelry. "An important fancy look is in yellow diamonds. They are extraordinary, like wearing a slice of sunshine." "People are exploring more options now, maybe breaking away from the norm," says Jeffrey Kellmer of Jack Kellmer Company, Philadelphia, Haverford and Cherry Hill. "Fancy colors, particularly the fancy intense yellow—canary yellow—and pinks are starting to become more recognized." Eric Sack of Sack's Jewelers in Jenkintown agrees. "Because color is enjoying a strong popularity in all fashion aspects, we're finding that fancy colored diamonds are enjoying popularity in jewelry." "Colored diamonds are important," says Sam Yampell of Sam. S. Yampell Jewelers in Haddonfield. "The fashion industry has a large impact on that by promoting more vivid colors in ready-to-wear. In order to complement the fashion, our customers are accessorizing with color in their jewelry."

METALLURGY

Platinum and white gold seem to be ubiquitous, and not only for bridal jewelry, but diamond jewelry in general. However, yellow gold is experiencing a new popularity, due perhaps to the influence of ready-to-wear designers who used the hue for everything from evening dresses to outerwear to accessories. The real news, however, as reported by our experts, is the mix of white and yellow gold in the same setting. "Two-tone is very important," says Nan Kochanski. "It segues between the all white look and the all yellow look and bridges the two, enabling a woman to wear more of her jewelry." "We're seeing an interest in a mix of metals in the same piece," says Sam Yampell. "Yellow gold is not a trend of the past, although it seemed for a while that everything was going back to white. It used to be that people wanted to accessorize and match their jewelry, but now

they want to mix jewelry. That's why there's such an interest in bicolor metals." Is it OK then for a woman to mix metals, say, wear a platinum set diamond engagement ring and a yellow gold bracelet on the same hand? The answers were mixed, but Jeffrey Kellmer was in favor when he said, "Of course a woman can mix white and gold set diamonds. She is wearing the finest metals. Who's to say it's not fashionable to wear two different color metals? If you think it looks good, go for it!"

HOOP TO IT!

Diamond ear studs have become something of a standard today. No matter how or when one wears them—as either an accessory to evening wear or picking up the kids from



Platinum ring with 1.51ct fancy yellow oval diamond and two .89ct side diamonds \$18,975;
Jack Kellmer,
Center City, Cherry Hill, NJ & Haverford, PA

basketball practice—diamond studs are a staple for every woman's jewelry wardrobe. So what is the hottest way to wear diamond earrings? Try a hoop. "Hoops are back," says Barry Sable of Barry Sable Diamonds, Philadelphia, "and are an important accessory for the fashion conscious customer." Great for Valentine's Day gift giving, diamond hoop earrings equal this year's fashion classic. "Diamond hoops are very much in vogue right now," says Fred Straub of Fred H. Straub, Inc. in Abington. "For our customers, the tailored diamond hoop is going to be a classic and versatile look." Try it

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The sky, or perhaps the wallet, is the limit when it comes to diamond stacking rings. You choose the look, from a single elegant circle of diamonds to more and merrier. "The pave diamond stacking ring is being worn alone or in multiples of two, three, five...it's really limitless," says Nan Kochanski. "In colored diamonds—pink, blue, yellow—the wearer can go for a monochromatic look or she can wear a rainbow on her finger."

Several of our experts pointed to diamond studded brooches, most notably those in the shape of insects, animals, flowers and foliage as being an important jewelry accessory. And, of course, with Valentine's Day looming, "classic heart-shaped pieces are



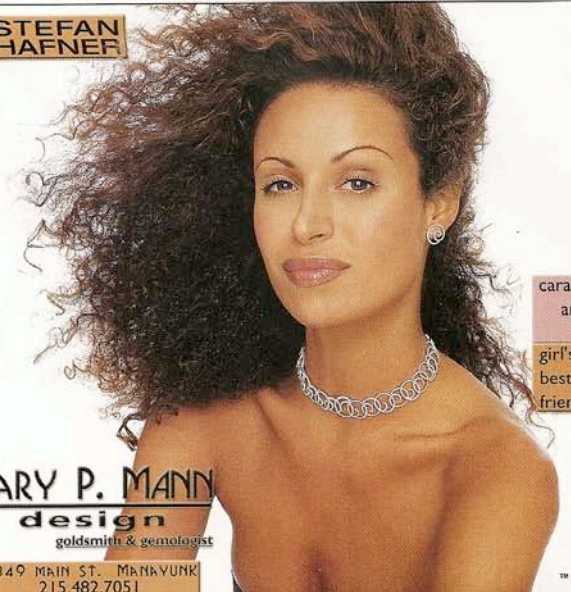
From Michael B. Lacey Collection, each platinum ring hand set with 42 diamonds. Solitaire mounting \$3,195, Band \$2,990; Bernie Robbins, Ardmore & Somers Point

always wonderful," says Fred Straub.

Perhaps the most important aspect of today's diamond jewelry is that it is for every day. "There's a huge trend to wearing diamond jewelry with casual wear," says Barry Sable, who adds, "People have it. It's insured and they're showing it." Save the more formal pieces for occasional wear, our experts caution, but go ahead, don your diamond hoops, stack those colored diamond bangle bracelets and rings, and allow a splash of starshine to shimmer on your throat. To paraphrase a legendary tag line—A diamond is forever—and always. •

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BAUBLES, BANGLES AND BRIOLETTES

The tennis bracelet, long a fashion staple, has been updated, or at least renamed, and has emerged as the line bracelet. Look for it in white or yellow metals, or in a combination of the two, with a variety of diamond shapes on the same bracelet. The newest way to wear diamonds on your wrist is the diamond bangle, but don't stop at one. Wear several for a style-setting look that is truly enviable. "Black and white diamond bangles bracelets are important," says Nan Kochanski. "Today's bangles are more modern than the bangles of the past, more sculptural, and people like to stack them." "(People) want something that is a little bit glitzy," says Diane Glynn of Diane R. Glynn Distinctive Jewelry in Jenkintown. "They don't mind putting four bangles on their wrists, with diamonds and some color." "Layer diamond bangles with other bangles or link bracelets for a terrific look," says Norma Mann. "(Or try) an antique bracelet with a more contemporary diamond bangle."

There is a return to old world elegance when it comes to diamond jewelry, and one of the best ways to accomplish this look is with the briolette, a teardrop-shaped stone that is meant to dangle. Says Norma Mann, "Briolettes are beautiful and unusual, feminine and elegant. You put them on and you feel transformed." Faceted 360 degrees around, the briolette pendant or earrings make a statement that expertly complements the feminine fashions many designers paraded down the runway for spring 2001. Imagine a delicately faceted, rain drop-shaped crystal catching the light as it dangles from a chandelier and you've got the idea.

ONE, TWO, THREE AND POTPOURRI

It is virtually impossible to open a fashion magazine and not see an ad for a three stone diamond ring. Whether it's being touted as an engagement ring or an anniversary ring, the three stone ring is an important, albeit not new, look and one that many of our experts say their customers want. In its newest incarnation, it is a mix of fancy colored diamonds and whites.

For some, the appeal of antiques is a tremendous lure. Says Jeffrey Kellmer, of the interest in vintage diamond jewelry, "They are one of a kind pieces and they tell a story. It's their history and their obvious beauty that appeals to people." No proper discussion of diamond jewelry would be complete without mentioning the importance of diamond watches. According to our experts, today's customer wants a watch wardrobe that will take her everywhere, from an afternoon at the mall to an elegant evening in town. "Watches are jewelry and are meant to be worn as such. People are buying multiple watches to change with their jewelry and wardrobe," says Lisa Vinicur. But, whether for a casual or sporty occasion or a more formal one, the common denominator is—you got it—diamonds. The newest trend is the sports watch with a circle of diamonds

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