

# National Post

## The day \$7M dangled from my ears: Introducing two glittering Oscar stars

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Illustrations: Color Photo: John Hayes, National Post / The National Post's Cori Howard shows off \$7-million (US) diamond earrings on Rodeo Drive yesterday. Some as-yet-unnamed celebrity will be wearing these gems at tomorrow's Oscars.

LOS ANGELES - I wore \$7-million on my ears yesterday -- two 50-karat, yellow diamond earrings with a cascade of smaller, white diamonds hanging like chandeliers from the larger stone. Designed by Harry Winston, the Rodeo Drive jewellery establishment that has long prided itself on dressing more Oscar winners than anyone in history, the earrings will be worn by an as-yet-unnamed star to tomorrow's Academy Awards.

They were designed for the younger stars in Hollywood, those who want to look traditional but with their own style, says Jim Haig, director of marketing and sales. And for those stars, this jewellery is free for the Oscars -- but it's also only on loan. Harry Winston often lends its jewellery to the stars for the night; some end up buying what they wear, while others return the pieces, only to have them snatched up by Winston's celebrity-hungry -- and very wealthy -- clientele.

In the tony Rodeo Drive store, more like a museum than a jewellery boutique, big pictures of Hollywood stars flashing fabulous jewellery decorate the walls. There's Uma Thurman in a simple, elegant diamond choker, Liz Taylor in the famous 69 karat, \$30-million pendant (all figures in

U.S. dollars), Goldie Hawn, Gwyneth Paltrow, Jennifer Lopez and Angela Bassett each looking like the glamorous Hollywood stars they are.

"All the pieces in the pictures have been sold," Mr. Haig says as he brings out a selection of this year's Oscar trends.

He sits at one of the four black velvet tables in the store, and lays out a simple diamond necklace (\$400,000), and another with diamond and ruby flowers hanging from it (\$800,000).

"This is classic American beauty," he says. Named after the nominated film, *American Beauty*, these are current examples of the "classic Winston look."

Someone "from the world of music" will be wearing this, Mr. Haig says, pointing to the simpler one. But, again, he can't be more specific. "It's like watching the Olympics and knowing the winners. It would spoil the evening so no one knows who's wearing what until Sunday morning. And just in case someone finds out before that, stylists have three complete wardrobe changes ready for their clients."

But it's the Oscars, more than any other

award show in Los Angeles (and there are many), that set the style for Harry Winston. On the other shows, such as the Grammys or the Golden Globes, stars can get away with looking funky, Mr. Haig says. "But if you're nominated for an Oscar, it's such an honour to belong to a tradition of wonderful actors. It's all about tradition, and people want to look traditional, but in their own way."

The most interesting trend this year is what Mr. Haig calls "glamour with an attitude." In addition to the classic American beauty, this category has drawn those such as Ms. Thurman and Hilary Swank, the young actresses who want to look glamorous and classic, but also stand out.

Then, there are those who are looking for romantic, understated elegance. They would be looking at, say, a \$4- to \$6-million pink diamond ring, like the one Mr. Haig has in front of him now. When I put it on, I am entranced, and this from a woman who has never been into gems, gold or fancy jewellery. A high estimate of the value of silver I normally wear on my fingers: \$50 -- Canadian!

The multi-million-dollar yellow diamond earrings I love, too.

"People look different when they wear our jewellery," Mr. Haig says as I admire myself in the mirror. "They radiate." (Believe me, if I'm radiating, it's because I'm wearing \$7-million).

Mr. Haig takes the earrings away and shows me another hot item, from the "glamour with an attitude category," that will be worn by an as-yet-unnamed star to the Oscars. It's a diamond belly chain. With 171 diamonds, its retail value is about

\$1-million. But what's \$1-million after you've worn \$7-million? I don't bother to try it on.

The absolute jewellery highlight of the Oscars will be seeing who wears the diamond waterfall earrings based on rhinestone earrings worn by Marilyn Monroe, which Winston bought at the recent Christie's auction.

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