

Small Designers Can Make Big Waves on the Red Carpet



While the big jewelry names like Tiffany, Harry Winston and Van Cleef & Arpels often get the most publicity during awards show coverage, don't overlook the innovative independent designers whose creations also grace the red carpets. Celebrity stylist Michael O'Connor says that while a very few big-name stars are paid to wear important pieces, most celebs come to him wanting a particular look and are willing to wear the most beautiful jewelry he can find to achieve it – regardless of the name on it.

"They know when they come to me, they're going to see a variety of pieces and they won't be pressured to wear one or the other," says O'Connor, who appears as a jewelry and style expert on a variety of TV programs. "If they walk into a brand's store on Rodeo Drive, that brand is going to want them to wear that brand. But if they come to me, they'll get an honest opinion and complete whatever style or look it is

that they want.”

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JEWELRY STYLIST
MICHAEL O’CONNOR

For example, at Saturday night’s Screen Actors Guild Awards, Priyanka Chopra drew rave reviews for her asymmetrical Anita Ko drop earrings, *Homeland*’s Sarah Socolovic wore emerald slice and diamond earrings and ring by Davani by A&D Gems, and Stephanie Drake from *Mad Men* wore earrings from designer/retailer Susan Eisen. Socolovic and Drake were among those styled by O’Connor (as was *Downton Abbey*’s Lesley Nicol, who also wore Davani).

When a celebrity wears jewelry from a designer they don’t know, it often happens because they trust the stylist, which can be a huge boon for the designer. “There are a lot of smaller designers and retailers, like Susan Eisen (of Susan Eisen Fine Jewelry & Watches in El Paso, TX) and Gail Kowalski (of Jewelry By Gail in Nag’s Head, NC) and even some of the smaller designers who are New York-based, where celebrities will tell me they’re looking for a specific style, and I know that these designers have the look they need – or can make it. It happened last year with the ear climber. Lauren Parsekian had a very specific idea of the type of ear climber she wanted, and I was able to reach out to Susan Eisen and ask her to make something specific. Another actress asked me for a small bracelet to fit her wrist and wanted a stack, and I reached out to Vahan to make them.”

So when the Academy Awards come around, keep an eye out for lesser-known designers making a big impact via the red carpet. These are often lines that are carried by retailers near you – or that you can access easily via the Internet.









