

# Jewellery that makes the man

Designer Giambattista Valli with Jessica Biel, right, in an oversized necklace. Left, Yurman spiritual beads, \$485, Holt Renfrew; below, gold Cartier ring, \$2,450.



**BLING BREAKS DOWN THE GENDER BARRIER,**  
**WRITES DAVID LIVINGSTONE**

In all the nooks and crannies of fashion, there is no issue more divisive than jewellery for men. You can find on YouTube a hateful harangue by a young black man ranting about thug life and hip hop leading to feminization, homosexuality and "sparkly girl earrings in both your damn ears." At the same time, there is Ray Emery, goaltender for the Ottawa Senators, who has made a pair of diamond stud earrings a signature, happy symbol of his living-by-his-own-rules style. And in baseball, where umpires sometimes have to ask pitchers to cover or remove their blinding bling, there is the Red Sox slugger David Ortiz who has been known to deck his ring in a large strand of icy, bezel-set stones.

Whatever your political take on the situation might be, there is no denying that, when it comes to jewellery for the modern male, all fuddy-duddy rules have been thrown out of the game. In the 20th centu-

ry, men's jewellery was worn for the purpose of either sentiment or function. Most things other than wedding bands and cufflinks would be viewed suspiciously as flashy or unmanly. Today, claiming their right to be fashionably accessorized, men are enjoying unprecedented freedom of choice.

When Giani Turiello, a Toronto designer responsible for Ultima Salon Jewels, decided to make diamond-studded pieces for men (available at George C., 21 Hazelton Ave.), he didn't think he was making any news with bling. His father and uncle wore diamonds. Rather, he was aiming to introduce men to the idea of costume jewellery, made from fine materials (real diamonds and white gold), but in a spirit of fun, not preciousness. Good times may take the shape of a ring, with a gothic, rock star vibe in the form of a pave cross, priced at \$4,100. Or, still in the works, a tubular tie bar with diamonds on either end, tie

bars being another trend in progress at men's jewellery counters.

These days, these counters are often a boneyard, the skull and crossbones enjoying a long life as a fashion icon, now cropping up in everything from baby clothes to bracelets for burly bike builders. Like daggers and the fleur-de-lys, the skull is an image that seems to have drifted into the mainstream from the margins of waterfront tattoo parlours. It's everywhere. At Black Line Studio, at 577 King St. W., which offers several jewellery lines, as well as tattooing and piercing, there is a heavy sterling bracelet with gargoyles for ornament, \$1,490.

At Holt Renfrew, 50 Bloor St. W., there is an Alexander McQueen neck chain hung with not only a skull but also a rib cage, \$325.

Fleshing out the jewellery options at Holts are collections by jewellery designers, such as David Yurman or Kerry MacBride, and also from

Above, goth cuff, \$1,290, at Black Line Studio, 577 King St. W. Bracelet and pendant by Giani Turiello, the Toronto designer behind Ultima Salon Jewels.

fashion labels that have seen potential in the market for men's accessories. These would include Emporio Armani (the current revival of the cornio, that horn-shaped Italian amulet) and Dior Homme. One of the last bold moves that menswear designer Hedi Slimane made before his recent departure from the house was a bangle for guys in clear plastic inscribed with the words, "Loves Me, Loves Me Not," \$130.

To suit the dandified mood that is another aspect of current male fashion, there is the twisted elegance of the Torque ring designed

by Frank Gehry for Tiffany & Co. Also, and always, there is the triple-banded Trinity ring made by Cartier and made popular by the elegantly twisted French artist Jean Cocteau, \$1,650, in the trio of yellow, rose and white gold.

Named after Alberto Santos-Dumont, the Brazilian-born aviator who, wearing one by Cartier, popularized the wristwatch at the beginning of the 20th century, there is a ring in pink gold, \$2,450, so perfectly plain and handsome that it could make any fellow believe he could fly.