

Dare to Dazzle

Bold new designs team classic diamond shapes with sleek, stunning settings

By Ruth Weisberg ■ Photographs by Hornick/Rivlin ■ Styling by Angela Groff for Ennis

IT INHALES LIGHT. IT EXHALES FIRE. IT IS as dazzling as daylight, and as seductive as moonlight. Perhaps the only thing that sparkles more is the love in the eyes of the person who receives one.

Now that your beloved has asked for your hand in marriage, chances are the fourth finger of your left hand is sporting your resounding response. And why not. Your eternal pledge of devotion is as clear, rare, brilliant and rock-solid as the diamond that symbolizes your life-long commitment.

While the diamond engagement ring has become the visible icon for a couple's intent to marry, this precious gemstone is making its dazzling appearance in plenty of other places: Diamond wedding bands, stackable rings, and unusual cuts and shapes are also in

NINE BANDS OF DISTINCTION

No matter what style you prefer, there are plenty of options, from top: a platinum swirl band with fancy yellow diamond accents, \$2,550, Lux Bond & Green, Boston; a burnished white gold and inlaid diamond band, \$473, Alex & Co., Newton Centre; an Eternity band with baguettes and round-cut diamonds, \$4,150, Alex & Co.; a fancy yellow radiant-cut diamond ring with two white trilliant-cut side diamonds, \$23,500, Shreve, Crump & Low; a platinum and diamond wave ring, \$1,775, Alex & Co.; white gold and diamond floral/star band by Van Cleef & Arpels, \$3,700, Dorfman Jewelers, Boston; a Chris-cut Eternity band, \$6,345, Alex & Co.; a platinum and square-cut diamond band, \$23,000, Dorfman Jewelers; and a white gold and diamond band, \$1,025, Lux Bond & Green.



“Dare to Dazzle”

By Ruth Weisberg

It inhales light. It exhales fire. It is as dazzling as daylight, and as seductive as moonlight. Perhaps the only thing that sparkles more is the love in the eyes of the person who receives one.

Now that your beloved has asked for your hand in marriage, chances are the fourth finger of your left hand is sporting your resounding response. And why not. Your eternal pledge of devotion is as clear, rare, brilliant and rock-solid as the diamond that symbolizes your lifelong commitment.

While the diamond engagement ring has become the visible icon for a couple's intent to marry, this precious gemstone is making its dazzling appearance in plenty of other places: Diamond wedding bands, stackable rings, and unusual cuts and shapes are also in vogue. Rare colored diamonds, such as pale pastel pink and breathtaking canary yellow, also have been popping up on the fingers of brides for a stunning variation on the classic gold wedding band.

“When it comes to diamond trends, it's hard to say what's in right now. So many people want so many different things,” says Harry Laskin, general manager of jewelry at Alpha Omega, a jewelry store in Boston, with additional locations in Cambridge and Burlington. “So many people want so many different things. With a jewelry purchasing decision, you either like it or you don't. It's a very emotional purchase.”

Although it's been said that diamonds are a girl's best friend there really is no such thing as a “best diamond.” The properties of all diamonds are the same. It's what your jeweler does with it that sets it apart from all the others. “What makes every diamond different is the way it can be faceted so the beauty can come out of it,” says Laskin.

Ah, the lure and allure of a diamond. Its romantic traditions are as intriguing as this spellbinding jewel. The ancient Greeks, believing the fire of a diamond reflected the constant flame of love, thought them to be teardrops from the gods. In other parts of the world, this earthly gem was assigned celestial powers, believed to be pieces of crystallized lightning that had mysteriously fallen from the heavens. The ancient Romans described a diamond's brilliance as being splinters from falling stars that tipped the arrow of Eros, the god of love. In the Middle Ages, it was believed that a diamond would accentuate the love of a husband for his wife, and had the power to reunite estranged marriage partners. And to dream of diamonds was symbolic of success, wealth, eternal happiness and victory.

We can credit today's custom of presenting a diamond engagement ring to the 15th century betrothal of Archduke Maximilian of Austria to Mary of Burgundy. His proposal in 1477 heeded the words of a trusted advisor who wrote, "At the betrothal your grace must have a ring set with a diamond." The young princess not only accepted Maximilian's grand and showy proposal, and the glittering gemstone that went with it—but the couple were also wed 24 hours later, perhaps going on record as the shortest engagement in history as well.

Now that your beloved has asked your hand in marriage, chances are, the fourth finger of your left hand is sporting your resounding response. And why not. Your eternal pledge of devotion for one another is as clear, rare, brilliant, and rock-solid as the diamond that symbolizes your lifelong commitment.

While the diamond engagement ring has become the visible icon for a couple's intent to marry, there are other emerging trends associated with this precious gemstone. Diamond wedding bands, stackable rings, unusual cuts and shapes are also in vogue. Colored diamonds, such as the pretty pastel pinks and breathtaking canary yellow diamonds, rare as they are, have also been popping up in the pages of elite bridal publications--and on the fingers of brides lucky enough (and husbands rich enough) to own one.

Boston's Signature Ring

Though the traditional, single stone diamond ring continues to be popular among both first and second-time brides, the three-stone ring setting, often called the "Boston ring", is experiencing newfound popularity for engagement rings and in wedding band designs. The dominant center stone (usually a round diamond), is flanked by smaller side stones in round, baguette, trilliant or other shapes set on a plain band.

But there's hardly anything plain about it. Sophie Rhys-Jones' engagement ring, which was given to her by England's Prince Edward in the latest royal romance, has a central, round brilliant-cut stone, flanked by two heart-shaped diamonds.

"In New England, traditional tastes in jewelry are more the norm than the exception," says Laskin of Alpha Omega. "So despite recent trends in diamond jewelry designs and settings, the Boston ring setting is still a top-seller."

Last year, DeBeers is launching its three-stone diamond anniversary ring, a brilliant stunner featuring a center stone of *at least* a half-carat, flanked by two slightly smaller side stones, which are available in a variety of shapes. The trio of stones is meant to represent each facet of the marriage: past, present, and future.

New Diamond Wedding Bands

Traditionally, the wedding band has been a simple, round, gold ring for both the bride *and* the groom. However, a growing number of brides are opting for diamond wedding bands. Depending on the setting, a diamond band can be large enough to be worn by itself, and can serve double duty as the engagement and wedding rings rolled into one.

“The diamond wedding band is very popular now,” avows Michael Lebowitz, merchandise manager of fine jewelry for Shreve Crump & Low in Boston.

“Years ago, most couples bought a plain gold band with simple engraving on it. Nowadays, we’re seeing more couples who are choosing a diamond wedding band, from channel set, ‘eternity style’ bands, to some very creative, custom-made designs. The important thing to keep in mind is that a diamond wedding band should complement, and not compete with, the engagement ring.”

Alex Zamsky concurs. This renowned jewelry designer is the owner of Alex & Company, a full-service jewelry store in Piccadilly Square, which specializes in custom-designed rings. Brides and grooms in the market for unusual diamond wedding bands want something to reflect their own unique distinction as a couple

“When a bride chooses to wear her band next to her engagement ring, the most important thing is for the engagement ring to still be just that--an engagement ring. It should *never* be overpowered by the wedding band. The diamonds in the band should definitely be well-matched in terms of color and brilliance with the diamonds in the engagement ring, and they should not take your focus away from the center.”

Zamsky says that a diamond wedding band is a lot like the bridal couple. You want something compatible, but not an exact match.

“A diamond wedding band should complement the engagement ring. It doesn’t have to match. In fact, it shouldn’t,” he adds. “If you look at some of those designs, sometimes they look like one big, lopsided ring. You don’t see the engagement ring, nor do you see the wedding band. You see one mounting with the diamonds off to the side. I prefer to design a wedding band that will complement the engagement ring. Every stone has within in something that I can find unique about it, and the resulting piece can become even more exquisite.”

When it comes to diamond wedding bands, less is more, advises Barbara Dorfman, co-owner along with her husband Sumner of Dorfman Jewels on Newbury Street in Boston.

“The trend is for more high-quality, high-color, well-matched stones, all the same size, going all the way around the band. The day of big, flashy wedding bands is over. People don’t

want trendy settings in their wedding bands. They are making a purchase that is meant to be worn for a lifetime, so they usually choose a classic style and setting that will stand up over time.”

Just a Hint of Color

There are fancy diamond rings, and then there are the “fancies.” These are diamonds with a strong, pure color, and can be found in pink, blue, canary yellow, and a host of other colors. Because colored diamonds occur rarely, they are very expensive.

“We live in affluent times, and contemporary couples don’t necessarily want quantity, they want quality,” says Lebowitz of Schreve, Crump & Low. “When you see the sheer vibrance, brilliance, and scintillation of a colored diamond, you know you’re looking at something unusual and special, not unlike the bride who chooses to wear one.”

The colorful canary yellow diamonds and pastel pink gemstones are especially coveted gems, adds Barbara Dorfman. “Even though they are very expensive, they are very much in vogue.”

Harry Laskin of Alpha Omega says that despite the rarity and costliness associated with colored diamonds, there is still a strong consumer demand for them.

“I’m very fond of them,” he asserts. “Especially the fancy yellows. They’re beautiful. Just magnificent.”

A Tall Stack

As the name suggests, stackable wedding rings, or multiple wedding rings, are a series of different bands all worn on the same finger. Some brides opt to wear as many as three to five rings, in platinum or various shades of gold, with an enviable number of diamonds. Stackable rings, by the nature of their sheer heft and boldness, are not for the fainthearted or for those prone to swollen fingers.

“They’re a fashion-forward look, but not all that traditional,” cautions Lebowitz. “It is a way for a bride to ‘wear her stripes,’ so to speak, where she is stacking a series of rings alongside her wedding band and engagement ring. But it’s not an easy setting to wear comfortably.”

John Tierney Sr., manager of Lux Bond & Green in Boston, says that multiple wedding rings serve a multitude of purposes.

“There’s been this trend away from big, flashy, so-called ‘cocktail rings or dinner rings.’ Years ago, when a woman got married, she only wore one wedding band. Nowadays, women have multiple bands, some with as many as six or seven diamonds, that she can wear in various combinations. Anniversary wedding rings have now become the biggest anniversary gifts.”

The Shape of the Future

If leading sales trends are any indication, couples are opting for traditional, clean ring designs.

“Right now, I think people want a more tailored look,” says Barbara Dorfman. “In fact, we sell plain, traditional diamond wedding rings 10-to-1 to the more fancy, trendy designs.”

“The emerald-cut diamond has had a rebirth in taste,” observes Michael Lebowitz. Thanks to today’s modern technology, what’s old is new again—in a whole new light. “We’re now able to take that classic shape, and facet the back of the stone much like a round diamond. What you wind up with is an emerald-cut look, but with much more brilliance. It’s like taking a beautiful piece of art and framing it in an entirely new way.”

An emerald-cut stone is the least brilliant, but it’s an altogether different look, says John Tierney. It’s a crisper, icier, colder look, but only in large stones, those that are at least a carat and a half. The smaller stones don’t appear as well here, he says.

No pun intended, but no matter how you cut it, classic diamond shapes are here to stay. “The *overwhelming* trend in diamond shapes is round, round, and round,” emphasizes John Tierney. “There’s been a big emphasis on the cutting of the diamond, and the maximum brilliance is clearly in a round stone. There’s this element of quality, and the public perceives the round stone as more brilliant and sparkly.”

Going Platinum

Another trend that’s made a spectacular comeback is the diamond ring in a platinum setting. “Everything has turned white within the last five to 10 years,” observes Tierney. “Platinum was the rage prior to World War II, and there’s little difference in the head that holds the setting. But once you get away from that, the style is very similar to what was in vogue then.”

Platinum is not only a beautiful metal, but a durable one, too. “It’s stronger than gold, and it holds up well,” adds Harry Laskin. “It’s also a lot more expensive. But remember, when you buy platinum, you’re getting a metal that’s pretty pure. White metals are the hottest thing in diamond ring settings right now.”

Alex Zamsky says that no matter what kind of cut, shape, or diamond ring setting a couple ultimately chooses, it all comes down to the amount of dazzle in the finished product. “Brilliance has to do 100% with the cut of the stone. When it comes to choosing a diamond, brilliance should be your No. 1 factor.”

Come to think of it, your beloved is a rare gem, something precious to behold. So it also should be with the sparkling jewel on the hand he’s taken in marriage. Yours.