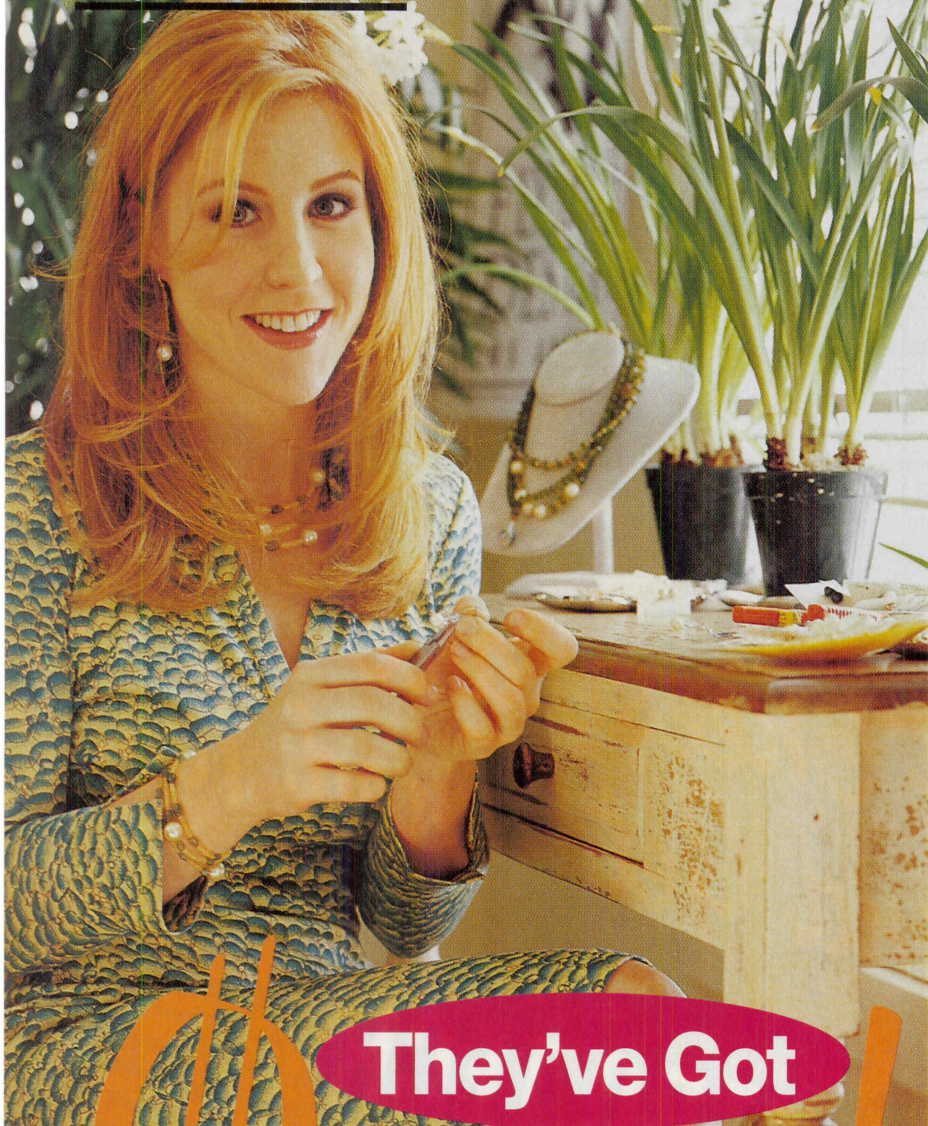


be your own boss



Elyssa Beth Silbert:

She's got a "reel" career going now that ELYSSA B made it on *Sex and the City*

For some people, the lifelong dream of building a business from the ground up inspires the genesis of a company. For Silbert, the motivation came from something far more humbling: A bad eye exam. At 24, this California-based fashion buff was told she needed glasses—and proceeded to misplace pair after pair. So, Silbert decorated an eyeglass chain with precious and semi-precious beads. Compliments flooded in and she realized she was on to something. That's when she took her creative edge to the street. After seven months, Beverly Hills' Saks Fifth Avenue agreed to take on her line. "I attended a bit of college, took some fashion courses, but really had to teach myself how to run a business," says Silbert.

Necklaces were the "obvious next step," so Elyssa read up on gemstones, then plunked down about \$4,000 to launch a jewelry line out of her house, which ultimately included earrings and bracelets. Small boutiques and local stores began carrying the pieces, followed by wholesale showrooms in Los Angeles and New York. Today, Elyssa B. Designs (also available at Barney's New York) sells hundreds of pieces in every color of the rainbow. Actress Cynthia Nixon (Miranda on HBO's *Sex and the City*) wore an Elyssa B. drop necklace on last season's final episode. "That's my necklace," says Silbert. "It's amazing."

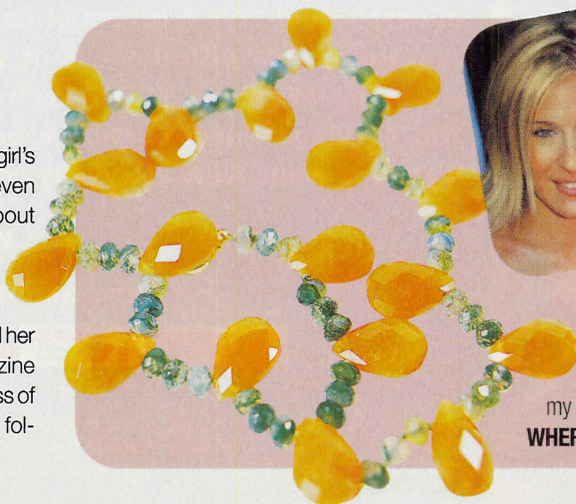
They've Got

Sparkle!

How seven women became shining stars in the jewelry business.

BY HILLARY QUINN

They say that diamonds are a girl's best friend, but for the seven entrepreneurs you'll read about on these pages, semi-precious stones may be even more valuable. Each of these hip jewelry designers started small—one even crafted her first bracelet out of crumpled magazine paper—but have made it big in the business of baubles, drawing a noteworthy celebrity following down their path to success.



STARS WHO WEAR IT: Sarah Jessica Parker, Cynthia Nixon, Julia Roberts, Christina Ricci
PRICE RANGE: \$100-\$20,000 (shown: Red Adventuren with Moss Agate; \$400)

MOMENT SHE KNEW SHE'D "MADE IT": "When I saw Christina Ricci on the cover of Paper magazine wearing one of my pieces. . ."

WHERE TO FIND IT: elyssab.com



SARAH: JOHN BARRETT/GLOBE PHOTOS, INC.; JULIA: TRICIA MEADOWS/GLOBE PHOTOS, INC.; KATE: PHIL ROACH/IPOL, INC./GLOBE PHOTOS, INC.; N'BUSHE: ANDREA RENAULT/GLOBE PHOTOS, INC.; PHOTOGRAPH OF ELYSSA B BY DOMINIQUE VORILLON, FOR VICTORIA

Donna Davis Sadler:

This Detroit woman's got a rock-solid following for her DONNA D semi-precious jewelry

Donna Davis Sadler's 20-year jewelry career began as a hobby she first launched in the early 80s to fill time between rehearsals for her vocal trio, Brandy. Now, she's got celebrities singing her praises! A singer since her college days at Eastern Michigan University (Davis Sadler's group earned 16 gold and platinum albums as back-up singers for James Brown, Aretha Franklin, and others), Donna D found herself rolling paper bracelets and beads out of magazine pages. "I wore my paper bracelets and got compliments wherever I went." Between gigs on the road, she started selling her original creations (\$10 to \$50 a pop) at jewelry parties held in her home. She slowly upgraded by adding semi-precious stones.

Eventually, singing took a backseat to family, and Davis Sadler, now pregnant with her first child, invited local department store buyers to view her unique collection. Next came snake-



skin belts with paper buckles—and the floodgates opened. Saks Fifth Avenue placed an order—so did Bloomingdales. Her husband, Al Sadler, who had been her music manager, became her business manager as well, and helped Davis Sadler establish her own wholesale showroom. "It wasn't like I had set aside money to do this," she

recalls. "It was a gradual thing, and at first, I had only enough money to make the security deposit and rent. I didn't even have a phone." As the Donna D line expanded, over 100 stores nationwide began carrying it; then the recession of the 80s hit, and the couple scaled back to a single retail store, currently located in Detroit. As for those original paper creations? They've segued into elaborate pairings of Austrian crystal, African brass beads, and strands of semi-precious stones.

Back home, she's a celebrity in her own right: "I dress all the Detroit judges," she says proudly. "Underneath those black robes, there's a whole 'lotta Donna D going on!"



STARS WHO WEAR IT:

N'Bushe Wright, Mary Wilson of The Supremes, Janice Combs (mother of hip-hop star P.Diddy)

PRICE RANGE: \$20-\$1,700 (shown: Silver Coil Bracelet, \$400)

MOMENT SHE KNEW THEY'D "MADE IT":

"It was wonderful to see the pieces on the Seventh Avenue runway [in 2001]."

WHERE TO FIND IT: shop.store.yahoo.com/donnad



Timmi Jandro & Heather Askinosie:

Their line's called ENERGY MUSE—it cures the blues—or whatever else ails you

Ask a New Age skeptic to try on a Prosperity necklace and steel yourself for some friendly jibes. Heather Askinosie did just that in 2000, when she presented friends with a string of jade beads clasped with a Chinese coin and asked them "to wear it for 10 days and see if you feel a difference." One of those friends was lifetime pal Timmi Jandro, who sensed a power in the healing jewelry and encouraged Askinosie to expand her concept into a bonafide business.

Askinosie, now 35, learned about "energy"

during several years working as a Feng Shui expert. "I studied with different healers about how energy works itself through the body and through the gem stones, and came up with this necklace," she explains. "I figured that if anyone would say I'm full of it, it would be Timmi—she wasn't into New Age stuff at all." Jandro, also 35, who had 12 years of fashion experience, instantly saw the potential for the spiritual jewelry.

With an initial investment of \$7,000, the women gave birth to Energy Muse. Word of mouth gathered steam and soon the pair found themselves selling to local clients. Within a year, Energy Muse strands, which are based on the healing properties of stones like amethyst and carnelian and strung together in sequences designed to create a specific energy for the wearer (with names like Confidence, Tranquility, and Weight Loss), became available at boutiques nationwide,

such as Fred Segal in Los Angeles.

In the almost three years since the pair went into business, they have sold over 10,000 pieces. "It's not magic," explains Askinosie. "These pieces are just tools with an energetic vibration. You're the driver of your life."

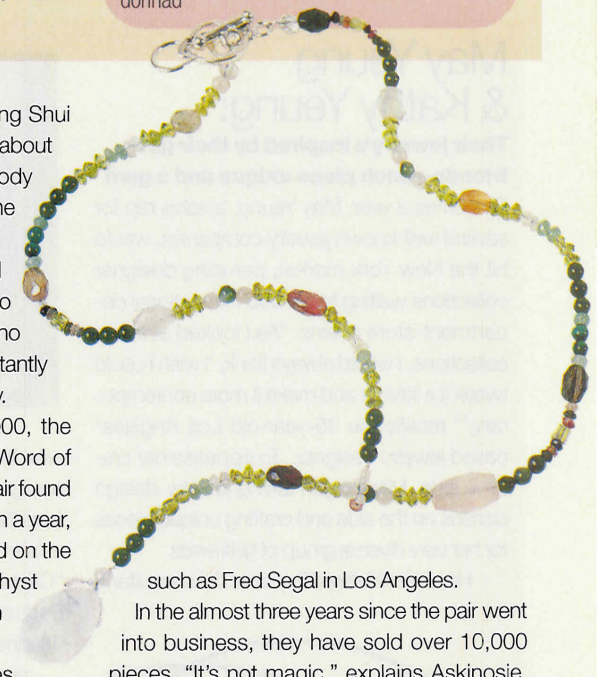


STARS WHO WEAR IT: **Kate Hudson** (Destiny), Kristin Davis (Prosperity, Voice, and Love), Jaime Pressly (Focus), Nicole Kidman (Destiny)

PRICE RANGE: \$60-\$600 (shown: 4th Heart Chakra, \$240)

MOMENT THEY KNEW THEY'D "MADE IT": "We've had calls from people in New York who said they were so depressed from 9/11 that it was difficult to get out of bed, but that the jewelry has helped heal them," says Ackinosie.

WHERE TO FIND IT: energymuse.com





Bettina Duncan:

She fine-crafted a \$4 million success story with \$5,000 worth of jewels

Few women can say that they knew their career path at the age of 12, but Brazilian-born designer Bettina Duncan begs to differ.

A self-confessed jewelry junkie, Duncan spent her childhood afternoons working at a small Rio de Janeiro jewelry store, where she was transfixed by the tantalizing colors and sparkle of necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. "I was the shop's best client," the 37-year-old mother of two laughs. "The owner finally hired me to help polish beads and necklaces." From there, it was on to more glamorous pursuits, including a five-year stint as a film and t.v. actress in South America, where she met an American (her future husband) who was visiting Brazil, and followed him back to the States. That's when Bettina went after her real dream career—jewelry design.

Though the designer spoke little English, she attended New York's Fashion Institute of Technology, followed by the Gemological Institute of America in Los Angeles. From there, it was on to internships at the renowned auction houses Christie's and Sotheby's.

In 1992, with \$5,000 in hand, Duncan plopped herself down at her kitchen table and began crafting the pieces she's now famous for—timeless, intensely feminine



jewelry with an antique edge. After several upscale boutiques in the Los Angeles area agreed to sell her work, the hardworking designer attended an 'open call' at the famous Fred Segal store. "They bought my collection that day and I suddenly realized that soon, everyone was going to see my name," recalls Duncan.

Ten years and dozens of designs later, Duncan's work (which now also includes a handbag collection) rakes in annual sales of over \$4 million in stores such as Neiman Marcus. Duncan is now a co-owner of Fred Segal, the launch pad for her jewelry's remarkable journey.

STARS WHO WEAR IT:

Reese Witherspoon, Britney Spears, Jennifer Lopez, Sharon Osbourne

PRICE RANGE: \$95-\$12,000 (shown: Turquoise Apatite and Suede Necklace with Diamond Heart, \$788)

MOMENT SHE KNEW SHE'D "MADE IT":

"The day Fred Segal agreed to sell my jewelry."

WHERE TO FIND IT: Fred Segal in California

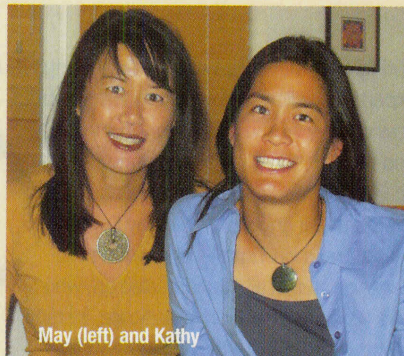


May Yeung & Kathy Yeung:

Their jewelry's inspired by their girlfriends—each piece unique and a gem

Five times a year, May Yeung, a sales rep for several well-known jewelry companies, would hit the New York market, perusing designer collections waiting to be sold into national department-store chains. "As I looked at those collections, I would always think, 'I wish I could tweak it a little bit and make it more contemporary,'" recalls the 36-year-old Los Angeles-based jewelry designer. To appease her creative side, May began taking jewelry-design classes on the side and crafting unique pieces for her very diverse group of girlfriends.

Her sister Kathy, 32, a financial consultant,



May (left) and Kathy

saw the potential in her sister's project. "We always knew we wanted to do something together, businesswise," says Kathy, "so we started small, with jewelry parties at home." "Classic-with-a-twist" became their motto. Each collection is named after a different friend. Joanne showcases gray and white freshwater pearls; Jennifer is based on colorful turquoise. "[All of our collections] have an edgy twist, like a necklace with a Y-

neck, or pearls mixed with semi-precious stones—it's not your classic white-strand look."

With friends urging the pair to forge ahead, May hit the pavement in 1999 and started selling to small boutiques in Los Angeles. "We both put in a small amount of money, which we bootstrapped from our jewelry parties," explains Kathy of the initial investment. "We worked out of our house initially." From there, it was on to major websites (like redenvelope.com) and more recently, Henri Bendel in New York. "To this day, we haven't taken any investors—we don't carry a lot of inventory, and we turn around product fairly quickly," says Kathy. "It's a strategy that clearly seems to work for the sisters, who have experienced triple-digit growth in sales—over 100 percent a year—since the day they started. "We're here for the marathon, not the sprint. We stay on top of the trends, grow our brand and our business, work well with our clients and vendors—but we don't go too fast."

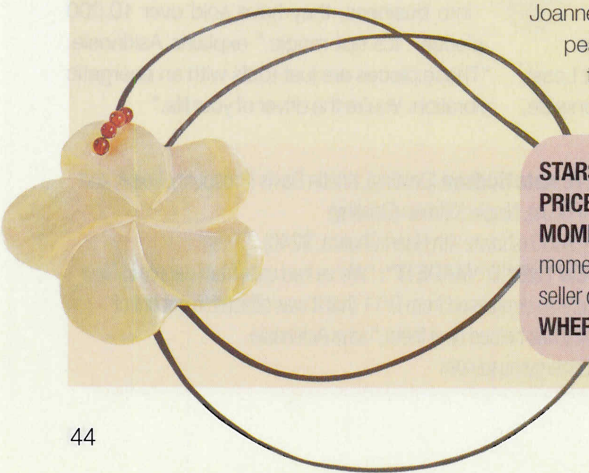
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STARS WHO WEAR IT: *ER*'s Ming-Na Wen, Nancy O'Dell, Kelly Ripa

PRICE RANGE: \$30-\$150 (shown: Mother of Pearl Flower Drop Necklace, \$60)

MOMENT THEY KNEW THEY'D "MADE IT": "There have been multiple moments—like our first order from Henri Bendel—and being a top Mother's Day seller on redenvelope.com."

WHERE TO FIND IT: mayyeung.com



REESE: FITZROY/BARRETT; GLOBE PHOTOS, INC.; MING-NA: COURTESY NBC.