

We Talk To Neil Lane, Jewellery Designer To The Hollywood Elite, On Jessica Simpson's Wedding And His Top Tips.

Jewellery designer and collector Neil Lane has long been a firm favourite amongst the Hollywood elite. From Renee Zellweger, Reese Witherspoon and Demi Moore to Angelina Jolie and Madonna. You would be hard-pressed to find an A-list lady who hasn't commissioned the legendary designer.

His most recent work was for Jessica Simpson and Eric Johnson's wedding. We caught up with him to get the low down on Jess's big day and his top tips for soon-to-be-brides...

GD: How did you decide on the final design for Jessica's wedding jewels?

Our first meeting was focused on my design books. After we agreed on certain details and finishes we then started the sketches. Jessica's wedding earrings were a process, the dress was being designed and made over a long period of time. The fabric of the dress was sheer gold, delicate with a wonder harmonious luminosity. Therefore, the jewels had to be significant but not over the top.

We designed earrings with a delicate line of gold with a 6 carat drop diamond. They were also constructed to have a slight movement with 2 smaller diamonds by the ear. They seemed so perfect when sparkling subtly from under her white veil. The look was magical like a Fairy Tale Princess.



GD: What requirements did Jessica set you?

Working with Jessica and Eric was great fun. Designing her wedding band to compliment her ruby and diamond ring presented some design challenges, she's a girl from Texas so she likes her rocks!

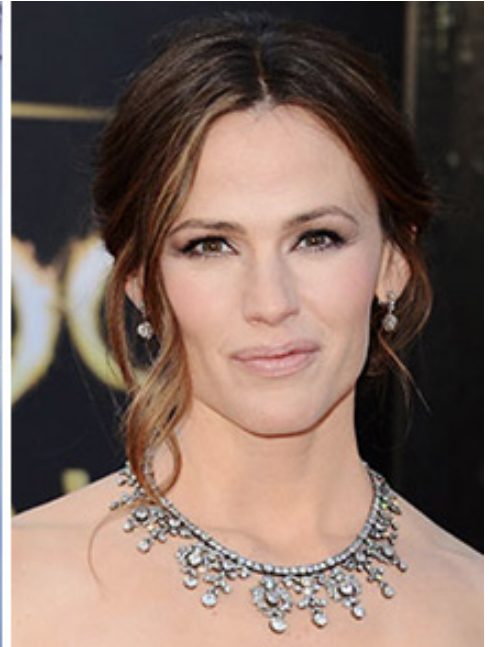
Her engagement ring with its central cushion cut ruby and pear shaped diamonds presented its own set of stylistic

issues! Creating a harmonious look but not necessarily a matching look, and of course it had to be significant and glamorous without overshadowing her engagement ring.

I chose marquise and round cut diamonds for the band, I liked the idea of 4 different cuts; cushion cut ruby, pear, marquise and round cut diamonds. There was a great synergy when the two rings were side by side. We used slight beadwork on the



Jessica's earrings, engagement ring and the happy couple's wedding bands



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edges and an antique engraving on the sides to give it its vintage vibe and a soft rose gold for a romantic feel.

GD: How involved was the groom, Eric Johnson?

Eric was involved in the process but of course he was also very excited about his band, so it was quite fun! Both he and Jessica were very supportive of each other when comparing their bands. When we came up with a design that incorporated a ruby in the center of his band, he was delighted and really appreciated the sentimentality.

GD: What process do you go through when designing unique pieces for a bride?

I don't really have a set formula or process when I'm designing. My first meeting is usually about what they are looking for and to understand their design expectations, every client is different, although they share a similar process. In my world and my job women just want to have the most beautiful ring in the world and my job is to make that happen.

GD: What is your favourite piece to design?

Engagement rings! To be able to capture all the romance that an engagement ring holds, to be able to incorporate my design esthetics that I have developed over a lifetime of work and bring it into this tiny jewel, fascinates me.

GD: What are your top five tips for our Grazia Daily readers picking their own wedding jewellery?

1. Choose wedding jewels that are timeless so they'll be loved for a lifetime.
2. Be careful not to wear a family jewel that doesn't enhance your wedding day look. If Granny's earrings just don't work you can always sew them onto the dress as a pretty detail or tuck them in the garter.
3. Skin tone is so important to consider, some women look better in rose gold than in yellow. Learn your style and what you feel good in.
4. You can never go wrong with classics. Diamond drop earrings or a diamond pendant worn on your wedding day can be worn throughout the year and also on special occasions.
5. Take your time. Don't get overwhelmed. My advice is to enjoy learning about

the options so that you end up with the perfect ring that will be treasured for a lifetime. I have many favourite cuts of diamonds, the cushion cut being one of my most favourites. I also like the Marquis cut because it's beautiful and unique with a long and slender shape—it's what Ellen DeGeneres had me create for Portia De Rossi when they got engaged.

GD: And what tips would you share with the guys out there who are surprising their partners with a ring?

One great tip for a groom-to-be is to go window-shopping with his significant other to learn what style she likes! When working with Nicole Richie and Joel Madden, Nicole wanted to be intimately involved in the design while Joel just wanted her to have the ring of her dreams.

On the other hand, Mark-Paul Gosselaar knew from the start that he wanted an engagement ring to exude romance. He and I worked on creating a gorgeous ring for then-girlfriend Catriona McGinn based on a photo she had given him for inspiration. ■ **HOLLY PEACOCK**

Jessica's
Grandmother's
Diamond
Necklace



Sister Ashlee Simpson's
Earrings



Eric Johnson's Mother
Mary Jo's Chandelier Earrings

Sister Ashlee
Simpson's Ring



Groom
Eric Johnson's
Cufflinks