



Jess Archer, The Resident Magazine's fashion expert, meets Richard Talman, one of the leading goldsmiths and jewellery designers in Sussex

**R**ichard Talman is charmingly polite, incredibly chatty and completely unassuming. I meet the 33-year-old in his Haywards Heath-based studio and witnessed him in action, struck by how delicate his hands are; hands that define his craft for making award-winning bespoke jewellery. But those same hands (and feet!) are quite dangerous too! That's because he's fast becoming an expert in the martial art of Taekwondo. Starting it only three years ago "simply to keep fit", says Richard, he's now a red belt and only two grades away from becoming a top of the grade black belt. It's designing and crafting unique pieces of sparkling jewellery though that gives Talman his biggest kick. He was always destined to be a diamond geezer, given he began his goldsmith studies in London's East End at the Sir John Cass Faculty of Art.

But what attracted him to a life of carats, rings, bracelets and necklaces? "My fascination started when I was a little boy. Aged five, I used to use my pocket money to buy rocks and minerals and my Dad said I was always toying with sparkly little trinkets". That love affair became his profession 17 years ago. After studying, he began an apprenticeship in London's Hatton Garden, the capital of the jewellery trade, working there until, three years ago, he decided to branch out and set up on his own. And at the turn of the new millennium, Richard's hard work was rewarded when he was named the UK's Fine Jeweller of the Year in 2000 and then a year later one of our top 10 goldsmiths in the World

Skills competition in South Korea. "They were great honours to receive", he says with typical understatement, "and it was always an ambition of mine to build my own business and be my own boss". And what makes him tick? "I just love what I do and I'm always in search of perfection. Without happy customers I am nothing and it's great when I am recommended to family and friends by someone I've created a piece for. I don't necessarily see myself just as a jeweller. I'm lucky enough to have been blessed with a skill for creating bespoke designs that, hopefully, exceed my customers' expectations. For me, it's very much a one-to-one service between the customer and me and I always want to create something a little different and individual".

It's not surprising that Richard, who married Jennie two years ago (he obviously made the rings!), classes the diamond as his "timeless favourite", followed closely by the Pink Sapphire and the rarely-seen Pariba Tourmaline, a semi-precious stone with turquoise and blue colours. "I love them all but it's not what I like; it's what my customer wants. At the end of the day, it's about personal taste". Away from work, the personable Talman lists other pastimes as rock climbing, mountain biking, eating out and a nice glass of red wine of any region, as well as his martial art. As we finish the interview, he rubs those delicate hands and gets back to his sparklers. For the personable Richard Talman, given this lifetime love affair, I suspect diamonds really will be forever.

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**DIAMOND  
GEEZER**