

Diamond collectors

The most mesmerising rock of them all, the diamond, transcends fashion, era and cultures, with new-age and yesteryear celebrities alike coming back for more and more

Of course, collecting is a game won by those who have been at it the longest, but hot on the diamond-encrusted heels of luminaries Queen Elizabeth II, Elizabeth Taylor and Madonna are Lady Gaga, Beyoncé and Charlize Theron.

Lady Gaga is regularly lighting up red carpets in one way or another, but the \$30m Tiffany & Co. 128.54-carat Tiffany Yellow Diamond necklace she wore at the 2019 Academy Awards was perfectly aligned to her *A Star is Born* reincarnation. It was, in fact, the very necklace Audrey Hepburn wore when she promoted *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Just a month before, Gaga had dazzled at the Golden Globes with a Tiffany & Co. necklace featuring a 20-carat pear-shaped center stone accompanied by 300 other diamonds and a price tag of \$5m. And it was her emerald-cut Lorraine Schwartz earrings that made the headlines at the 2016 Academy Awards. The 90-carat stunners cost a cool \$8m.

Another A-listener never to be shy with the bling is Beyoncé, who wore Lorraine Schwartz to the 2014 and 2017 Grammy Awards, with \$10m worth of chandelier earrings and cocktail rings at the former and a 400-carat necklace and 'that' ruby ring at the latter – taking the total to \$12m worth of diamonds on the night.

Beyoncé's blast at the 2014 Grammys followed Carrie Underwood rocking a \$31 million necklace designed by Jonathan Arndt the year before.

South Africa is a world leader in diamond mining and Charlize Theron is never afraid to fly her flag. She made a statement at the 2014 Academy Awards with a 21-carat emerald-cut stone Harry Winston necklace that she paired with diamond earrings for a total of \$15.8m worth on Hollywood's biggest night.

Other notable sparklers include Cate Blanchett who wore \$18m-worth of Chopard diamonds at the 2014 Academy Awards, including opal earrings, a diamond bracelet and a pear-shaped diamond ring.

Look no further than the classic fashionistas to see where these hot shots gain inspiration. Highlights of Queen Elizabeth II's private collection include the Timur Ruby, a 352 carat spinel inscribed with the names of the Mughal emperors who were its previous owners, a diamond and sapphire necklace and earrings, known as the Victorian Suite of Sapphire and Diamond set, which were ►

Pictured: Natalie Portman in Harry Winston six-carat cluster necklace and oval drop earrings at the 2012 Oscars



originally designed in 1850 and gifted to the Queen by her father, King George VI, for her wedding.

The Duchess of Windsor was not such a popular figure. As well as scandalously luring King Edward away from his throne in favour of marrying her, Wallis Simpson also managed to accrue a rather spectacular number of jewels during her 35-year marriage to the subsequent Duke of Windsor. The collection, along with a number of items belonging to the Duke, were auctioned at Sotheby's Geneva shortly after Wallis' death in 1987. At the request of the Duchess, the proceeds from the sale, which amounted to around £39m (US\$48m), were donated to the Pasteur Institute in Paris. This was believed to be a gesture of thanks to the Parisian people for taking the couple in after they were banished.

The collection included a Cartier charm bracelet featuring nine jeweled crosses, engraved with love notes 'handwritten' by the Prince, and a custom Van Cleef & Arpels ruby and diamond necklace, which was a gift for Wallis' 40th birthday. Wallis later had the necklace redesigned to feature an additional cascade of rubies down one side. It sold for £2m (US\$2.5 today) when it was auctioned in 1987, along with a diamond and onyx panther bracelet, which was also custom-made by Cartier for the Duchess.

Rumour has it that Madonna paid £4.5m (US\$5.25m) for the latter piece of jewellery when it was sold again in 2010.

Above: Queen Elizabeth II has the best collection of all Right and below: Cate Blanchett and Charlize Theron (2014 Oscars)



American actress, Elizabeth Taylor was also known for her love affair with jewellery and amassed an incredible assortment of jewels in her lifetime, largely thanks to her on-off husband Richard Burton. The entire collection was sold

through Christie's New York in 2011 at approximately £74.9m. Some of the most famous pieces in the collection included La Peregrina, a 16th-century pearl, once owned by Mary Tudor, which was gifted to Taylor and with which Cartier created a pearl, diamond and ruby necklace (it sold for £7.6m); the Krupp diamond ring, a potentially flawless emerald cut diamond ring, which was a gift from Burton in 1968; and a Van Cleef & Arpels ruby and diamond ring of 8.24 carats, another gift from Burton to Taylor.

The formidable Shakespeare actor Burton is said to have promised the actress a 'perfect' red ruby, but it was four years before he tucked a small box into the bottom of Taylor's Christmas stocking, which she nearly missed when opening her gifts. ■

