



Oscars' best friend

Jewellery is as important to the Oscars as the awards themselves, writes *Sarah Assenti*, adding a literal sparkle to the occasion. We look at the pieces that have appeared on the Academy Awards red carpet, making headlines worldwide

An Oscar-winning performance can turn a Hollywood starlet into a household name. Almost as important is how the winning nominee collects their famous statuette. Now in its 94th year, the Academy Awards is the jewel of the awards show season, and has become a must-watch event for cinephiles around the world. Pandemic notwithstanding, the annual show traditionally takes place in late February to March, and the glamorous threads on L.A.'s Dolby Theatre red carpet

often receive as many column inches as the Best Picture winner.

Favouring Vera Wang or vintage Valentino, what an actor chooses to wear can cement their position on Best Dressed or Worst Dressed lists for decades to come, and nothing quite helps the former like a piece of statement jewellery. Actors have donned the finest gems from the most prestigious houses since the Oscars first began in the late 1920s, one notable standout being 1940 Best Actress winner Vivien Leigh's aquamarine pendant from

Van Cleef & Arpels. A gift from then-husband, Lawrence Olivier, for her starring role in *Gone with the Wind*, Leigh wore the gem on a long gold chain for the occasion.

During World War II and into the late 1940s, the Oscars were a more sombre affair, with conservative dressing and impassioned political speeches on the agenda. This shift in tone even impacted the shimmering statuette itself. Traditionally made from solid bronze and plated in 24-carat gold, for a three-year period Oscars were made of

painted plaster. Mirroring the 1950s fashion trend of femininity, awards season accessories remained understated – Grace Kelley's delicate pearl earrings for her 1955 win being one such example. Things changed in 1966, when the Oscars began broadcasting in colour, and at-home audiences were able ▶

Above: In 2009, Angelina Jolie won a Best Actress nomination for *Changeling* and revived a trend for coloured stones, with earrings by Lorraine Schwartz



to appreciate the glitz and glamour of the occasion for the first time. In response, red carpet dressing stepped up the wow factor, and over the next two decades, luxury brands began to loan out gowns and accessories, rather than actors select outfits from their own closets.

Never one to be underdressed or out done, Elizabeth Taylor's red carpet looks featured her own vast collection of jewels, from Bulgari to Cartier. For the 1970 Awards, Taylor wore what's now known as The Taylor-Burton Diamond. Originally cut into the shape of a pear by Harry Winston, Taylor's then-husband Richard Burton was in a bidding war with Cartier over

Above: Keira Knightley in 2006 wearing a 1960s Bulgari necklace Above right: Gal Gadot at the 2018 Oscars, debuting a Tiffany & Co necklace Right: Lady Gaga also in Tiffany & Co

the 68-carat diamond, eventually securing it for US\$1.1m. After Taylor complained that the ring was too heavy, the diamond was reset into a custom necklace, and accessorised for the Oscars with matching earrings and a plunging neckline.

With the rise of social media, the last decade has seen actors go all-out with their Oscars-night accessories, tapping Tiffany and Co, Lorraine Schwartz and Chopard for cuff bracelets, drop earrings and diamond pendants. While a demure diamond bracelet is elegant and timeless, colour and texture have become increasingly popular on the red carpet in recent years, with rubies, aquamarines, tourmaline and emeralds making an appearance on the ears and décolletages of Hollywood's elite. Leading men aren't averse to showing a little sparkle either – with Best Supporting Actor, Daniel Kaluuya, sporting a diamond

Cartier tennis necklace at the 2021 Oscars, and fellow nominee Leslie Odom Jr rocking a Panthère de Cartier 18-carat gold ring. Jewels have shown up at the Oscars on the other side of the screen, too, with Oscar-winning films featuring elaborate, screen-stealing gems, like the opulent gold headdresses in *Cleopatra*, the fiction 50-carat blue diamond in *Titanic*, and Holly Golightly's tiaras and necklaces in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. For promotion of the 1961 cult classic, Audrey Hepburn wore Tiffany & Co's 128-carat yellow diamond – the Tiffany Diamond – becoming only the second person to do so. Originally set in an ornate diamond ribbon necklace, the legendary diamond wasn't worn again until the 2019 Oscars, this time by Lady Gaga, who made the US\$30m stone shine, pairing it with vintage-inspired strapless black Alexander McQueen gown.

Only the stars and their stylists know what looks will appear on this year's red carpet, but we predict more glamour, more carats, and more show-stopping accessory moments. ■

