



Owned or Loaned?

BY REVEALING THE SECRETS OF HOW THEY ARRIVED AT THEIR RAVISHING STATE, STARS STRIP THEMSELVES OF THE MYSTERY THAT ELEVATES THEM FROM MERE MORTALS TO LEGENDS.

DAWN MOORE SUGGESTS THE ELEGANT THING IS NOT TO ASK.

I AM A CHILD OF HOLLYWOOD, yet no matter how much I am behind the scenes, on sets, or dealing with publicists, the fantasies spun like cotton candy here are as intoxicating to me as to a grocery clerk in Kansas.

But the trend to tell all during awards season gives me pause. When did it become OK for a movie star to dispel the fantasy by announcing she had borrowed everything she had on? For that matter, when did it become OK to draw back the curtain and ask? Martin Katz, premier jeweler to red-carpet mavens, sighs for the early days (a mere ten years ago) when “interviewers didn’t ask. Appreciative actresses would offer the information; it came out of their love for what they were wearing. It was from the heart.” I recently watched, slack-jawed, as an A-list actress read her thanks from an index card to be sure she “didn’t forget anyone.” No less a master of the red-carpet interview than *Variety*’s Army Archerd recalls a time when “we were more interested in the person than what the person was wearing.”

The very meaning of *glamour* is illusion or witchcraft, and casting a spell is exactly what movie stars have done since Theda Bara appeared on screen wearing little more than a jeweled asp. What today’s stars don’t realize is that by revealing the secrets of how they arrived at their ravishing state they strip themselves of the mystery that elevates them from mere mortals to legends. Can you imagine Marilyn Monroe explaining that she got her sexy “diamond” chandelier earrings from Woolworth’s? Or Garbo deconstructing her extraordinary style? Never.

Borrowing jewels and gowns is not a 21st-century phenomenon. In the days of studio contracts, actresses were regularly dressed for public appearances through the wardrobe department if they couldn’t manage a white fox stole and ten-carat rock on their own. At the second Academy Awards dinner in 1930, Norma Shearer accepted her Oscar for *The Divorcee* wearing a mink-trimmed gown created by Adrian for the film and dripping in diamonds: five bracelets on one arm, one on the other, a massive ring, and a long delicate pendant necklace. The diamonds, hers; the gown, the studio’s. On the

other hand, Gloria Swanson, the woman who set the gold (platinum?) standard for glamour, knew her fans wanted to see her dazzle and she didn’t disappoint. In 1924 alone, she wore \$5 million worth of rented jewelry, which she paid for herself at ten cents on the dollar. Neither Shearer nor Swanson would have dreamed of reporting those truths, and, frankly, we didn’t want to know; we wanted to believe they ate breakfast swathed in sable and sapphires.

The women we consider icons of Hollywood’s golden age—Marlene Dietrich, Joan Crawford, Merle Oberon, and Paulette Goddard—were all known for their personal collections of mouth-watering gems. Dietrich so loved her extraordinary diamond cuff bracelets, each with an emerald cabochon the size of a chicken’s egg, that she insisted on wearing them and the rest of her jewels in her films—as did Goddard, Jean Harlow, Hedy Lamarr, Lana Turner, Ava Gardner, Grace Kelly, and Barbara Stanwyck. But no actress has so relished a mutual love affair with jewels as Elizabeth Taylor, owning and wearing a collection rivaling that of the British royal family. By wearing their jewels both on screen and at the Troc or Ciro’s, each legendary sorceress created a veil of gold dust from behind which she glimmered, and we were bewitched.

Who today traverses the red carpet in her own baubles? Women who are comfortable in their own skin and value the investment of real jewels. Oprah, of course. Rita Wilson always looks like a movie star, owns her jewels, and cheekily replies to inquiries of “whose jewels are you wearing?” with “Tom Hanks’s.” In the classic tradition, Barbra Streisand buys her own vintage gems and wears them in her films, as does connoisseur Jennifer Tilly. Kate Capshaw, too, has an elegant collection, but tends to borrow for public appearances. Jennifer Lopez and Gwyneth Paltrow own important gems yet also borrow for red-carpet duty. What you don’t hear from these stylish women is which is which—owned or loaned. That’s elegance.

At last year’s Emmys, under the red-carpet inquisition, Teri Hatcher declared, “But the shoes are mine, if you can believe that!” I can, but I’ll take my glamour with a dose of mystery. I’d rather enjoy the view through the hazy glow of stardust. **D**