

Write Up

"What women want..."

By Lyle Walters

Extract from article "All That Glitters"

Diamonds may be some girls' best friend, but diamond simulants are less stressful friends to have -- as in, they needn't bankrupt said girls (or their partners) and, when done right, can sparkle like the real thing.

Australian-born Sally Cowley took note of simulants' steadily increasing popularity during her 14-year stint in Saudi Arabia. She recalls a lunch where she noticed her friend's gorgeous earrings as the impetus for a passion that became a multinational enterprise. The "authentic" brilliance of those first earrings sparked her entrepreneurial interest.

Initial research revealed the frequent disparity between her friends' hopes for quality and the oft-disappointing reality. Sally saw a niche and decided to fill it by creating pieces using 18k yellow and white gold and simulant stones sourced in Asia due to the high expertise in the cutting process here. She started out with a small range of products, running events out of her home.

The dynamic mum of two attributes her early success to "the knock-on effect of comments from friends to friends", many of whom were fellow expats who helped her develop other markets by becoming distributors in their native Europe, North America, Australia, etc. "No major marketing was necessary," Sally says. "The product has sold itself...The value lies in the gold content and the handcrafting element -- we use only very high quality, hand-cut stones."

Precious, semiprecious and colored diamond simulant stones often add splashes of color to her jeweler.



Sally works closely with her manufacturing team to create pieces inspired by leading brands as well as taking note of trends in magazines, trade shows, and what's seen on stylish people out and about.

Desert Diamonds recently opened their new showroom in the ground floor of Mahatun Plaza, partly as a response to increasing requests for bespoke service. About 30 percent of their items are custom-made for clients at the moment. Walk-in clients can purchase pieces from Desert Diamonds collections or they can brainstorm with DD consultants to create their own designs.

"You can have a custom ring within three to five weeks," Sally says. "At a typical 'High Street' jewelers you'd usually have to buy only from their selections."

Taking a cue from Thai hospitality, Sally's team is keen to keep the showroom's ambience inviting and pleasant. "You can come and relax, have a refreshment, have a browse," she assures. "There's no pressure to buy, just enjoy getting to know our products."

Growing legions of pragmatic people are wising up to the myth that only a diamond says forever (or happy birthday, Christmas, mother's day, etc.). Sally says Desert Diamonds have "made exquisite engagement rings that look a million dollars but in the end, cost about \$500 a piece." Sounds grand to this pragmatic lass.

Prepare to be blinded by the brilliance at www.desertdiamondsco.com.

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