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INSPIRING INDEPENDENTS 2011, PART 1

Welcome to the run down of the top 50 Inspiring Independents 2011. This supplement was started last year in Retail Jeweller and was so popular that not only have we brought it back for a second year, we've also upped it to 50.

One of the questions we've constantly asked through out this process is what makes these retailers inspiring and we've found that there just isn't one defining quality.

Some of the retailers do amazing events and have clever, creative ways of marketing their business; others are on this list because of their brilliant product choice; for others their USP is their incredible store design. It could be their commitment to sourcing stones, championing ethics or showcasing great design talent or because they offer their customers the best service imaginable.

Whatever the reason they are on this list because their fellow retailers seriously rate them.

And that is one of the most important things about this list. We didn't want it to be something the editorial team chose, because, although we know this industry well, we don't run jewellery and watch stores and therefore don't have the intimate knowledge that comes from actually being there building up a business that's a success.

That is why we looked to those who do know, the owners of the industry's independents themselves, to create this list and determine its order.

We hope you agree that all the people on this list have something special about them because that really is the one quality that unites them.

Laura McCreddie Editor, Retail Jeweller

1. Boodles

Boodles House, Lord Street, Liverpool

Who you should know

Martin and Nicholas Wainwright, joint managing directors

Brands and designers include

Patek Philippe, Wellendorff

"Truly inspiring fine jewellery pieces and great window displays" enthused one respondent; "they've gone from independent to household name in one generation" said another. A third praised the Wainwrights for creating a "luxury British jewellery brand from a provincial jewellery business with a strong presence in the capital" and said: "In terms of image, they rival any of their continental competitors".

The rest of the industry certainly agreed because, although sharing it with EC One this year, for the second year in a row Boodles claims the top spot.



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First starting out in 1798 in Liverpool and eventually bought in 1910 by the Wainwright family - who owned another jewellers in Liverpool but bought Boodle and Dunthorne and amalgamated the two stores - Boodles remains as relevant today as it was then. In 2004, the company dropped the Dunthorne arm of its name and became simply Boodles.

Nicholas and Martin Wainwright started at the company in 1992, succeeding their father Captain Anthony Wainwright. Nicholas took charge of creative direction, while Michael was charged with developing the commercial side of the business. It has been under their stewardship that the company has become what it is today. As well as bringing the company's focus to the acquisition of rare gemstones, they ensured the jewellery was created by a highly skilled in-house design team and made by British master craftsmen.

And if the exquisite jewellery isn't enough, Boodles also supports numerous charities such as the Rainbow Trust Children's Charity and, in keeping with its Liverpool roots, Alder Hey Children's Hospital's Imagine Appeal.

"We are extremely flattered to receive this vote from our peers," says Michael Wainwright. "We have tried to be as authentic and independent as possible in everything we do. We are lucky to have such an excellent design team and showroom managers who we can rely on."

And it looks like the industry agrees.

1. EC One

56 Ledbury Road, London

Who you should know

Jos and Alison Skeates, co-owners

Brands and designers include

Alex Monroe, Alexandra Franchoise, Alexis Bittar, Amanda Coleman, Ana de Costa, Austique, Avasarah, Becca, Corinne Hamak, EC One, Dark Horse Ornament

This year is one of celebration for London retailer EC One. The winner of the first ever Boutique Retailer of the Year category at July's UK Jewellery Awards 2011, it now joins Boodles in the top spot as the triumphant pack leader of a truly impressive list of inspiring independent retail jewellers.

One of the UK Jewellery Awards' judges proclaimed: "They certainly have an eye for designers." And when you look at EC One's exciting designer portfolio you can't argue with that.

The boutique retailer - comprising a store complete with open-plan market in Clerkenwell's Exmouth Market and an outlet in Notting Hill, west London - is run by husband-and-wife team, goldsmith Jos and buyer Alison Skeates. Both are keen to maintain EC One's individuality and so have no qualms in moving away from a designer when their work becomes too readily available elsewhere.



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Within the jewellery industry, the team at EC One has become known for its excellent business model and an openness that welcomes experience and knowledge sharing. It has not been plain sailing for the London boutique however, which had to close its Chiswick store when the recession took its toll in 2009. Although disappointed, the team took the opportunity to look closely at its strategy and have used the experience to flourish into the award-winning business it is today.

A popular retailer among its peers, EC One was described by one respondent as having “great galleries with a fine eye and attitude”. Another said: “I have always liked their store and their concept. I think they do what they do better than so many others who do something similar”.

It is this level of respect that has won EC One joint top spot status, an achievement welcomed by Jos Skeates. “With so much doom and gloom on the high street it’s great to be involved in something positive like inspiring independents,” he says.

3 Marmalade Jewellery

23 Turnham Green Terrace, London

Who you should know

Simon Johnson, owner

Brands and designers include

Lucy Q, Rachel Galley

Marmalade Jewellery runs an annual marmalade-making competition. Need we say more about why this retailer is one of the best independents out there?

On placing Marmalade in their top five, one voter exclaimed, “I can’t believe they hold a marmalade competition!” But they do - as part of the Bedford Park Festival. Entrants collect oranges from the jewellery shop and are marked on two categories: classic Seville orange and mixed citrus fruits. Simply brilliant and our respondents agreed, with one saying Marmalade is “always innovative and thinking of new and interesting marketing solutions”.

But there is far more to Marmalade than cultivating a community of preserve enthusiasts. The gorgeous store is a feast for the eyes and the retailer is creative in every aspect including its branding, interior design, product selection, lighting and displays. Specialising in engagement, wedding and eternity rings, its bespoke service promises to satisfy, regardless of an individual’s requirements and budget.

Also supportive of its staff, Marmalade sponsors its design team in getting recognised national qualifications from various institutions, including the National Association of Goldsmiths and the Gemological Institute of America. The retailer has two degree-level designers in store and goldsmiths with over 120 years’ combined experience in the workshop.



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One of our respondents praised the store's "adventurous and quirky displays", while another summed up the appeal saying it is "fun, knows its market and has all the qualities a great independent should have". Well said.

4 Nicholas James

16-18 Hatton Garden, London

Who you should know

Nick Fitch, owner

Brands and designers include

Cardillac, Elizabeth Powell, Henrich & Denzel, Weissenstein

Described by someone in the industry as "the light at the end of Hatton Garden," Nicholas James certainly is different from the usual Garden store. Its modernist approach to jewellery is evident in the decor; predominantly white, it feels like something out of Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey, if Kubrick had decided that what the Pan-Am space shuttle really needed was a motorbike and a statue of a dog.

The quirks obviously work because, in 2005 when it opened, this store beat the Apple Store in London's Regent Street for the award of Best Shop Design at the British Retail Interior Design Awards.

In keeping with the clean, white brightness of the store, the designs are predominantly modern, in platinum and feature diamonds but are not completely avant garde.

The store is the brainchild of Nick Fitch, whose life has been involved with diamonds since his father got a job at De Beers because one of the directors took a chance on his chauffeur's son. Fitch's knowledge of diamonds made him a respected diamond merchant but his talent for designing innovative design-led pieces secured his place as a leading industry figure.

5 Wave Contemporary Jewellery

20 Finkle Street, Kendal, Cumbria

Who you should know

Jo and Paul Henderson, co-owners

Brands and designers include

Baume & Mercier, Calgaro, Calvin Klein, Emporio Armani, Gucci, Oris, Paul Spurgeon, Shaun Leane, Stephen Webster



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This husband-and-wife duo Jo and Paul set up Wave in 2001 with the idea of providing customers with jewellery that was designed with flair, was unique and stood the test of time.

They opened their first boutique in Kendal in the Lake District and since then the business has expanded to include four more stores including one in Beauchamp Place in Knightsbridge. Their business model has certainly worked. Jewellery from Wave has featured in numerous fashion magazines, while Italian Vogue called it

the best place to shop for designer jewellery in London.

The other thing for which Wave is well known is its diamonds. Paul and Jo travel the world sourcing the rarest specimens.

The store design fits with the Hendersons' aesthetic - it is cool, contemporary but far from intimidating.

Those who voted for Wave commented on its "good stock offering and attention to detail", as well as saying they were inspired by the retailer because it proved that "growth is possible without losing identity".

6 Jeremy France Jewellers

1 Walcote Place, High Street, Winchester

Who you should know

Jeremy and Sarah France, owners

Brands and designers include

Fope, Georg Jensen, Links of London, Lovelinks

This independent is a bit of a stalwart of the industry and the husband-and-wife team, Jeremy and Sarah, who front the business are local celebrities, as is their dog, Daisy.

There are so many elements that ensure this company is ahead of its time, one of which is its visible workshop - initially located at the back of the original shop, this has since moved to larger premises across the road. Another is the fact that Jeremy and Sarah regularly go to mines to source stones and have incorporated into the firm a non-hierarchical team dynamic, which means no one is the boss and everyone is responsible for some part of the business.

They are also active in the local community and cooperate with the Royal Hampshire County Hospital to create silver ring splints to aid patients who have progressive arthritis in the fingers.

But, when it comes to what makes Jeremy France stand out, you don't just have to take our word for it. One of the respondents to our survey said this is a "beautiful shop where staff are very helpful and always manage to know exactly what you are looking for", while another said that "their service and attention to detail is second to none".



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The store has been part of the Winchester landscape for the past 21 years and its combination of great brands and a fantastic onsite design team has made it a success. It has won various awards, including two UK Jewellery Awards, a Winchester Business of the Year award and is a regular name on the UK Jewellery Awards finalists' list.

As one customer said: "They have always provided excellent customer service, including spending over an hour with me on two separate occasions when I chose my engagement and wedding ring".

This is an independent that not only impresses customers; it also inspires those in the industry.

7 Hamilton & Inches

87 George Street, Edinburgh

Who you should know

Stephen Paterson, managing director

Brands and designers include

Georg Jensen, H Stern, Stephen Webster

Hamilton & Inches is a well-known name within the jewellery trade and beyond, and is synonymous with quality and elegance. Having had a silversmith focus since 1866, the company has a strong heritage and loyal customer base.

It has two shops, one in Edinburgh's Princes Street and another in London, but it is the Scotland-based premises that is the real head-turner. It is a stunningly dignified building with a modern fascia that remains in keeping with its chic interior. "Blessed with the most beautiful store in the UK, if not Europe, Hamilton & Inches use it to great effect with gorgeous stock, professionally presented," said one of its peers. Uniquely they combine all this with a full silversmithing department.

The jeweller also has a dedicated repairs and valuations department situated in the rear of its Edinburgh store. Resident jewellers and silversmiths are on hand to give jewellery the occasional servicing and regular cleaning that it requires.

As well as having an excellent appearance and service, Hamilton & Inches has a product range with similar appeal. It has a wide range of fine jewellery to delight and, while Stephen Webster and Georg Jensen are some of the sought-after names on offer, it also has various ranges in silver, most of which are made in the retailer's own workshop.

A jeweller with a great reputation, Hamilton & Inches continues to successfully nurture its image, resulting in one of our respondents saying: "I really like their website and their marketing images - [they] always stay ahead of the rest".



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8 Clive Ranger

2/4 Castle Arcade, Cardiff

Who you should know

Richard Slack, managing director

Brands and designers include

Björg, Casa Gi, Clogau, Hot Diamonds, Jersey Pearl, Paul Spurgeon, PepperPink

Diamonds are at the heart of this business, which isn't surprising as managing director Richard Slack - nephew of Clive Ranger - is a qualified gemmologist and diamond expert. Slack, and business partner Richard Thomas, work very closely with the in-house design team to develop its diamond ranges using the full gamut of stones from fancy cut to coloured. The business actually has its own specialised gem laboratory, which houses the latest gemmological instruments for grading and identifying precious stones.

Set up in 1977, Clive Ranger has been famous for its diamond rings and jewellery ever since, but diamonds aren't the only thing it does well. Slack got a name for himself as a canny buyer, able to spot a trend; he is not afraid to contrast brands and designers, which is why Clogau Gold shares store space with Björg or Paul Spurgeon.

Clive Ranger was described by one survey respondent as having a "great online presence and huge stock offering, backed by exceptional customer service," while another said it is a "market leader in its field". Under Slack and his team, it is going from strength to strength - just one of the many reasons why it deserves a place in this year's top 50.

9 Lunn's

Queen's Arcade, Belfast

Who you should know

John Lunn, store director, Queen's Arcade

Brands and designers include

Breitling, Bulgari, Cartier, Chanel, Chopard, Gucci, Hearts on Fire, Mikimoto, Patek Philippe

Another family business makes it into our top 50 retail jewellers. Lunn's was established by the grandfather of current store director John Lunn 50 years ago; since then three generations of the family have worked in the company, which comprises three stores in total - two in Belfast and one in Londonderry.



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In its own words, Lunn's aims to be "a world-class jeweller, with world-class service and a world-class reputation". John Lunn said: "Our big focus is wowing the customer. We have worked intensely hard at that and do everything we can to ensure our customers have the best experience they can when they come to us". And if the comments on the retailer's website are anything to go by, its customers are obviously impressed.

"We were treated as if we were regular customers who would spend large sums of money," commented one, while another said: "I have always had a brilliant experience here and have been treated so well. I am so impressed and I wouldn't go anywhere else". The company has also impressed the industry, in which John Lunn is active. As well as being a member of the Houlden Group, he was also one of the judges for the inaugural Designer of Excellence competition, which took place at The Jewellery Show at Spring Fair in February of this year.

10 Annoushka

41 Cadogan Gardens, London

Who you should know

Annoushka Ducas, owner and designer

Brands and designers include

Bochic, Fei Liu, Topall, Wendy Yue

Annoushka Ducas is probably most well known for setting up Links of London with her husband John Ayton. In doing so, they created one of the biggest jewellery success stories of the 1990s, kickstarted the democratisation of luxury and proved that silver jewellery didn't necessarily mean disposable jewellery.

Ducas's subsequent venture is completely different, although an element of the ethos that started Links remains. She said she wanted to start her eponymous brand in order to "remove the feeling of reverence that so often surrounds the whole experience of buying and wearing fine jewellery. I want our pieces to be worn every day".

Ducas's Sloane Square boutique certainly helps to compound that. Although the jewellery is expensive, the set-up isn't intimidating and there is an air of

relaxed glamour to how the collections are displayed.

Ducas does have her own brand displayed in store but also showcases other designers. Passionate about seeking out new talent, she oversees an annual jewellery design project with students at Central Saint Martins and is part of a mentoring programme with the Royal College of Art.

Ducas was described in our survey as having "achieved an amazing amount in a very short time". One respondent said she is a "product and merchandising innovator" and praised her for being a "leader in the fine jewellery sector".



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We think she definitely deserves her place in our top 50.

11 Justice

1 Burton Street, Bath

Who you should know

Jon and Lisa Quayle, co-owners

Brands and designers include

Alexander Davis, Bell & Ross, Bremont, Bunz, Dower & Hall, Fei Liu, Hamilton, Maurice Lacroix, Pandora, Shaun Leane

Jon Quayle's jewellery career started in Camden Market - a long way from the genteel locales of Bath and Winchester, where his two Justice emporiums are based. The humble beginnings sparked in Quayle a love of British design that moving up in the world hasn't diminished. Despite broadening his retail horizons, Justice was originally created to showcase the best of British; from Shaun Leane, Fei Liu, Alexander Davis, Dower & Hall and Stephen Webster, the list of designers reads like a roll call of UK talent.

It is not just the designers that are achingly cool; the store aesthetic sets off the jewellery perfectly. The watch brands are definitely chosen to educate the Hampshire and Bath clientele and, although there are recognisable brands such as Hermes, Bell & Ross and Bremont, brands such as Maurice Lacroix and Manometro & Contagiri by Giuliano Mazzuoli also feature.

As one survey respondent said: "This store has a bold selection of interesting jewellery, both self-designed and brought in". We couldn't agree more.

12 Wakefields

11 West Street, Horsham, West Sussex

Who you should know

Dominic and Melanie Wakefield,

managing directors

Brands and designers include

Baccarat, Citizen, Lalique, Links of London, Longines, Pandora, Tissot

This summer, Wakefields celebrated its centenary with a community that has been well served by four generations of the family. Since 1911, this family-run business has been keeping shoppers satisfied with a varied



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jewellery and watch selection in a pleasurable shopping environment.

Situated in the historic market town of Horsham in West Sussex, Wakefields is a name known among locals and a must-visit destination for those passing through. The jeweller celebrated its significant birthday with a vintage tea party.

Boasting a rich heritage, the team behind the company is forward thinking, consistently keeping pace with trends and offering a jewellery selection that meets both traditional and contemporary demands. One of our retailers praised Wakefields for being, "a traditional family business that [has] embraced the new wave of fashion jewellery brands and invested the profits wisely in both their store and traditional merchandise". Another voter seconded that opinion by describing Wakefields as "a true family-run business with traditional values but [one that is] moving with the times to create a modern shopping experience".

As well as a varied product portfolio, the retailer puts a strong emphasis on excellent customer care and is known for its willingness to share with other retailers the wisdom of its experience and its best practice principles. Evoking such admiration among customers and peers alike, Wakefields not only has a full history but is set for an exciting future.

13 Steffan's

2-4 Abington Square, Northampton

Who you should know

Stef Suter, owner, Wes Suter, managing director

Brands and designers include

Björg, Daisy, Gc, Gucci, Links of London, Monica Vinader, Raymond Weil, Pandora, Shaun Leane, Stephen Webster, Theo Fennell, Thomas Sabo

Steffan's the Jewellers has become a bit of an industry legend. This family enterprise has notched up an impressive reputation in the industry as a retailer that gets there first. It was one of the early adopters of the branded jewellery model and its Northampton flagship reads like a who's who of well-known jewellery names from Pandora and Thomas Sabo to higher-end pieces from the likes of Shaun Leane, Stephen Webster and Theo Fennell. However, Steffan's doesn't only take on brands once their reputation is secure - Björg, a relative unknown in UK jewellery circles, is already stocked there and Stef Suter is constantly on the lookout for the next big success story.

Steffan's has also been pioneering when it comes to ecommerce. Quick to adopt things such as apps and 3D - customers can get their 3D glasses when they make a purchase in store and view products online in all their dimensional glory - there is even talk of Steffan's TV coming to computer screens soon. It's no wonder it won Jewellery Etailer of the Year at this year's UK Jewellery Awards.

It is not just the industry that knows about Steffan's - both Wes and Stef Suter are well known in the local



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community for their support of concerts and sporting events, and the store is one of the most popular jewellers in Northampton.

If that isn't inspirational, we don't know what is.

14 Kabiri

18 The Market, Covent Garden, London

Who you should know

Nathalie Kabiri, owner

Brands and designers include

Akong, Anna Hu, Cabinet, Cindy Chao, Duffy, FS Augusta, Gina Melosi, Imogen Belfield, Jada, Jayce Wong, Naked Label, Tai, Umane, Vita Fede, Yunus & Eliza

Kabiri is the place to find exciting up-and-coming design talent. The business, which was founded by Nathalie Kabiri in 2004, endeavours to keep its offering original and gives new design talent the opportunity to sell their product in its Marylebone boutique, its flagship Covent Garden store and via its popular online jewellery store.

Firm followers of fashion, the Kabiri team selects jewellery that complements the season's trends and is so committed to providing its London audience with a fresh and eclectic mix of designs that it works on a roster with featured designers changing from month to month. Also strong in its convictions, the business has no qualms about stopping the selling of a collection if it becomes too widely available in other shops.

The Kabiri blog also captures the brand's penchant for fashion, sharing with its followers trend spots from the catwalk and celebrity favourites. It even invites guest retailers to share their trend observations.

With an eye on what's being worn on the high street, trends on the catwalk and what's making waves at trade shows, Kabiri is a leader when it comes to spotting the next big thing. Our respondents agreed; one said Kabiri is "always finding new up-and-coming designers who are on trend". Nathalie Kabiri's buying is so influential that designers who enter her stores as unknowns often end up being featured in the fashion press - some even get taken on by other retail outlets.

In an environment where many jewellers are relying on well-known brands to bring in customers, Kabiri continues to be innovative, inspiring and a champion of new talent. We aren't the only ones heaping on the praise. One retailer said Kabiri has "created a complete aura of fashion and desirability".

15 Finnies

219-223 George Street, Aberdeen

Who you should know



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Matthew Finnie, director

Brands and designers include

Bell & Ross, Breitling, Cartier, Chopard, Coleman Douglas Pearls, Ebel, Elaine Ferrari, Fope, Frieden, Georg Jensen, Gucci, IWC, Lalique, Links of London, Raymond

Ricci Carlo, Rotary, TW Steel, Vendorafa

When Finnies first opened in 1957, newlywed couple Ron and Peggy Finnie had to sell some of their wedding presents to stock the shop. Over 50 years later, the jeweller is now an Aberdeen institution.

Bespoke jewellery, a legendary watch collection and the repair workshop have ensured the family-run company's ongoing success. The booming business and popularity with customers led to a major rebuild in 2001, with the shop doubling in size thanks to the introduction of separate watch and jewellery showrooms downstairs and grandfather clocks and gifts upstairs.

A real emphasis on optimum watch and jewellery knowledge has happily filtered down to the current family members who are now involved with the business.

From fashion watches to exclusive high-end pieces and exclusive agreements with the likes of Bell & Ross, Chanel and Michel Herbelin, Finnies is a must-visit for watch enthusiasts. It also has a diamond setter in house, making exclusive jewellery for customers as well as its own stock.

Finnies moves forward without losing its identity. One retailer said it "shows that traditional need not be boring".

16 Robert Gatward

39-41 Buttermarket, Ipswich

Who you should know

Keith Gill, owner

Brands and designers include

Baccarat, Breitling, Cartier, Chopard, Citizen, Gucci, Hearts on Fire, Links of London, Longines, Pandora, Paul Spurgeon, Tag Heuer, TW Steel

In the 12 years since Keith Gill and wife Bridie bought the business they have gone from having one store to five, with premises in Abingdon, Ipswich, Reading, Thame and Windsor. The impressive growth has done nothing to dent the family-run spirit of the business, with staff saying the company remains 100% family oriented and they are made to feel part of that tight unit.



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Keith and Bridie are still involved with every aspect of the business and have successfully moved the retailer with the times, adopting a modern approach and not shying away from taking necessary risks. So immersed in the business are they, that the shop design was even inspired by the design from their own home, giving the retail space a comforting, welcoming feel through a bold use of colours and patterns, which customers absolutely love.

The most recent addition to the portfolio is last year's Windsor shop. Taking over another store and expanding into the unit next door, the Gills transformed the dark, old-fashioned space into something bright, airy and modern, where customers can choose from a fantastic selection of watches and jewellery.

It's not just customers who love what's on offer. Staff are given no end of support with promotions and ample training encouragement. A great all-rounder.

One retailer said: "Robert Gatward is going places - very forward thinking and one of the only independents to successfully win over Rolex in recent years".

17 Baroque Bespoke Jewellery

9 Union Street, Brighton

Who you should know

Kyle McIntosh, Pippa Knowles and Jason French, owners and designers

Brands and designers include

Alexander Davis, Andrew Geoghegan, Fifi Bijoux, Shaun Leane, SHO, Stephen Webster

Baroque certainly lives up to its name - it doesn't go for clean lines and paired down furnishings, instead its fascia is a deep purple and vintage cabinets house a mix of fine jewellery and high-end fashion pieces.

With guest designers that read like a who's who of design talent from the established to the emerging, it's not surprising that the three people behind this store are master goldsmiths themselves.

Knowles, French and McIntosh set up shop in Brighton in 2006, to make a break from the London jewellery scene. Knowles focuses on the women's collections, despite working for 10 years designing menswear collections. French - who has worked for Graff Diamonds and designed bespoke pieces for Ronnie Wood - brings a rock-luxe edge to the designs, while McIntosh, who trained as a jeweller and stone setter, creates clean and contemporary pieces that incorporate a hint of the unusual.

All three are passionate about the jewellery industry. The blog on their website posts on things such as the beauty of uncut diamonds, Jessica De Lotz's royal wedding-inspired collection and the designs that work as engagement rings from the classic diamond solitaire to vintage-inspired elliptical shapes.



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Everything Baroque does comes back to the idea of championing good design - that's certainly worth a place on this list.

18 Rox

42-45 Argyll Arcade, Glasgow

Who you should know

Kyron Keogh and Grant Mitchell, managing directors

Brands and designers include

Armani, Ebel, Gc, Gucci, Hugo Boss, Links of London, Monica Vinader, Thomas Sabo, Toy Watch, TW Steel

This dynamic duo took home the award for Independent Retailer of the Year at this year's UK Jewellery Awards so it is no surprise to see them here.

There are three other stores around Scotland that embody the Rox brand but it is what they have done to the Argyll Arcade store that really impresses. Extended from 1,800sq ft (167sq m) to almost 5,000sq ft (464.5sq m), it includes a Thrill Room on the upstairs floor. This area features a bar and seating areas, and has stills from classic films projected onto the wall. It also contains booths where staff can serve private clients.

As one of our respondents said, Rox represents "a clear investment and commitment to retail" and should be commended for "always keeping things exciting for the customer". Another said: "by god they have bottle".

It is not surprising that Keogh and Mitchell are looking to bring their particular brand of retail - a fusion of old-school service and on-trend stylish decor - to the rest of the UK. And it's not just the stores that are innovative. Rox's advertising images look like something out of a glossy magazine and the website gets people buying by offering customers inspiration boards and letting them send wish lists so they can drop heavy hints to clueless partners.

Whatever Rox does, it does with a style all its own. And it's certainly inspirational.

19 Brazen

58 Albion Street, Merchant City, Glasgow

Who you should know

Sarah Raffel, creative director and founder

Brands and designers include

Ana de Costa, Hannah Livingstone, Indra Karpaviciute, SHO, Tina Lilienthal



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Brazen was set up in 2004 by Glasgow School of Art jewellery graduate Sarah Raffel with the sole intention of selling the best, most desirable and most striking pieces the jewellery industry had to offer.

The store itself doesn't conform to approved retail design aesthetics. Described by Caragh McKay back in 2005 as looking "as though it might have been transported in one piece from New York's trendy East Village and plonked into the heart of Glasgow's Merchant City," it is a riot of mismatch that somehow works. So arresting is it, that it was awarded Most Stylish Boutique at the 2007 Scottish Style Awards. It's not just the industry that loves Brazen - it has been featured in magazines such as InStyle and Wallpaper, as well as local Scottish press. The site also houses on-site workshops where Raffel and the in-house design team create bespoke pieces and where Raffel works on her ready-to-wear collection for in-store.

This year Brazen was a finalist in the Boutique Retailer of the Year category at the UK Jewellery Awards. One respondent voted for it because of its "bespoke and unusual jewellery" while a customer said: "The whole Brazen team will go out of its way to help customers. This makes us feel valued. This caring ethos, combined with their eye for beautiful jewellery is an irresistible combination, which I feel deserves to be recognised". You can't say fairer than that.

20 Swag

G12a Bentall Centre, Kingston upon Thames

Who you should know

Edward Ferris, managing director

Brands and designers include

Alex Monroe, Daisy, Dower & Hall, Hearts on Fire, Links of London, Longines, Pandora, Thomas Sabo, Trollbeads

Six-store retailer Swag is still a family-run business through and through, despite now having a whopping 350 employees under its umbrella of Swag stores and 15 Pandora shops countrywide.

The first Swag shop was opened in Kingston in 1974 by Bill Ferris, who strived to present gorgeous jewellery in a colourful and artistic way. Now, son Edward has picked up the baton. Edward's younger brother Tom is also involved with the business, running a handful of the Pandora stores, while Edward's wife works with the buying team and cousin Chris runs the website. They're clearly a talented family.

Chris does a fantastic job on the easy-to-use and incredibly informative website, which provides in-depth metal and stone information as well as allowing customers to shop by both brand and product category. The online presence also extends to the social networking environment - Swag is a keen communicator that has a strong presence on Facebook, posts continual updates and has cultivated a creatively constructed personality on Twitter that keeps followers interested in what's going on in store.



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With stores in Kingston, Bromley, Bluewater, Watford, Staines and Croydon, Swag still prides itself as a diamond expert with a vast collection of wedding and engagement rings on offer. However, its product selection has a much wider reach, catering for those with classic tastes as well as those wanting something more modern and individual.

The jewellery services are also extensive, and include engraving, valuations and pearl stringing.

21 Branch on the Park

227 Victoria Park, London

Who you need to know

Julia Cook, owner and designer-maker

Brands and designers include

Frilly by Lily, Galibardy, Stolen Thunder

This store certainly defines the term “independent”. Owner Julia Cook not only designs a lot of the jewellery in store, she also built most of the interior herself. This is her first store, having moved out of her home workshop where she had been working for the past five years.

Cook’s mission for the store was to have a jewellery shop that people weren’t intimidated by and she has certainly achieved this - even managing to tempt the locals from the pub two doors down to make a purchase.

Cook also keeps intimidation levels at the lower end of the scale and sales levels at the higher end by keeping prices in the store to under £1,000. As such, the range goes from wooden pieces for pocket-money prices to beautiful necklaces and rings that are perfect pay-cheque splurges. There is even a large wooden table in the middle of the shop filled with stones so children can pick out something to buy while their parents get on with the serious business of commissioning jewellery, which Cook makes herself from a bench on the shop floor.

Despite only being open for a year, Branch on the Park was shortlisted for a UK Jewellery Award in the Boutique Retailer of the Year category and really impressed the judges with its ethos and mix of bespoke pieces and unusual brands. It’s no real surprise that it has also made it into this year’s Inspiring Independent countdown.

22 Cottrills

13 Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire

Who you need to know

Karl Massey, managing director

Brands and designers include



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Audemars Piguet, Chanel, Dior, Gucci, Patek Philippe, Richard Mille, Rolex, Stephen Webster, Tag Heuer

With its art deco showroom in Wilmslow, Cheshire, that boasts a giant fish tank in a bronze champagne bar, this retailer, which has been trading since 1910, continues to be the envy of its peers. As decor goes, Cottrills really is leading the pack with its stylish and individual shop fit that makes every customer feel special.

One respondent said that the retailer is “creating excellent drama in a fabulous store”, while another heaped on the praise by saying: “Cottrills is always one step ahead of the game in terms of design, marketing and branding”.

In both the jewellery and watch arena, Cottrills dazzles when it comes to the big names lining its trays and shelves, and 2011 has been an eventful year for the store with the opening of the first Rolex Boutique in the UK. In the watch world, it is a true market leader. As well as trading in pre-owned watches, the retailer has an extensive portfolio of watch brands, including those that are often hard to come by. Among the many that are on offer are Audemars Piguet, Chanel, Dior, Patek Philippe, Richard Mille, Rolex and Tag Heuer.

In addition to an excellent product range, Cottrills has thoroughly trained knowledgeable staff who will go out of their way to help customers find exactly what they are looking for. In short, customer service at the retailer is truly second to none.

With strong competition in the north-west, retailers have to go above and beyond to stand out and one thing's for sure - Cottrills could never be described as following the crowd.

23 Pykes

237 Grange Road, Birkenhead

Who you need to know

Eleanor Pyke, managing director

Brands and designers include

Babette Wasserman, Breitling, Clogau Gold, Dreyfuss & Co, Georg Jensen, Juicy Couture, Links of London, Roberto Coin, Rolex, Rotary, Tissot, Trollbeads

Traditional family values are highly respected in this industry and setting the example of a successful family-run business is northwest powerhouse Pykes. William Pyke began the legendary operation back in 1876 when he established his jewellers shop in Market Street in Birkenhead. Since then, five generations of the family have taken up the baton, growing the business on an impressive scale. The retailer has popular branches in Liverpool, Chester, Birkenhead, Shrewsbury and Newcastle-under-Lyme, each showcasing head-turning designs, individually selected diamonds and top watch brands.

With an international outlook, the Pykes family are no strangers to travelling across the globe to find beautiful



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jewellery of the highest quality. The buying experience within the Pykes' camp is revered among its peers, with the retailer demonstrating a notable track record for making savvy buying decisions and spotting the next big wave on the horizon, often introducing trends to the UK that will take hold. Gemstones are also sought out globally for the retailer's popular commission work.

Despite a lengthy business heritage, Pykes the Jewellers is modern and fresh - the business remains commercially spot-on, while the stores' enviable interiors capture a sense of luxury and sophistication that offer a welcoming shopping environment. Looking to the future, the retailer's adoption of stylish branding, together with an easy-to-use online shop, should serve to encourage a new audience of committed Pykes fans through its doors.

24 Galio

4 George Street, St Albans

Who you need to know

David and Sarah Gillow, owner-managers

Brands and designers include

Baccarat, Bell + Ross, Bjørg, Bremont, Gc, Hearts on Fire, Jaeger LeCoultre, Pandora, Stephen Webster, Tag Heuer, U-Boat

Established in 1992 by husband-and-wife team David and Sarah Gillow, Galio was created in order to supply customers with the very best in international design - something it still does today.

The contemporary cool of the store's design is reflected in the choice of brands, which manages to run the gamut from up-and-coming names to classics. On the watch brand side, Jaeger LeCoultre rubs shoulders with Bremont and U-Boat, while jewellery industry celebrity Stephen Webster sits alongside the more eclectic stylings of Bjørg and the French chic of Baccarat.

As well as being early adopters of brands that go on to become industry must-haves, Galio sets itself apart from other jewellers through the events it holds. From summer drinks aimed at promoting U-Boat, to getting Charley Boorman and the English brothers from Bremont into St Albans to introduce Galio customers to the brand, this business's regular events not only build brand awareness, but also mean that, when new brands come in store, customers already know something about them.

It's not just brands this store does well; it also has a bespoke arm, headed up by Sarah, which creates amazing commissions. All in all, this is one seriously stylish business.

25 Harriet Kelsall

Jewellery Design



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6/7 Green Street, Cambridge

Who you need to know

Harriet Kelsall, founder and design director

Brands and designers include

None. This business prides itself on making everything bespoke

This year Harriet Kelsall took home the UK Jewellery Award for Business Initiative for her desire to bring bespoke design to the high street, and it is this principle that forms the grounding aesthetic of her business. Her concept is simple - the store exists as one big workshop. There are some ready-to-wear pieces but all are unique designs inspired by Cambridge.

In an industry where brands seem to be gaining dominance, this business model is refreshing and original and it is not just the jewellery that is well designed. The Cambridge studio was recently redesigned by Callum Lumsden, who has worked with Mary Portas on her television shows, and uses, as its focal point, the stories with which people have regaled the staff when coming in to get their jewellery made.

Kelsall is also committed to the ethical side of the industry and, as recognition of this, has been one of the first 20 jewellers to be given a batch of Fairtrade, Fairmined gold, which was launched in the UK on February 14. As one respondent said: "Not only are they one of the very few jewellery-makers that deals exclusively in one-off design, they also support fair-trade gold and ethical diamonds."

This insistence on bespoke products and the championing of standards in the industry, combined with a fabulous workshop/store concept, makes this retailer the true definition and epitome of inspiring.

26 Laings of Glasgow

38-39 Argyll Arcade, Glasgow

Who you need to know

Stuart Laing, managing director

Brands and designers include

Babette Wasserman, Bell + Ross, Breil, Bremont, Cartier, Fope, Gucci, Hoxton, Longines, Mikimoto, Patek Philippe, Tag Heuer

Laings, founded by the present owners' great-great-great-great-uncle, has been a staple of the Glasgow retail scene for over 150 years. Offering modern and exciting jewellery design and delivering excellent customer service and care have been the cornerstone of the firm's business model and is something it still prides itself on today.



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Stuart Laing joined in 1971 and, through his entrepreneurial flair, initiatives have been developed to enhance customer loyalty. Drawing on his watch expertise, he created the Laings Watch Club, which allows watch connoisseurs to buy new models before they reach the market and share information about watch fairs and brands. To expand the engagement ring side of Laings, he recently added Portfolio of Fine Diamonds - a collection, created by Lunn's, that offers diamond and engagement rings with diamonds that have guarantees about their quality, price and certification.

But it is not just jewellery and watches that have made Stuart Laing an integral part of the industry. In 1975 he set up the Houlden Group; now with 30 members representing 60 stores and a combined turnover of £150m, it is involved in supporting a new generation of design talent.

Laings may go back 150 years but it is at the forefront of the industry's future.

27 Charles Fish

320 Cabot Place East, London

Who you need to know

Samantha Hansard, buying director

Brands and designers include

Alex Monroe, Alexis Dove, Assya, Avasarah, Bell + Ross, Bjørg, Chan Luu, Dorit, Georg Jensen, Isharya, Jana Reinhardt, Joanna Dahdah, Links of London, Tirisi Moda, Tomasz Donocik, Wouters & Hendrix, Zenith

The Canary Wharf branch of Charles Fish, launched in 2006, is a plush inviting haven of delectable jewellery, bringing together big brands as well as up-and-coming designers in a harmonious crescendo. It was the first of the London-based family business of jewellers and pawnbrokers - in business since 1830 - to rebrand as Charles Fish. The new vision is a modern jewellery boutique that is the perfect space and product selection to get city bankers spending during their lunch break.

The buying team at Charles Fish, led by Samantha Hansard, has worked tirelessly to ensure the stores cater to their customers' requirements and that staff endeavour to understand what customers want and why. After-sales service - such as repairs, refurbishments, advice and valuations - also add weight to the jeweller's significance for its customers.

Charles Fish continues to build on its relationships with customers, and plans have been put in place to host exclusive events over the coming months, at which private and corporate customers will be given the opportunity to meet some of the designers behind the brands stocked within the stores.

The innovative marketing plan taking shape is just one of the reasons why Charles Fish has made it into the best of the best. Our respondents saw the retailer's strengths, with one saying: "Charles Fish has started to emerge as a force in the jewellery industry. New store design and great networkers, it deserves its success." We couldn't



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have put it better ourselves.

28 Jon Dibben

40a Smithbrook Kilns, Cranleigh, Surrey

Who you need to know

Jon Dibben, owner

Brands and designers include

The store prides on selling its own designs

As one of the few designers in the south of England to be licensed to sell Fairtrade and Fairmined gold, jewellery designer Jon Dibben is doing his bit to improve working conditions and trading standards within the industry. He recently presented his first piece made from the much sought-after Fairtrade and Fairmined gold - made from the very first batch of the certified metal to enter the country, the ring is a real dazzler, set with eight rare, sea-green tourmalines from Nigeria, marquise cut in graduating sizes. So, although Jon Dibben, the company, started more than 20 years ago in 1990, Jon Dibben the jeweller is still making waves and setting standards in the industry.

Founder Jon Dibben's colourful history, includes teenage travels that culminated in him spending two years in a hut on a nudist beach in the Greek island of Naxos, which found him using his natural flair to create jewellery from shells and beads. It seems a far cry from his workshop in rural Surrey but his jewellery continues to impress and his original designs are created through traditional craftsmanship, with a nod to current technology.

Dibben's work now exclusively retails from Jon Dibben at Smithbrook Kilns near Guildford and allows him to keep his hand in on the workbench. And, despite being a busy man, he still finds time to update his blog - not only do the musings give an insight into the person behind the business, but the extracts of the writing also offer an interesting educational treat for visitors.

29 Peter Jackson the Jeweller

54 Fishergate Walk, St Georges Centre,

Preston

Who you need to know

Peter Jackson, managing director

Brands and designers include



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Amore & Baci, Breitling, Ebel, Gucci, Hot Diamonds, Links of London, Omega, Rado, Raymond Weil, Tag Heuer, Thomas Sabo, Tissot

Peter Jackson is both popular and successful according to his fellow retailers. Now in its 30th year in business, the opening of the Bury store in 2010, has given the retailer a burgeoning portfolio of five shops.

The first of the five was the Preston store, positioned in the heart of the shopping district and, since then, the family-owned business has gone from strength to strength, growing in terms of scope and the brands on offer. The other stores are located in Blackburn, Southport and Carlisle.

Our voters were certainly taking notice of Peter Jackson, with one describing the retailer as, “an independent with fantastic customer service but with the look and feel of a multiple”.

They added: “Peter Jackson has one of the most respected businesses in the Northwest” - a high accolade considering the number of fantastic retailers from that region that have made it into our Inspiring Independents gallery of talent.

The judges of the UK Jewellery Awards 2011 also approved, with the retailer making it as finalist in two categories, all credit to its friendly, enthusiastic and knowledgeable employees. The judges were full of praise for the retailer referring to its “cool store”, “fabulous product range” and its approach as an employer, particularly in terms of staff training and development. Boss Peter Jackson is always keen to promote internally and is passionate about his team, resulting in one judge saying that he “is clearly passionate about the business”, while another “was inspired by his ethos”.

30 Simon Pure

5 Swan Lane, Guildford

Who you need to know

Steve Parsons, co-owner

Brands and designers include

Alexis Dove, Beth Gilmour, Fei Liu, Flash Jordan, Malcom Morris, Miranda Sharpe, Sabine Muller, Tara Kirkpatrick, Tezer

Simon Pure’s own-label designs are things of beauty. The 25 years’ experience garnered by the team behind the two-store boutique is evident in the creativity and skill demonstrated in each piece.

The Surrey-based business has been growing since its birth in 1986, when design graduate Steve Parsons and Bond Street-trained jeweller Kevin Rogers kicked off the brand with contemporary pieces evoking natural themes, flowing lines and femininity. While the Simon Pure creations continue to take shape in the Smithbrook Kilns site in Cranleigh, Surrey, it was back in 2000 that the retailer opened its flagship Swan Lane store in the heart of Guildford, which has become home to much-loved designers and up-and-coming talent.



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As well as investing in developing its own collections and finding designers whose work complements its own, Simon Pure's management team is keen to develop the company's staff, insisting all employees spend some time in the Smithbrook Kilns workshop creating a piece of jewellery so they fully understand the manufacturing process. The retailer is also keen to maximise its existing skills, such as working with diamonds and unusual stones.

Its in-house graphic artist creates impressive prints for the shop displays and walls - it was this individual flavour that impressed our respondents. "I like the style of their website and their branding," said one.

31 Keanes

93-95 Oliver Plunkett Street, Cork

Who you need to know

With the majority of the family still in the business, any of the Keanes men

Brands and designers include

Breitling, Cartier, Longines, Omega, Pandora, Patek Philippe, Paul Costelloe, Raymond Weil, Ti Sento

This three-shop family-run business is an industry institution. Set up in 1948 by watchmaker Patrick Keane, it started life as a watch and clock repair business and moved to the Oliver Plunkett Street address in 1950.

Keanes manages to stock the latest brands and bring in younger generations, while retaining customers that have been coming to the store for years. It recently engaged in some interesting marketing drives such as setting up a Pandora Club for those who want to be the first to know about new beads and an in-store magazine that looks like a newsstand glossy. Its staff retention is legendary, with many employees clocking up as many years with the business as the family itself.

Both store and family are well known in the local area; last year it became the official sponsors of the Munster Rugby Club, designing jewellery for the club and watches for the women's team. It is also involved with corporate partnerships, societies, clubs and organisations to emphasise its support of the local area and bring the business to the attention of new clients. It may have been set up in 1948 but it is still relevant today.

32 Catherine Jones

9 Bridge Street, Cambridge

Who you need to know

Vanessa Burkitt, owner

Brands and designers include



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Andrew Geoghegan, Fei Liu, Fortis, Georg Jensen, Lapponia, Nomos Glashütte, Sarah Jordan, Simon Benney

Another UK Jewellery Awards 2011 finalist on this list, Catherine Jones is a fabulous boutique retailer in Cambridge operating like a City business. Thanks to systems put in place by Vanessa Burkitt's son Matthew, the store tracks its progress daily against the stock market and has numerous ways to monitor stock flow and takings.

And that's not all there is to love about this indie - the windows are overhauled every six weeks to reflect the changing seasons or what is happening in Cambridge, from May balls to punting; there is an emphasis on unusual designers who focus on creating pieces (even watches) with some element of hand-crafting; and the business has been part of the Cambridge landscape since the 1960s when Vanessa Burkitt's mother, the eponymous Catherine Jones, opened a store with the desire to "show people things they have never seen before".

Burkitt has continued this ethos with the range of designers and watches stocked. She is also a leading figure in Cambridge's indie retail scene and heavily involved in trying to improve the supply chain of gemstones in the industry. As one respondent put it, this is a "very unique business with great enthusiasm for all trade matters".

33 Gilda's Tryst

71 Duke of York Square, London

Who you need to know

Shireen Jayyusi and Amanda Waterstone, founders

Brands and designers include

It is almost exclusively own brand

Gilda's Tryst is all about fashionable jewellery and its founders are passionate about design and accessories. With both designing bold, recognisable pieces using freshwater pearls, semi-precious stones, silver and gold, the boutique was created in response to their struggles to find strong statement - but not costume - jewellery.

The jewellery is stunning against the decadent black look of the shop. A finalist in the Boutique Retailer of the Year category of the UK Jewellery Awards 2011, Gilda's Tryst has turned many heads in the industry. One judge at the awards said the business has a model that could work nationwide. The shop fit and displays particularly impressed with their chic yet welcoming ambience that is perfectly in tune with the Sloane Square audience seeking an eye-catching piece for an evening outfit. The contemporary and wearable jewellery is promoted by the team through innovative marketing strategies, including popular evening events.

The Gilda's Tryst team has invested much time developing a website that uses its own stylish and distinctive photography, and promotes the boutique's fashion-forward flair. One respondent singled it out, saying they "like the edgy look of the website".



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With plans to open more boutique's on the horizon, Gilda's Tryst is one to watch.

34 Prestons of Bolton

The Timeball Building, 2 Deansgate, Bolton

Who you need to know

Karl Massey, managing director

Brands and designers include

Chopard, Links of London, Rolex, Storywheels, Trollbeads

Prestons of Bolton - aka the diamond centre of the North - is a sight to behold with its distinctive clock tower and floor-to-ceiling windows. Seeped in glamour, the decor features an oval-shaped counter, walls adorned with historic pictures of the shop and a dignity evoked by a number of antique objects including grandfather clocks. Customers have the choice of either taking the lift or stairs up to the colonial style first floor, which features a champagne bar, black and white chequered floor, chandelier and leafy plants - a design triumph.

Prestigious brands are also treated with utmost respect - Rolex has a dedicated room - while the design touches continue to impress in Wedding Ring World and on the mezzanine level, which, at Christmas, is filled with pine trees and converted into a Narnia-style grotto.

The attention to detail carries over to the business operations and one of our respondents was keen to show their respect for the retailer's looks and substance: "Prestons of Bolton brings heritage and style together in a very successful commercial jewellers - amazing attention to detail and great advertising campaigns using television and radio".

Proactive when it comes to marketing, Prestons of Bolton's latest online advert, called Piccadilly Circus, focuses on a couple seeking, but failing to find, the right engagement ring while looking in London, before spotting an advert for Prestons of Bolton on the side of a building. As the storyline suggests, couples undoubtedly continue to travel to this establishment in the north of England for their dream ring and so much more.

35 Assya

53 Ledbury Road, London

Who you need to know

Tessa Grazzini, owner

Brands and designers include



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Jacqui Aiche, Perle de Lune

Offering its customers 90% own-label products, Assya's team boasts an impressive array of talent among its employees. As well as an on-site design team, the boutique has an in-house gemmologist and members of staff who focus on the digital development of the brand.

This year is significant for the boutique, which was due to be revamped over the summer, making the stylish Notting Hill shop even more appealing. A total website overhaul is also in the pipeline to build on the interactive side of the business.

Despite trading in many fine pieces, Assya is not overly precious about its product, proudly displaying the majority outside of glass cabinets for people to pick up and touch. The appeal of this is evident when you see the intricacy of design demonstrated in the 18ct gold vermeil or silver pieces, which incorporate unusual semi-precious stones - they make you want to do exactly that.

The fantastic designs propelled Assya into the running for Boutique Retailer of the Year in this year's UK Jewellery Awards. Chosen by the impressed judges as one of their finalists, they said the boutique looks very at home in its Notting Hill setting and its own-label designs were "excellent".

With consumer magazines Cosmopolitan, Tatler, Vogue and Elle already spotting the editorial potential for Assya designs, together with a healthy celebrity following, Assya's popularity with A-listers and the general public is only going to grow. This is a definite hit business, and one that is likely to make an even bigger impression in the future than it has already.

36 PureJewels

290-292 Green Street, London

Who you need to know

Jayant Raniga, brand manager

Brands and designers include

PureJewels has embarked on numerous collaborations with various designers for its Platinum Heritage collection

This East London retailer has positioned itself as a brand ambassador, making it its business to raise the jewellery industry's profile by sharing experience and knowledge with other retailers. Its has a forward-thinking modern approach to business, but embraces its rich cultural heritage.

While dedicatedly launching itself as a brand, the family-run retailer is also keen to support young talent. During 2011 PureJewels' Platinum Heritage Collection has collaborated with another six designers to produce pieces made in platinum and diamonds, which embody an element of the cultural journey that the family-run business took from India to England via Kenya. Last year's collaborations proved a success for both the retailers and the designers involved. "The designers have found that their involvement with this collection has made them



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household names,” said brand manager Jayant Raniga.

“Our relationship with those designers is still ongoing. It’s a commitment, not a competition.” As well as being important for new product development and business growth, the Platinum Heritage Collection concept has been part of PureJewels’s mission to establish itself as a brand that supports new talent.

The Green Street retailer has also put its weight behind London Jewellery Week (LJW), it being another opportunity to share ideas, network and draw attention to what the industry is doing. Raniga has even used his contacts to bring other sponsors, including Jaguar to LJW.

An example of savvy marketing and clever investments, PureJewels has also sponsored the annual Asian Wedding Exhibition, which takes place at north London’s Alexandra Palace. Despite having already been involved in so much activity in 2011, this retailer shows no sign of slowing down.

37 Weir & Sons

96-99 Grafton Street, Dublin

Who you need to know

Chris Andrews, marketing director

Brands and designers include

Breguet, Bulgari, Cartier, Chopard, Fabergé, Gucci, Lladró, Louise Kennedy and Tipperary Crystal, Mikimoto, Mont Blanc, Omega, Patek Philippe, Rolex

The opening of its Omega boutique in July is just the latest accomplishment for this Irish gem built on family values and excellent quality. Founded by Thomas Weir in 1869, it continues to thrive with fourth and fifth generation family members now at the helm.

Weir & Sons’s iconic building on Grafton Street oozes grandeur and elegance, and is an apt home for the classic and modern watch and jewellery brands adorning the inside. The shop also houses silverware, leatherware, china and antiques, as well as corporate presentation gifts and engraving services. This ensures the retailer still prospers despite trying economic times.

Reacting quickly to signs of recession, experienced buyer Neville McDowell recognised the consumer move towards more conservative jewellery and responded accordingly. It is no surprise that this long-established Irish retailer is in our top 50.

38 Nude Jewellery

36 Shepherd Market, London

Who you need to know



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Nikki Galloway, owner and designer

Brands and designers include

Andrew Geoghegan, Katie Rowland, Nikki Galloway, Rachel Galley, Ziio

Nude Jewellery is based in the gorgeously quaint Shepherd Market, which is nestled behind the bustle of Piccadilly and feels like a London modernity forgot. But there is nothing old-fashioned about Nude. It prides itself on stocking the best in award-winning British design as well as sourcing up-and-coming jewellers from around the globe.

It is not just beautiful jewellery from other designers that is stocked in Nude, Nikki Galloway heads up the store's team of design experts who take commissions for anything from engagement and wedding rings to jewellery for special occasions; Galloway's own ready-to-wear collections are also stocked in store. And those in the industry are not the only ones who love Nude. Vogue called it a "celebrity must-stop for unique gems", while Stylebible, the online luxury directory for everything from hotels to spas and shops, called it "Mayfair's sparkling little gem of a boutique".

Galloway is not just about making and selling exquisite jewellery; the company also ensures that all its stones are conflict free and is another one of the jewellery retailers in our top 50 that works with Rubyfair.

For those customers who want to get hands on with their bespoke pieces, Nude also offers a range of classes, including Make Your Own Wedding Ring, classes in which you make and design a silver pendant and ones encouraging the bridal party to make their own jewellery.

Team RJ are already thinking of signing ourselves up. You have been warned.

39 Diana Porter

33 Park Street, Bristol

Who you need to know

Diana Porter, owner and designer

Brands and designers include

Aside from Porter's own pieces, there is a rotation of new designers on di

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