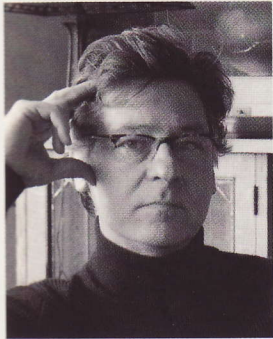


The Prince of Platinum

Michael Bondanza Gives Lazare Kaplan the Royal Treatment

By Lorraine DePasque, Contributing Writer

PHOTO COURTESY OF CELLINI NY



MICHAEL BONDANZA

It was King Louis XV of France who first declared that platinum was the only metal fit to be worn by royalty, but it is Michael Bondanza who has debuted a collection truly fit for a queen.

The latest jewel in designer **Michael Bondanza's** crown is *Simply Lazare™* by Michael Bondanza, a collection of 30 platinum engagement and wedding pieces, designed exclusively for manufacturer and distributor **Lazare Kaplan.**

This isn't the first time Bondanza has collaborated with Lazare, though. Not long after starting his own company in the 1970s, he created a bridal collection for the diamond powerhouse. Those designs included "twisted shanks, similar to the shanks in the new line, but the rings were smaller and simpler," notes Bondanza. Although his own line is more streamlined and architectural than the feminine and organic *Simply Lazare*, there are still similarities between the two. In both collections, all stones are hand-set and, of course, are forged from 955 platinum.

At a time when most of his contemporaries weren't yet thinking about the rare metal's renewed potential, Bondanza started experimenting with platinum in 1978. He began incorporating engraving as well as complex combinations

with gold, quickly establishing readily recognizable pieces.

Underscoring what would become the signature Bondanza aesthetic, he trademarked the slogan "Platinum Redefined™" in the early 1980s. He credits luxury retail legend, Ruthie Tivol, for the tagline. "When she saw the kind of jewelry I was making, she said I was 'redefining platinum' and should trademark that phrase. So I did. I'm glad I listened to her."

This year has been a significant one for Bondanza's own bridal line as well. New 2008 additions have grown the

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collection to more than 100 platinum engagement and wedding rings—most accommodating one-to two-carat stones. "Each ring is made for each center stone.

Every prong is done for that specific stone," Bondanza says. "A wedding or engagement ring is a big purchase for someone—in terms of money and emotion—so that ring needs to be special, with great attention to detail."

That level of craftsmanship has not gone unnoticed. In 2006, Bondanza became the first jewelry designer given the **American Gem Society's** prestigious Triple Zero Award. With 30 years worth of achievements, some might ask, "What could possibly be next?" Those who know Michael Bondanza, however, suspect that his crown jewel is yet to come. ❖



"NAOMI" RINGS FROM THE SIMPLY LAZARE™ COLLECTION



SIMPLY LAZARE™ TWISTED SHANK RINGS



"MADISON PAVE" RINGS