

The Best of Everything Jewelry-Related in 2017

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Source: National Jeweler

New York--The year is drawing to a close, and before National Jeweler plows full steam ahead into 2018, we're recognizing all the happenings 2017 had to offer.

Without further ado, here are the winners of the second annual National Jeweler "Best Of" Awards, in 17 categories.

Best Jewelry Crime #Fail: Left Behind

This fall, federal authorities in Florida charged four men wanted in a string of jewelry store heists in Florida and Georgia who were not great at covering their tracks.

A water bottle, a cell phone, a poor hiding place and, of course, Facebook ultimately led the police to them.

According to the Sun-Sentinel, authorities arrested the first of the four men as he crawled out from under a bush near the jewelry store the group allegedly robbed in Port St. Lucie, Florida in April.

Also during this robbery, the men allegedly tried to disguise themselves as women but were "not very convincing," according to the newspaper, and panicked when police were called, leaving behind all their loot save for one Rolex watch.

A dropped water bottle that, of course, contained DNA, a left-behind cell phone and a Facebook Live video showing one of the suspects dancing around with a gun led to the subsequent arrest of the other three men.



One of our picks for Best Diamond Discovery is this 34.17-carat yellow stone recovered by Alrosa affiliate Almazy Anabara.

Best Diamond Discovery: Pink and Yellow (tie)

They may not be the biggest diamonds recovered this year but they certainly are among the brightest.

The Ebelyakh alluvial deposit in Russia produced a stunning 34.17-carat yellow diamond that Alrosa said was immediately identifiable as a fancy vivid.

The mining company said it was its largest fancy color find of the year, and it came just a month after the discovery of a 27.85-carat pink that could become the most expensive polished diamond in Alrosa history.

Both stones were recovered by Alrosa affiliate Almazy Anabara.

Best Buzz: The Blue Box Café

Tiffany & Co. made a great move this year, opening a restaurant inside its flagship store on Fifth Avenue so people could literally have breakfast at Tiffany's



A \$9,000 sterling silver ball of yarn, anyone?

What made this move so smart from the storied retailer was the way it created online buzz ahead of its opening by offering common objects for sale at ridiculous prices, like the infamous \$1,000 "tin" can.

It caught a lot of social media flack and snarky stories, like the one from Golf Digest that described the tin can as an excellent alternative to "simply lighting the money on fire."

But in the end, who cares? People were talking about

it and lining up around the block for the café, and that's the bottom line.

Best Jewelry Movie: "A United Kingdom"

Sorry, "Breakfast at Tiffany's" is not our pick, and neither are any of the bauble-heavy films from The Adventurine's brilliant and original "Jewelry Movie Review."

Our award goes to "A United Kingdom," which came out in February and tells the story of Botswana's road to independence in the late 1960s and the role that diamonds played in that.

Long since gone from theaters, the movie is available on DVD/Blu-Ray as well as on iTunes, Amazon Video and HBO Go.



Longines debuted the 40 mm self-winding mechanical Heritage 1945 at the Baselworld show in March. An editor's watch inspired the brand to update a piece from its archives.

Best Watch: Longines Heritage 1945

This watch is by no means the most complicated or the most expensive, but we think it's an attractive watch with an interesting backstory that's completely saleable.

As the story goes, the genesis for the Longines Heritage 1945 was Benjamin Clymer, the watch-loving founder and executive editor of Hodinkee.

Clymer posted a picture of himself wearing a vintage Longines on Instagram and it caught the eye of a brand employee who suggested they remake the original and add it to the Heritage line.

Powered by the ETA 2895/2, the 40 mm self-winding mechanical Longines Heritage 1945 has a 42-hour power reserve and is priced at \$1,800.



Best Feud: The Facebook Face-Off

In February, National Jeweler published an article on the popularity of pastel-colored gemstones that

featured a ring by Page Sargisson (pictured above).

Another designer took issue with her work and posted the picture on his personal Facebook page, sparking a lengthy, and sometimes nasty, back-and-forth on his page as well as on other pages on the social media site.

It also prompted this response from one of our editors.

Best Comeback: Retailer Hall of Fame

We can't believe it ... we've won again!

National Jeweler has just selected National Jeweler's 2017 Retailer Hall of Fame issue as the best comeback of the year.

It is the first time in five years that the publication has picked a new class for its Hall of Fame, which first was introduced in 1989.

Inducted as the members of the class of 2017 were John Henne of Pittsburgh's Henne Jewelers in the Single-Store Independent category, Sissy Jones of Sissy's Log Cabin in Pine Bluff, Arkansas in the Multi-Store Independent category; and for the Majors, Jean-Christophe Bédos of Canadian retailer Birks Group Inc.



Best Auction Piece: Garage Sale Brooch

Everyone dreams of finding out something they purchased or were handed down from family is actually really valuable; that's why Antiques Roadshow is so popular.

In an envy-inducing story, a ruby, emerald and diamond brooch (pictured above) purchased at a garage sale went for \$26,000 at Bonhams New York in September.

The brooch, circa 1900, was purchased for \$8 in Ohio five years ago. The owner's daughter was at a jewelry store years later when she pulled it out and shared the story about how it came into her family's possession. She was surprised when she was told it featured precious metal and gemstones.

Bonhams had it tested by the Gemological Institute of America, which confirmed the stones were gem quality.

Not only a great story, but a beautiful jewel to boot.

Best Golden Anniversary: Tavorite

Sure, there were only two gems that were celebrating the big 5-0 this year, and even that was only to celebrate their discovery and introduction to the wider world, but still, we're giving this award to recognize a special gem.

It's going to ... tavorite!



The green garnet has come a long way in the 50 years since the late Campbell Bridges discovered it and started bringing it to the market.

And though there's a lot of activity happening in Kenya right now that's affecting the tavorite market and supply, the beautiful green stone--long a favorite of many gemstone connoisseurs-- seems like it's a got a bright future ahead of it given its naturally vibrant color and high demand.

Happy 50th tavorite. We're happy you're here.

Best New Gem Source: Ethiopia

It's always exciting for a new source to come on-line and for the gem community to wait with baited breath to see what kind of material will start coming out of the production.

In 2017, there were plenty of developments in the supply chain, as our Senior Editor discussed in a recent blog post, but few seemed to have more excitement around them than Ethiopia.



While there's plenty of not-so-great material coming out of the deposit--and supply remains to be seen--there also is some fine quality material to be found there, and when you talk to the people who are

dealing in the fine goods, they're really pleased with it.

Another source for beautiful green emeralds? Count us in.

Best Marketing "Activation:" Simon G.

It's easy to tell brands and companies trying to reach a younger crowd to be in their spaces; finding that space and figuring out how to talk to them there can be its own challenge.

We think Simon G. did an amazing job on this front, participating in the South by Southwest festival earlier this year, where it had a booth at a conference series for millennial female entrepreneurs.

Aside from the fact that it was at such a large event that skews toward millennials, what do we think was the most important factor here? It offered an experiential space that was only partly about its jewelry.

The booth was set up as a lounge area with snacks, mimosas, free jewelry cleaning, flash tattoos, a henna artist providing custom tattoos and a photo booth with an "Instagrammable" wall as a backdrop.

There was also product, but the brand designed the booth so that it was an aspect that visitors discovered on their own.

Way to go, Simon G. More innovations like that and people might learn that millennials do buy jewelry, they just want to discover it a certain way.

Best Renovation: Govberg Jewelers

At a time when people are buying less fine timepieces, Govberg has evolved to become one of the country's most specialized purveyors of luxury watches today.

The retailer aims to combine traditional brick-and-mortar with today's tech-savvy consumer, and the recent renovation of its Philly headquarters does just that.

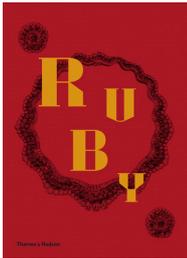


They added five-foot tall windows to the perimeters of all three floors and created an area for

concierge-style associates to engage with clients across the world in what it's calling its "trading floor."

And even cooler? In its efforts to embrace startup culture, Govberg added aspects like autographed sports memorabilia from legendary athletes, playful artwork and life-sized superheroes to the office.

Govberg is doing things right, and clearly people agree, since the retailer is up for a **Gem Award in Retail Innovation** in January.



Best Jewelry Book: "Ruby, The King of Gems" by Joanna Hardy

Arguably the prettiest book ever to celebrate a gemstone, "Emerald," released in 2014, got a follow-up this year.

"Ruby" featured a cover, photographs and illustrations every bit as lovely as its predecessor and author Joanna Hardy's extensive research and knowledge of the gem shown on each page.

The tome was sponsored by Gemfields, and we can only hope the miner enters the sapphire market in the near future, if only for another book in the series.

Best 50 Jewelers/50 States Store: Washington

Pick a favorite child? Nearly impossible, but we're doing it.

All of the stores profiled in our 50 Jewelers/50 States series were largely in agreement on core business principles like putting the customer first and maintaining a digital presence, if only to help get customers into their stores. But a few stores had utterly unique approaches to running their businesses.

For Green Lake Jewelry Works in Seattle and Bellevue, Washington, this meant coding their own website long before e-commerce was relevant, designing their store locations in Matrix and employing about 60 people, most of whom are designers and jewelers, to create the custom work for which they're revered from start to finish.

Green Lake is a business that seems to set retail trends, rather than follow them.



Best Piece of the Week: John Hardy's "Agni Naga" Ring

This year, we began spotlighting one spectacular jewel a week, and the above ring from John Hardy's high-jewelry "Cinta" collection was easily a favorite.

The "Agni Naga" ring--or Fire Water Dragon ring--features a **breathtaking fire opal** over 18 carats and is perfectly accented with orange sapphires and brown diamond pave. The piece was debuted at an exciting time for the Balinese brand, right as new creative director Hollie Bonneville Barden's unveiled her first offerings for the label.

Best Up-and-Coming Designer: Marlo Laz

The colors found in locales like Jaipur and Mexico City, typography and antique jewelry are all points of reference for up-and-coming designer Jesse Lazowski, who designs under the moniker **Marlo Laz**.

The New York-based designer manages to make the pieces in her collection feel like weighty heirlooms, but with an unexpected playfulness.

The designer is landing in all the right places; most recently she created a set of medallions exclusive to taste-making jewelry store Broken English.

Best Demographic: The "Midult"

Several studies in recent years have shown that Generation X females between the ages of 35 and 55--a group that one website has termed "Midults"--are high in buying power but underserved in terms of marketing.

The demographic is digitally literate, despite not growing up with the internet, and has the discretionary income that millennials don't. They are the self-purchasers that every jeweler wants but to whom few properly cater.

Here's hoping the midult gets more attention from retailers in 2018.