

Baby Emi Jewelry's "Jingle Bells Anklet," handcrafted in .925 sterling silver; suggested retail price is \$40. (877) 7-BABYEMI or www.babyemijewelry.com



Jewelry for 'mini-moms' a profitable little niche

By Vanessa Geneva Ahern

NEW YORK—Bejeweled babies are everywhere these days—including the covers of much-read tabloids—and many designers and manufacturers have seen a steady increase in sales of baubles for babies.

Jack Gindi, director and head designer of FuFoo's baby division, says that since the company's 2000 launch, he has seen a renewed awareness among retailers that the baby gift is part of being a fine jewelry retailer.

The vast majority of the demographic that is shopping for baby jewelry, he says, are seeking gifts for special occasions, such as christenings, first birthdays and first ear piercings for baby girls.

"Customers are definitely looking for the product, and if the jeweler doesn't have it, then they are pushing the diamond- and gold-buying customers to go elsewhere," says Alan Kaufman, president and

chief executive officer of Tru-Kay Manufacturing.

Offering U.S.-manufactured children's jewelry is becoming increasingly important, especially amid recent concerns over high lead content in children's costume jewelry. Customers have told Kaufman that they are willing to spend more money on fine jewelry because of this issue, he says.



Above: Rembrandt Charms' "Baby Steps" bracelet in 14-karat gold; suggested retail price is \$1,200. (800) 828-7840 or www.rembrandtcharms.com

Above right: Boon's "Bubble" bracelet in sterling silver; suggested retail price is \$99. (888) 376-4763 or www.booninc.com

Rebecca Finell, principal designer and co-founder of Boon, a company that designs innovative gear for babies, launched a collection of whimsical silver cuff bracelets

in August 2007. She sees the emerging "mini-mom" merchandising phenomenon expanding into jewelry. Moms who accessorize with jewelry as cute as they are, Finell says.

One entrepreneurial mom who can relate is Debbie Savage, who created Baby Emi Jewelry in 2005 with the intention of offering jewelry

anklets at baby blessings, she created her signature "Cambodian Jingle Bell" anklets. Savage says the anklets promote baby activity and parents love hearing the dainty jingle accompany their toddlers' comings and goings.

Baby Emi Jewelry, an online retailer, is preparing to make its national retail debut this year, aiming for maternity stores, baby boutiques and jewelry stores. In the meantime, it is making a splash—and a profit—through channels such as celebrity gifting company Jewels & Pinstripes.

In fact, Baby Emi received a plug on *The View* during a live televised baby shower for co-host Elisabeth Hasselbeck.

Sales spiked after its inclusion in a "celebrity bump" gift bag given to the show's studio audience, which was filled with pregnant women.

Since 1897, Kiddie Kraft by Marathon has been selling a classic heirloom line of bracelets, earrings and religious-themed jewelry for children, with the latter being the strongest sellers.


Marathon President Roger Forman reports that gold-filled lockets have been selling well as keepsake items, a trend that has perhaps been fueled by the rising price of precious metals. The fact that fine jewelry can be passed down from generation to generation is a draw.

Bentelli President Maurice Wasyng says

the most important thing retailers can do is make "display, display, display" their mantras, since baby jewelry is an emotional purchase, and an attractive display can entice and inform.

"Baby jewelry makes for an exciting category as an addition to the basics, and it can be a unique selling point, particularly in silver and diamonds, combining precious metal with precious gems at affordable price points, with no compromise on quality," Wasyng says.

More parents and godparents are purchasing "starter charm bracelets," for newborns, says Karen Filbert, senior account manager at Rembrandt Charms.

"The first charm would be a birth certificate, an initial or an angel," Filbert says. "I'm sure these little people aren't wearing them yet, but it's very meaningful, and it's something the gift-giver can keep giving," she says. 

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Van Cleef & Arpels brings dance into designs

By Mary Wisniewski

PARIS—Art worlds constantly collide, and Van Cleef & Arpels is making the most of such run-ins with the introduction of "Ballet Précieux," a line based on the George Balanchine-choreographed ballet *Jewels*.

The collection is centered on four central themes: the ballet, the emerald, the ruby and the diamond. Some pieces literally capture the dancers' leaps and arabesques by means of baubles, while others pay abstract tribute to the art of dance.

Ballet-inspired jewelry is nothing new for Van Cleef & Arpels, which has been dancing with the concept since the 1940s. However, the relationship escalated in 1967, with the introduction of *Jewels*.

The ballet, with three acts—the emerald, the ruby and the

diamond, was first shown in New York, Chicago and Paris, with renditions performed by prestigious companies, including the Miami City Ballet, Ballet de l'Opéra de Paris, the Mariinsky Ballet of St. Petersburg, Russia, and the Cincinnati Ballet.

For its 40th anniversary, the Royal Ballet brought the performance to the Royal Opera House in London late last year and, in conjunction, Van Cleef & Arpels launched Ballet Précieux.

To design the collection, Nicolas Bos, creative director of Van Cleef & Arpels, says the company studied the ballerinas, endeavoring to capture the beauty of the dance within the jewels on a literal and symbolic level.

"The very idea of movement and fragility can be translated into a piece of jewelry that doesn't exactly look like it

came from ballet," he says.

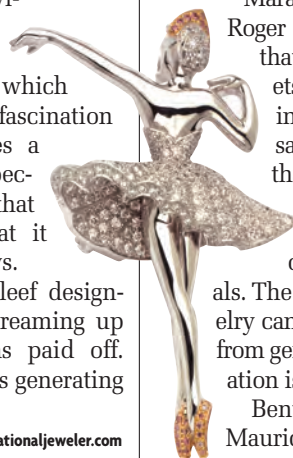
Gracefulness, femininity and timelessness all tie *Jewels* to Ballet Précieux, Bos says.

"In ballet, pieces can be centuries old, but can appeal to a contemporary audience," he says, adding that this characteristic is also evident in jewelry. The dance-jewelry collaboration, which focuses on the fascination with stones, gives a new jewelry perspective to people that might not look at it otherwise, Bos says.

And the Van Cleef designer's patience in dreaming up the collection has paid off. Bos says the line is generating solid sales.

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"Pulcinella" clip in white gold with pink, gray and white diamonds and a rose-cut diamond face by Van Cleef & Arpels; suggested retail price is \$215,000. www.vancleef-arpels.com



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TIPS > Buy, baby, buy!

■ **Pull out baby pictures.** Include a framed photo of a baby modeling jewelry in your jewelry display.

■ **Target dads.** Given the new trend of "push presents" for mothers who have just given birth, suggest that new fathers buy mom-and-baby sets or a special necklace or locket.

■ **Think big.** If you devote a whole showcase to baby jewelry, you'll find a niche as a retailer who carries it.