

# The Province

## Accessories turning men into bling boys; Items as much about ornamentation as function

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Illustrations: Photo: Agence France-Presse / In the post-metro-sexual world, even bohemian types such as Johnny Depp are adorning themselves with accessories. Just check out the many bracelets and rings he sported at a press conference in Tokyo for his latest movie, Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street.

Last December, the trademark little blue Tiffany box under my tree wasn't for me, nor for any of my girlfriends. It was for a man in my life. The gift in question was a simple sterling-silver money clip. But when I was buying it, I could not help but observe how the availability of men's accessories has taken huge leaps in recent years.

While the "Diddy Effect" is indubitable, this is not a phenomenon that is confined to the blingerific crowd. Another male friend recently ran out and purchased mother-of-pearl cufflinks for a black-tie event he was attending over the holidays. Five years ago, it might have been difficult to find such items apart from some specialty stores. Now products run the gamut from high-end jewellers to high-street stores.

Thinking back, the older men in my life -- my father and grandfather -- were not without their accessories. But the emphasis was on the functionality rather than the ornamentation. Watches were utilitarian and simple. Cufflinks were similarly unadorned and reserved for special occasions. These items were usually purchased by a significant other, or handed down father to son, acquiring a patina that eliminated any "fashion" connotations.

It is those fashion connotations that today's men seem no longer to shy away from. Yet, for many men, jewelry is still agog with messages concerning masculinity and class. When I was young, a man who put too much effort into his appearance was referred to as a "Dickie Dazzler," a term that was at once a shot at pretension and a question mark about sexuality and class.

The celebrity factor certainly has had an impact on that way of thinking. David Beckham is a classic example. But in the post-metrosexual era, we see even those men who culture a certain bohemian negligence adorning themselves with accessories. Think Johnny Depp or Colin Farrell at their most laid back. Browsing the blog of the Sartorialist ([thesartorialist.blogspot.com](http://thesartorialist.blogspot.com)), the increasing diversity of men's dress, demeanour, body-shape and accessories fast becomes apparent. As in women's fashion, the ideals are muddying and, thankfully, more choice is evolving.

Linda Penwarden, a custom jeweller in Toronto, had one male client requesting that a diamond from his dearly departed mother's engagement ring be incorporated into the design of his wedding band. And she gets frequent requests for custom cufflinks, incorporating elements such as family crests or an

elephant head inlaid with turquoise.

So, while the extremes are there, the male bling trend is not an all-or-nothing proposition. As is the case for women's jewelry, there will be those who operate with a more-is-more philosophy when it comes to their jewels. And there are those who opt for one or two sentimental pieces. Whether you lean toward more or less, the options are certainly out there for every style of man.