

MAGIC CARPET RIDE

WITH THE RIGHT EXPOSURE, JEWELRY FLIES OFF THE SHELVES BY IRENE LACHER

"DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES"

Felicity Huffman might have been fairly new to the full-court press of paparazzi that greeted her at this year's Emmys, but she wasn't a wallflower. Newspapers and magazines hungrily snapped photos of **Huffman**, and when they did, designer **Charlie Lapson's** 10-carat, multidrop diamond earrings appeared in shots seen 'round the world.

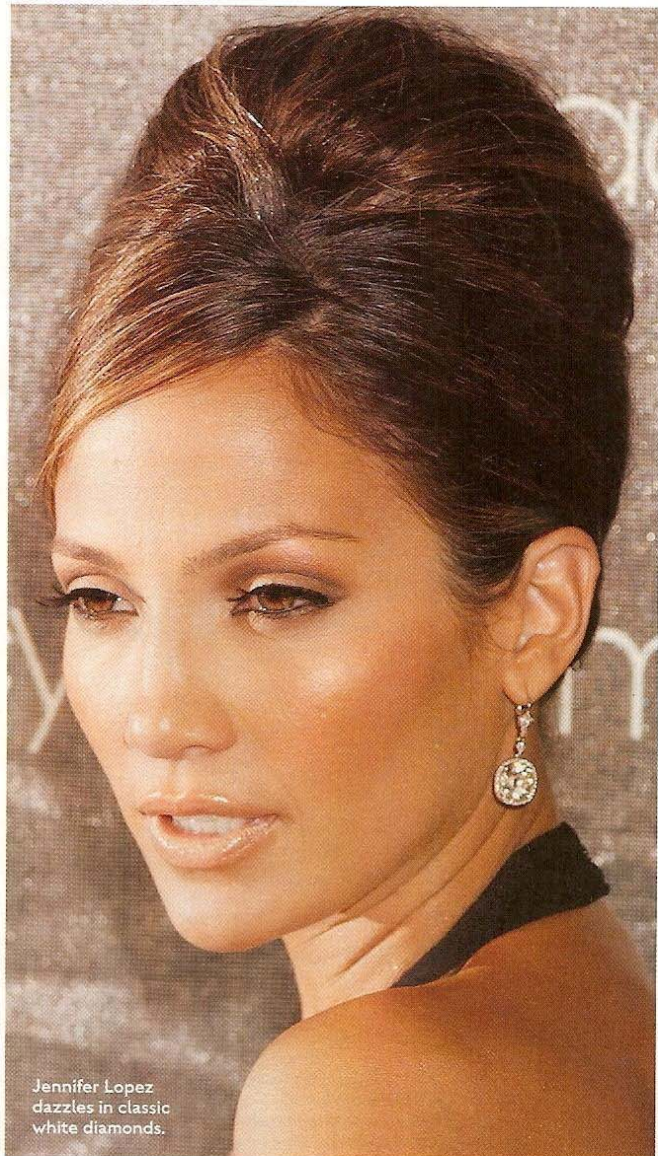
Lapson is a familiar face to customers of ShopNBC, which sells his handbags, but he is just beginning to make his mark on the red carpet, where stunning displays of fine jewelry have become the American equivalent of Britain's crown jewels. Such is the power of the red-carpet walk: A moment like **Huffman's** can make a designer's reputation in an instant.

Lapson calls **Huffman's** dangling diamonds "the next evolution" of chandelier earrings, which have flooded the red carpet in recent years. He describes his narrower update as "art deco meets modern Italy" but acknowledges that chandeliers are here to stay.

"I don't think any jewelry is ever over," **Lapson** says. "I don't think women will get rid of the chandeliers they just made a big investment in, and there's no reason not to enjoy them. But there's always a next thing, and the next thing would be new shapes. Instead of the gypsy look, it's becoming a little more artsy and a little more about geometric."

Red-carpet jewelry tends to be more trend-resistant than other baubles because of its hefty price tag. "The cycle is much longer for a fine-jewelry trend versus costume jewelry, or even fashion, because of the inherent value of the pieces," says Helena Krodell, media manager for the nonprofit trade association the Jewelry Information Center. Harry Winston chief marketing officer Susy Korb says red-carpet jewelers choose a relatively-conservative approach because though the event is fixed in time, the photos live forever. "You don't want to create something for somebody that's going to look stupid in two years," she says.

Nonetheless, actresses are style-conscious, and trends still



Jennifer Lopez dazzles in classic white diamonds.



SHOWBIZ JEWELS
SPECIAL ISSUE