

El Paso jeweler helps stars shine on big night

Dave Acosta, El Paso Times 10:54 p.m. MST February 8, 2016



(Photo: RUDY GUTIERREZ / EL PASO TIMES)

Awards season is in full swing and local jewelry designer Susan Eisen is helping the stars shine a little bit brighter as they make their way down the red carpet and up to the podium to collect their awards.

Eisen, who owns Susan Eisen Fine Jewelry & Watches, said she was ecstatic when she learned she was among a short list of designers whose jewelry was selected by celebrities and their dates to be worn at this year's Screen Actors Guild Awards.

"It's an incredible feeling," said Eisen, who attended University of Texas at El Paso. "It's a true honor to have people who can choose jewelry from any designer in the world to pick something we designed and made here in El Paso."

Eisen said she has been submitting her jewelry to award show stylists for several years. Her jewelry has been worn during the Academy Awards and the Emmy Awards, in addition to the SAG Awards.

At the 2016 SAG Awards, which took place on Jan. 30, actresses Stephanie Drake – who played Don Draper's bubbly secretary on the popular TV show "Mad Men" – wore a pair of Eisen's custom-made, diamond and gold earrings, which were made at her El Paso shop.



This pair of diamond earrings from the Diamond Vine Collection at Susan Eisen Fine Jewelry & Watches were worn by "Downton Abbey" actress Lesley Nicol. (Photo: RUDY GUTIERREZ / EL PASO TIMES)

SAG Award-nominated actor Alan Tudyk's ("Trumbo") fiancée, actress and dancer Charissa Barton, also wore a pair of Eisen's earrings to the show.

Kathleen Robertson – who recently starred in the TV mini-series "The Fixer" and was on the popular teen drama "Beverly Hills, 90210" throughout the 1990s – wore diamond earrings and a bracelet from Eisen's personally curated collection to Entertainment Weekly magazine's SAG Awards party the night before the awards show.

Michael O'Connor is a celebrity stylist, who also has covered award show red carpets for the TV Guide Network, "Access Hollywood" and "Entertainment Tonight." O'Connor said that what makes Eisen's jewelry so desirable to stylists and celebrities is their uniqueness.

"A lot of people are under the misconception that when they see jewelry on the red carpet its only from big-name (designers)," O'Connor said in a phone interview from Los Angeles. "The reality is, celebrities are looking for design. Susan has a variety of collections and, for the most part, they are all one-of-a-kind or limited-edition pieces. ... She uses interesting pearls and stones that aren't standard, and things that are interesting and unique to El Paso that celebrities aren't going to see on someone else or in a store afterwards."



Actress Stephanie Drake attended the 22nd annual Screen Actors Guild Awards at The Shrine Auditorium on Jan. 30 in Los Angeles. Drake wore a pair of earrings designed by El Paso jeweler Susan Eisen. (Photo: COURTESY OF SUSAN EISEN, GETTY IMAGES)

O'Connor said that Eisen's pieces also are desirable because their design, such as the earrings worn by Drake – which feature a diamond stud on top of a gold branch-like arm, wrapping down toward the face before ending with another dangling diamond – draw attention to the face, which is what celebrities walking the red carpet desire.

O'Connor said the earrings worn by Drake perfectly matched her hair, and also were selected because the dress which she wore featured a halter-style top that crosses over the neck.

"There's no room there for a necklace," O'Connor said. "It needed earrings that would hold their weight, but not be too overpowering."



Actress Kathleen Robertson, who starred in the TV mini-series "The Fixer" and the popular teen drama "Beverly Hills, 90210," wore earrings and a bracelet from El Paso jewelry designer Susan Eisen's personally curated Estate Collection when she attended Entertainment Weekly celebration honoring Screen Actors Guild Awards nominees on Jan. 29. (Photo: COURTESY OF SUSAN EISEN, GETTY IMAGES)

Eisen said that, because the celebrities typically don't choose the jewelry until just before the show in order to match their outfits, she usually doesn't find out which pieces are picked until the days following the awards show.

Last year, however, "Access Hollywood" host Shaun Robinson wore a pair of Eisen's earrings as she interviewed celebrities on the red carpet – giving Eisen's design some serious screen time.

"I was screaming like crazy when I saw (Robinson) wearing (the earrings)," Eisen said. "We make (the pieces) specially for the shows, so I don't know what they look like on. The stylist did a wonderful job picking them to go with her outfit and hair."

Eisen said that she is thrilled that out of about 100 pieces from different designers, four of her pieces were worn during the SAG Awards weekend.

"Each award show is different," Eisen said. "It's challenging for me to hit it right. I have to put all these pieces of the puzzle together and also, as a designer, make what I want to make, but make what's in style. What will fit (the actors') personality, what will be attractive to

them and to a stylist.

"It's only because of my wonderful education from UTEP and two medals professors that taught me how to make jewelry and the importance of design, that I've been able to do this. I really thank UTEP for teaching me the basics."

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Eisen file

Who: Susan Eisen

Title: Owner and chief creative and appraisal officer of Susan Eisen Fine Jewelry & Watches, 5857 N. Mesa, Suite 19, for 35 years

Of note: Native El Pasoan, who graduated Coronado High School; studied jewelry design at the University of Texas at El Paso; studied gemology at Gemological Institute of America; only master gemologist appraiser in El Paso; author of two books, including "Crazy About Jewelry! An Expert Guide to Buying, Selling, and Caring for Your Jewelry"

More information: 584-0022; susaneisen.com (<http://susaneisen.com%E2%80%8B>)



Susan Eisen's creations were worn recently at the 2016 Screen Actors Guild Awards. (Photo: RUDY GUTIERREZ / EL PASO TIMES)

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