

JCK SHOW DAILY



JCK attendees prep for a busy day of buying.

City-based Women's Jewelry Association. "I'm sensing a lot of excitement."

"There is definitely a good mood," said New York City diamond dealer Amal Jhaveri, an official of the Indian Diamond & Colorstone Association. "Retailers are looking to buy show specials. The setup looks very nice, particularly the people with the 'Help Me' signs."

Susan Eisen, owner of Susan Eisen Fine Jewelry and Watches in El Paso, Texas, struck a more guarded note. "We are all cautiously optimistic as long as we are in our little jewelry world," she said. "But as soon as we venture into the real world and hear the news, it causes me to face reality and go slow and easy."

Forevermark CEO Stephen Lussier reported hearing mixed but generally good things. "It's not an easy environment, but most of the feedback we get is that business is decent," he said. "You get some bad months, but most people seem to be saying it's okay."

Still, the industry does have issues to confront. Some of the thornier topics bedeviling the jewelry business—the diamond market in particular—were the subject of an Accredited Gemologists Association conference, "Through the Looking Glass: The Future of Diamonds," on May 31 at the Mirage Hotel in Las Vegas. Panelists discussed synthetics and treatments, and why disclosing a stone's origin is crucial to maintaining consumer confidence.

Howard Coopersmith, the geologist who helped find the Kelsey Lake mine in Colorado, characterized the current global diamond production outlook as "cloudy."

"I wish I could find more diamonds. A lot of my colleagues wish they could find more diamonds," he said. "Exploration is expensive; it's very high-risk; it has not been successful."

Taking that theme further, Tom Chatham, president and CEO of Chatham Created Gems & Diamonds, maintained that lab-grown stones could provide a solution for the

shortfalls of natural stones. He also made the point that environmentally sensitive consumers may favor his stones.

GIA distinguished research fellow Dr. James Shigley reported that the GIA has had a lot of experience looking at both HPHT- and CVD-grown diamonds, and is confident it can detect most synthetic gems (though melee remains a serious problem).

Suncrest Diamonds president Sonny Pope discussed his company's high-pressure high-temperature (HPHT) treatment service, which turns brown stones white and, on occasion, yellow. But since the treatment works only on Type II diamonds—which represent just 1 to 2 percent of the world's supply of diamonds—his business will always be limited, he said.

Rapaport Corp. CEO Martin Rapaport said the industry will always be playing "catch-up" with treaters and diamond manufacturers. He also noted that today, everyone is responsible for what they buy and sell and people shouldn't assume their diamonds are "okay."

"You have to know who you are buying from," said Rapaport. "You have to know where it comes from. Don't just sort the diamonds; sort the people you deal with."

But while all these issues weighed on people's minds, they didn't seem to dampen the hearty spirits of showgoers on opening day. Let the games begin. ■

VISIT...

Alpine Creations, S10578

Arya's Collection, S10278

Bezim Gems, S12340

Express Fine Jewelry and Design by Yagi, B5239

RC Gems, S12141

Viva Collection Co., B4270