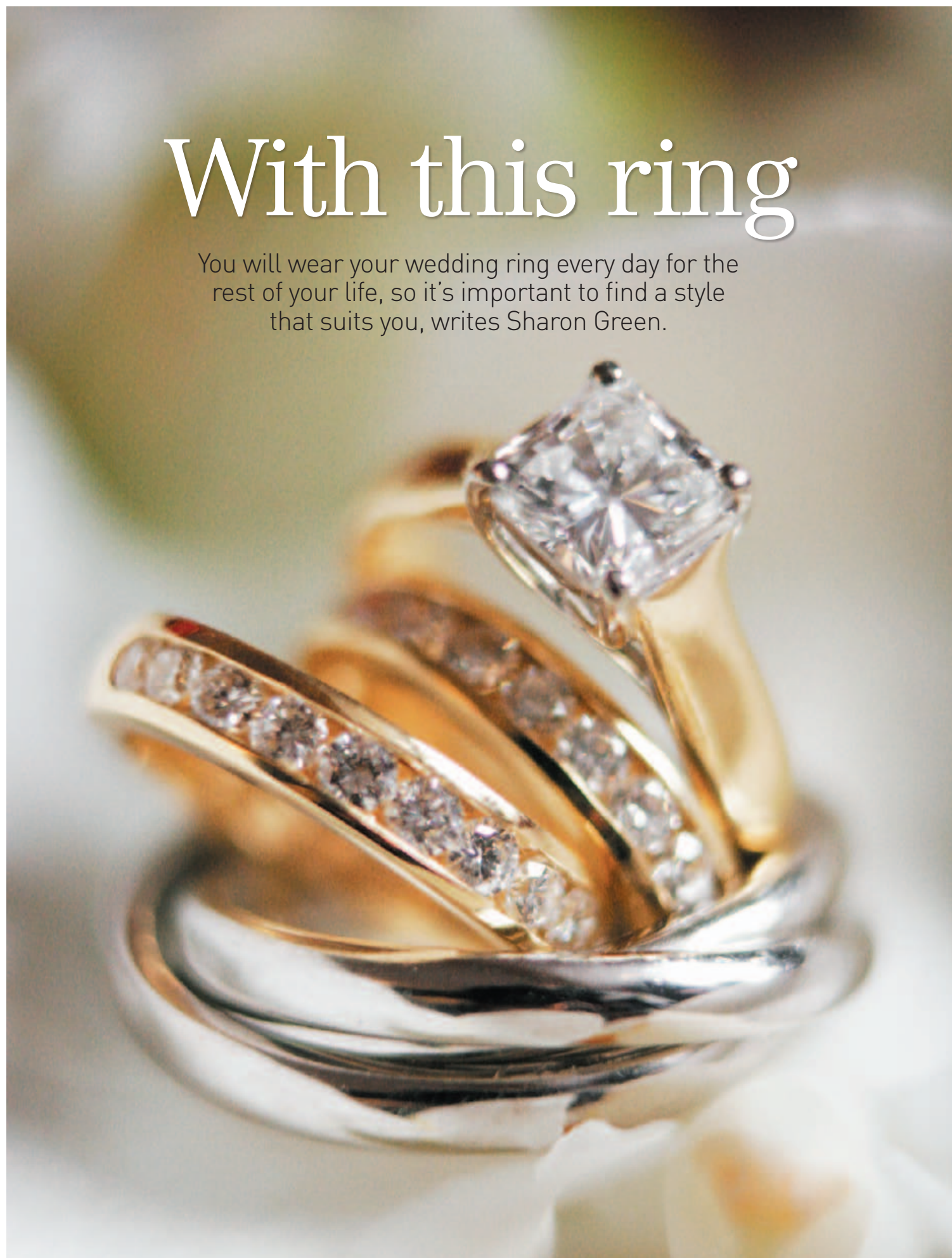


With this ring

You will wear your wedding ring every day for the rest of your life, so it's important to find a style that suits you, writes Sharon Green.



The wedding band has historically been the symbol of marriage, devotion and everlasting love. As the ring is a circle with no ends that diverge, it is considered the perfect symbol of the union between two loved ones. In ancient times, it was believed that a vein from the fourth left-hand finger, known as the "vena amoris" or vein of love, led directly to the heart. It is for this reason that it has become universally known as the ring finger and the finger on which the wedding band is worn.

When it comes to selecting wedding bands, both men and women should choose a design that is individual and comfortable, says Greg Meddick from Fairfax and Roberts.

"Most clients go for diamond set options... Fine diamond bead setting and millgrain finishing are the key elements in our range."

With an increased popularity of diamond-set wedding bands for women, men can match their design by adopting the same metal for their ring. "The key element is to get the width right as well as the dome," Greg says. "While men with smaller fingers tend to like flatter bands, a slightly domed band looks better on men with bigger hands."

Greg says most couples are well prepared and start to purchase their wedding bands around four to six months prior to their wedding day. "We do have a wide range of bands in stock, but in case we have to specially design and manufacture a band to meet the clients' request or to match the engagement ring, the lead time is four to six weeks."

Diamond wedding bands from Fairfax and Roberts range from \$3000-\$15,000, depending on the diamond content and metal type, while plain bands start at \$500.

If you decide to choose a ring with diamonds, it's important to do your research and know about the type of stone you are purchasing.

A cleanly cut gem will have perfect symmetry and proportions – and often a hefty price tag. When shopping for diamonds, remember the four C's; colour, cut, clarity and carat – and the larger and more clear the stone, the more expensive it will be.

For those seeking a timeless style, whether it includes diamonds or not, vintage jewellery is always beautiful and can be a great way to add

MAKE YOUR OWN WEDDING RINGS

If you're looking to add a personal touch to your wedding rings, why not make them yourself? Larsen Jewellery offers a "make your own wedding ring" experience where you can enjoy crafting unique wedding rings under the guidance of a jeweller.

The Wedding Ring Experience takes about four hours to complete and because Larsen Jewellery intends to offer an intimate experience, the sessions are available to couples by appointment only.

Owner Lars Larsen says the one-on-one experience is a personalised and romantic way for couples to get involved in an important part of their wedding planning. "You end up wearing the ring that your partner has made with you, which is really special."

No prior knowledge or creative skills are required to complete the ring making – the process has been set up so that anyone can take part. The ring-making process involves traditional handcrafting techniques, including milling, bending, soldering and the finishing touches of filing, buffing and polishing.

According to Lars, it's also a great way for men to get involved because the workshop involves "getting your hands dirty" and using tools to handcraft the rings. "It's a lot of fun on the day and is a really romantic bonding experience."

Lars says a common starting point for people who want to create their own rings is to let them try on a range of designs and see what they like. This may come down to the shape, width or profile of the band, or whether a flat or rounded finish better suits your hands. "It's important (for women) to match the band to the engagement ring," Lars says, adding that quite often the wedding ring needs to be fitted up against the engagement ring and match elements like the shape, size and style.

A light lunch and beverages are provided during the experience, and champagne is served on completion. Also included in the service are photos of your experience and a lifetime of annual polishes to keep your rings in pristine condition.

The Wedding Ring Experience is available at Larsen Jewellery's Sydney Strand Arcade location and Melbourne's GPO.

a touch of old-world glamour to your rings.

Melbourne jewellers, Keshett, specialises in vintage and Art Deco designs and antique wedding rings. "Vintage is different; they don't look like anything else," director Paula Keshett says.

Art Deco styles have a point of difference, are eternal and, because the designs don't follow any trends, there's no fear that the style will go "out of fashion", Paula says.

Vintage rings borrow styles from the 1920s and 1930s and often pay attention to fine detail in the designs. Because of this, Paula says, there is something more sentimental and historic about wearing antique and inherited jewellery, especially when it comes to wedding rings.

Paula says antique jewellery is sought after because it is scarce yet wearable in today's age. The style also offers a way for people to personalise their wedding rings because you can get the finer details that other styles can't offer.

Antique and Art Deco designs often reflect flat, fine bands and delicate lace work with platinum metals, which is a very specialised craft and difficult technique.

"Art Deco is beautiful yet subtle," Paula adds.

While most men opt for a conservative design, free of jewels and fancy details, an antique-inspired style can offer a way for them to personalise their wedding bands.

Paula says men generally don't want anything too glitzy, but there have been a lot of requests for 9ct metals and black diamonds recently as a way to give their rings that point of difference. Usually, a classic, Art Deco design will appeal to men's style preference, Paula says, but there are options including a matte finish, dark oxidising and oxidised diamonds for those after a modern look.

Roberto Ulas, director of EON Rings, says a wide range of wedding rings is available for men, from classic, plain bands to diamond set and multi-tone styles.

"There is also high polish, cross-hatching and matte finishes to consider," he adds.

Roberto says a lot of men opt for a two-toned, platinum finish or decide on a personalised pattern.

"There's now a trend for rose gold where a fine strip of rose gold is set against a white gold or platinum." ◊