



HEATHER NOLAN WITH HIS AND HER RINGS



RINGS BY MICHÉ MEIZNER-ONOCLEA



the ring becomes you

LOCAL RINGMAKERS OFFER CUSTOMIZED SERVICE

by Chuck Adams

You've made up your mind; you've found the one person in this world who will complete you; you're ready to take the plunge. So you get down on your knee, and your love looks back at you in puzzled intimations of hope and fear. You've thought this scenario through a thousand times in your head, consulted family, friends, psychologists, astrologists, your dog. They all send their blessing (well, OK, some grudgingly), but still you're stuck. Do you go with the ring in pocket number one, the chain store gold band with the 24-carat rock? Or do you go with pocket number two: a custom-made ring with your Trekkie partner's name engraved in Klingonese on the band, locally designed and fabricated using recycled platinum silver?

Your choice depends a lot on who you are.

Rings come in all shapes and sizes to fit your personality, but if you're picking one from a chain store jeweler, they usually come in thousands of duplicates. You wouldn't choose your partner from a catalog, the wisdom goes, so why would you choose your wedding ring from one? For those who take their rings as seriously as their relationships, and desire a customized experience, the goal is to find a ringmaker who will work with you to make something special.

But, first, here's a good rule of thumb: If you're working with local artists, make absolutely sure you're looking for something unique. "People look through these [catalogs]," says Eugene resident and jewelry artist Barney Beguhl, "and go 'I like this' and 'I like that,' and I go, 'Well, if you like that and that, we should buy that' because they can cast it or die-strike it and make a million of them. And they go, 'Well, I want *you* to make it.'" But, Beguhl points out, "It's like asking an artist, 'I want *you* to paint my car with spray cans because I like your work.' No, it's just a paint job." Working with a jeweler to customize your ring can be an intimate collaboration where you trust them to make your vision a reality, but jewelers aren't wizards. "People have an image in their mind," says Winston-based ringmaker Mark Jackson, a longtime vendor at Eugene's Saturday Market, "and how it translates into metal and the functionality of it from there is often two different things."

Other questions to ask yourself: How eco-conscious are you? Do you give a lick about strip-mining, water pollution, workers exposed to cyanide and arsenic? Do you stay away from diamonds served with a side dish of blood and oil? Well, local ringmakers will try to accommodate your conscience — some more than others.

Heather Nolan, who works from her Eugene studio and will meet clients over coffee to discuss details, encourages diamond alternatives (such as the synthesized-in-a-lab cubic zirconia) as opposed to real diamonds. But if a client is dead set on the real deal, Nolan says she can find a "clean diamond" sourced from Canada or elsewhere because she doesn't "really like working with blood diamonds." As for eco-conscious gold, Nolan says that "unless some-

LOCAL RINGMAKERS GUIDE

Barney Beguhl
(541) 285-4834
www.joyfulcrow.com

Mark Jackson
(541) 679-4895

Miché Meizner-Onoclea
(541) 896-9841
www.sumiche.com

Heather Nolan
(541) 844-1056
www.nolandesigns.com