Platinum Group Metals Spotlight:

A monthly series by The International Platinum Group Metals Association

Platinum in Fine Jewellery: The Timeless Choice



Platinum & Diamond Ring, courtesy Carlo Nogaroto, Pixabay

Apart from being a titan of industrial metals, platinum has long been associated with the prestige and luxury found in fine jewellery. In the early part of the twentieth century it became the preferred choice for creating intricate jewellery designs, particularly during the Art Deco period. Many historic and royal jewellery collections feature platinum pieces, reinforcing its status as a symbol of sophistication and refinement. Today, platinum remains a popular choice for engagement rings, wedding bands and diamond jewellery.

So what is it about platinum that makes it a timeless choice for the jewellery buyer?

The **rarity** of platinum in comparison to gold is a significant factor for the buyer seeking something exclusive and prestigious. Around thirty times more gold is mined each year than platinum. Indeed, the total amount of platinum mined each year would make a cube with a 2m side that would fit into a garden shed! The feeling and fact of rarity adds to the sense of commitment and enduring quality that the buyer is looking for.

The **natural white colour** of platinum is another reason for its popularity. White gold is typically anything but white, with alloying elements leaving a distinctive gold or grey tinge in its natural state. It requires rhodium plating to maintain its appearance that deteriorates over time without regular maintenance. Platinum retains its natural white luster throughout its life and requires no plating. The white colour also presents the optimum canvas for setting gemstones, bringing out the natural beauty of diamonds and coloured stones; platinum truly makes stones “pop”, to use the modern term.



Natural jewellery colours, courtesy Aide-memoire

The **purity** of platinum in jewellery adds to a winning combination. Platinum jewellery alloys are typically 95% pure, with small additions of other metals made to improve workability. In comparison, gold jewellery alloys are generally less pure, typically ranging from 9 carat with 37.5% gold content to 18 carat at 75% gold. The purity of platinum is highly valued in the very large jewellery markets in China and India. Platinum is also **naturally hypoallergenic**, making it an excellent choice for buyers with sensitive skin or metal allergies.

With purity comes exceptional **durability**. Platinum is a dense and strong metal which naturally resists wear and corrosion. While all precious metals can develop surface scratches over time, platinum does not lose significant material when scratched, with the metal being displaced while maintaining weight and integrity. In comparison, gold tends to lose small flakes over time. This unusual property of platinum helps it develop a matte “patina”, a natural luster that is valued by many jewellery wearers, but can be easily polished out if desired.

The **strength** of platinum in both cast and wrought forms provides excellent security for setting gemstones. These are typically held in place by a number of metal prongs, which can become loose or break allowing stones to fall out. Platinum settings are particularly strong and can be made less obtrusive by using thinner prongs, emphasizing the size and brilliance of the gemstone they hold. It’s little wonder that platinum is especially important for setting larger diamonds and is recommended for engagement rings that will last a lifetime.



Platinum Engagement Ring, courtesy Eileen Pan, Unsplash

Working with platinum is not without its challenges. The manufacturing process is longer and more complex than working with gold alloys, with the durability so desired in the finished piece making it harder to work, adding to the production costs. Combined with platinum’s higher density than gold, this often results in pieces being sold at a higher price point than an equivalent gold design. Consumers nonetheless frequently regard platinum as a worthwhile investment given its durability, rarity and general appeal.

In the new millennium, platinum found an exciting new niche as the ultimate material for high-end watches. Given a new lease of life by increasing demand from Asia, watchmakers seeking the last word in exclusivity turned to platinum for bands and cases, typically housing their most complicated mechanical movements. The relative understatement of white metal compared to yellow gold found favour with consumers looking for a combination of luxury and quiet elegance.

Sustainability has become a defining priority across the platinum jewellery value chain. From responsible mining and refining to jewellery manufacturing and retail, companies are strengthening environmental, social and governance practices while increasing transparency and traceability. Platinum producers and jewellery manufacturers continue to advance responsible sourcing, reduce the environmental footprint of their operations and uphold high ethical standards throughout production. At the same time, consumers are becoming increasingly informed and are looking beyond beauty and craftsmanship to understand the story behind the products they purchase. Responsibly sourced platinum jewellery therefore offers not only timeless luxury and exceptional durability, but also the confidence that it has been produced with a strong commitment to environmental stewardship, social responsibility and good governance.

Over time platinum has come to occupy a unique position in the world of jewellery. It’s rarity, purity and durability combine with aesthetic beauty to make it a highly desirable jewellery metal. The deeply emotional sense of value and elegance have made it the first choice for engagement rings, wedding rings and heirloom pieces that will continue to be cherished and passed from generation to generation. A timeless choice.