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Helping the jewellery-impaired male

Rita Zekas

Valentine's Day is custom built for candy, flowers and bijoux.

Or if you subscribe to the Bob Dylan manifesto, everybody must get Stoned. As in Terri Michael Stoned Originals, a line of jewellery available online at www.stonedoriginals.com.

"But I never inhale," she quips.

"We Boomers are a fun generation," reasons Michael, a former radio personality on EZ Rock, 97.3 "I may be getting older but my attitude is rock and roll. In the nursing home, I'll be listening to Led Zeppelin."

Michael used to be on air — now she is online and works out of her North Toronto home.

Point of pride at Michael's: a framed outtake from the cover shoot of the Rolling Stones' *Beggars Banquet* album, which she found in a San Francisco gallery.

"I left radio five years ago after 25 years in the biz," she explains. "It wasn't fun anymore; I couldn't be me. Anyone can do the time and temperature. TV just happened (Michael is a host on Biography Channel) — where was TV when I was 26 with no bags under my eyes?"

She has created her own jewellery since the '70s as a hobby born out of necessity.

"I could never find anything to fit. I have a 'chicken neck' and 'chicken feet,' small wrists. I made pieces for myself and my friends and I finally got my act together and started selling in September."

Half her customers are men. And since men have the worst time/taste shopping, Michael came up with a Help For Guys page and a Wish List page for women nervous about hubby making an appropriate choice.

"A lot of guys are tired of buying stuff for their Significant Other that ends up in a drawer," Michael explains. "You ask the men, 'What is her favourite colour?' and they say, 'She wears a lot of black.' Oh, and then what? So we came up with a list. At Christmas, one gentleman was buying a necklace and said, 'You have a pair of earrings to go with it but she doesn't like dangling.' We can 'undangle.' We make those in pearls. And don't buy something bulky if she wears a thin, little chain."

Michael's aesthetic is funky and elegant. She does necklaces, bracelets and earrings fashioned from semi-precious stones and freshwater pearls on sterling silver and gold-filled components.

"I follow the forecasters; I am clued into fashion shows and try to interpret for Canadians," she explains. "Canadians are conservative in taste. We recognize that people won't wear big and bulky. In New York, they are wearing gemstones the size of apricots. How can we create a big look without being heavy? We do clusters so you can layer or wear singly."

Her prices range from \$50 to \$500. And there is a charitable connection: a percentage of Michael's sales goes to The Redwood, a 24-hour emergency shelter for women and children fleeing abuse.

