

# Stephen Webster

## Britain's 'Rock' Star Jewelry Designer

Each winter, more than 65,000 geologists, gemologists, jewelers and enthusiasts from around the world descend on southern Arizona to search for rare and valuable minerals and gems at the annual Tucson Gem, Mineral & Fossil Showcase. It's an event that Stephen Webster has been attending for the past four decades.

"With very few exceptions, I have been every year for 40 years," he says. "I go with a big shopping list."

Many fine jewelers who attend the show are looking for precious stones, such as opals and rubies. But Webster isn't your typical jewelry maker.



After more than 40 years of rock 'n' roll — and rocks and minerals — British designer Stephen Webster, often referred to as the Jeweler to the Stars, shows no signs of slowing down.

Writer Rebecca L. Rhoades





**There's something about my jewelry that, without question, appeals to the rock 'n' roll crowd.** *Stephen Webster*





The British designer, often referred to as the Jeweler to the Stars, is renowned for his edgy, avant-garde creations that mix elegant diamonds, gold and pearls with unexpected materials such as sugilite, chrysoberyl, moonstone, zultanite, spinel — even fossilized wood, dinosaur bone and brilliantly colored enamel.

Webster's pieces have graced the fingers, necks and ears of just about every A-list celebrity from Madonna, Elizabeth Taylor and Elton John to Jennifer Lopez, Kris Jenner and Taylor Swift. And his unmistakable designs have garnered him praise from his clients and industry peers and awarded him numerous accolades.

## FROM ACCESSORY TO FASHION STATEMENT

Webster was first introduced to the Tucson show in the early 1980s, when he was working as an apprentice for a Canadian jeweler. In a 2023 New York Times article, he says, "My first boss was a real rockhound, and as a treat, he brought me (to the Tucson Gem show), and it changed my life. I saw for the first time what was possible in a world of gems."

At the time, the exotic minerals — tsavorite, tourmaline, tanzanite, kunzite — were outside of the palette of other fine jewelry.

"I could hardly pronounce their names," Webster jokes. But he could make beautiful rings with them. "I was always mucking around with the things that were less precious, because I knew if it didn't work, it wasn't the end of the world."

By the mid-'90s, Webster had struck out on his own, riding the changing wave of the fine jewelry industry.

By then, trends in fine jewelry had been shifting for about a decade. Petite strands of pearls and diamonds were out. Large necklaces and cocktail rings with big stones in alluring hues were the rage, inspired by Princess Diana's famous sapphire engagement ring. Working women also had become the main customers for designers, seeking out pieces that appealed to their personal style. And they wanted to wear their precious jewels not just with ballgowns but with everyday jeans and boots.



“I brought with me a style that probably didn’t exist, and that’s what I got recognized for,” Webster says. “Looking back, you couldn’t find loads of creativity in fine jewelry that was an aesthetic like mine. It was interesting times.”

## A NEW AGE OF BLING

Although Webster had made a name for himself with his mix of classical training and rock ‘n’ roll attitude, his leap into the celebrity stratosphere came in 2000, when Madonna was photographed wearing the designer’s signature Crystal Haze ring.

In the now-famous story, which Webster recounted in his autobiography, “Gold Struck: A Life Shaped by Jewelry,” the artist says, “It was the first time I had seen my jewelry on anyone so famous, and it just happened to be the most famous woman in the world.” A few months later, Webster designed Madonna’s wedding ring for her marriage to Guy Richie.

Press coverage snowballed, and soon other celebrities were seen sporting Webster’s creations. Punk-inspired pieces — skulls, thorns, serpents, insects and sea creatures, all rendered in precious metals and gemstones — were especially coveted by musicians, including Ozzy Osbourne, Steven Tyler, Pink and Christina Aguilera. Webster was hailed as the “rock god of jewelry.”

“There’s something about my jewelry that, without question, appeals to that crowd,” he says.

His own persona and appearance — slim, a shoulder-length wavy shag, a penchant for black clothes, and a passion for vintage cars and motorcycles — further fuels that impression.

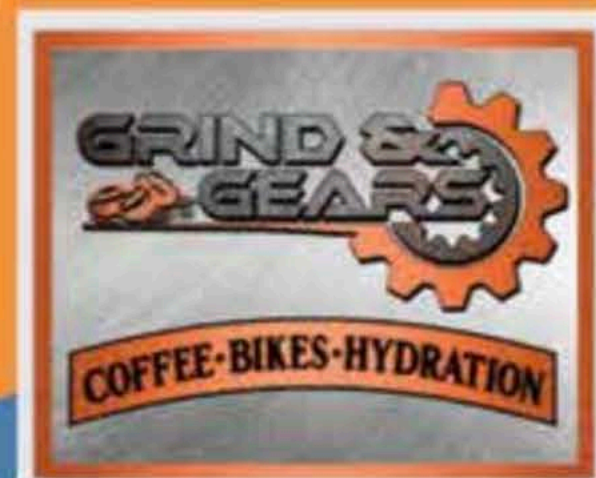
“My friends look at me and say, ‘You’re the most rock ‘n’ roll person we know.’ But that’s just because I’m skinny and old,” Webster says with a laugh. “It’s an attitude, and in that case, I can step up and go, ‘Yeah, I am rock ‘n’ roll.’ I don’t like being told what I can do.”

Case in point: In 2019, Webster released “Jewels Verne,” an aquatically themed collection of fantastical, whimsical sea creatures, including fighting fish, lobsters, shrimp, rays, puffer fish and crabs.

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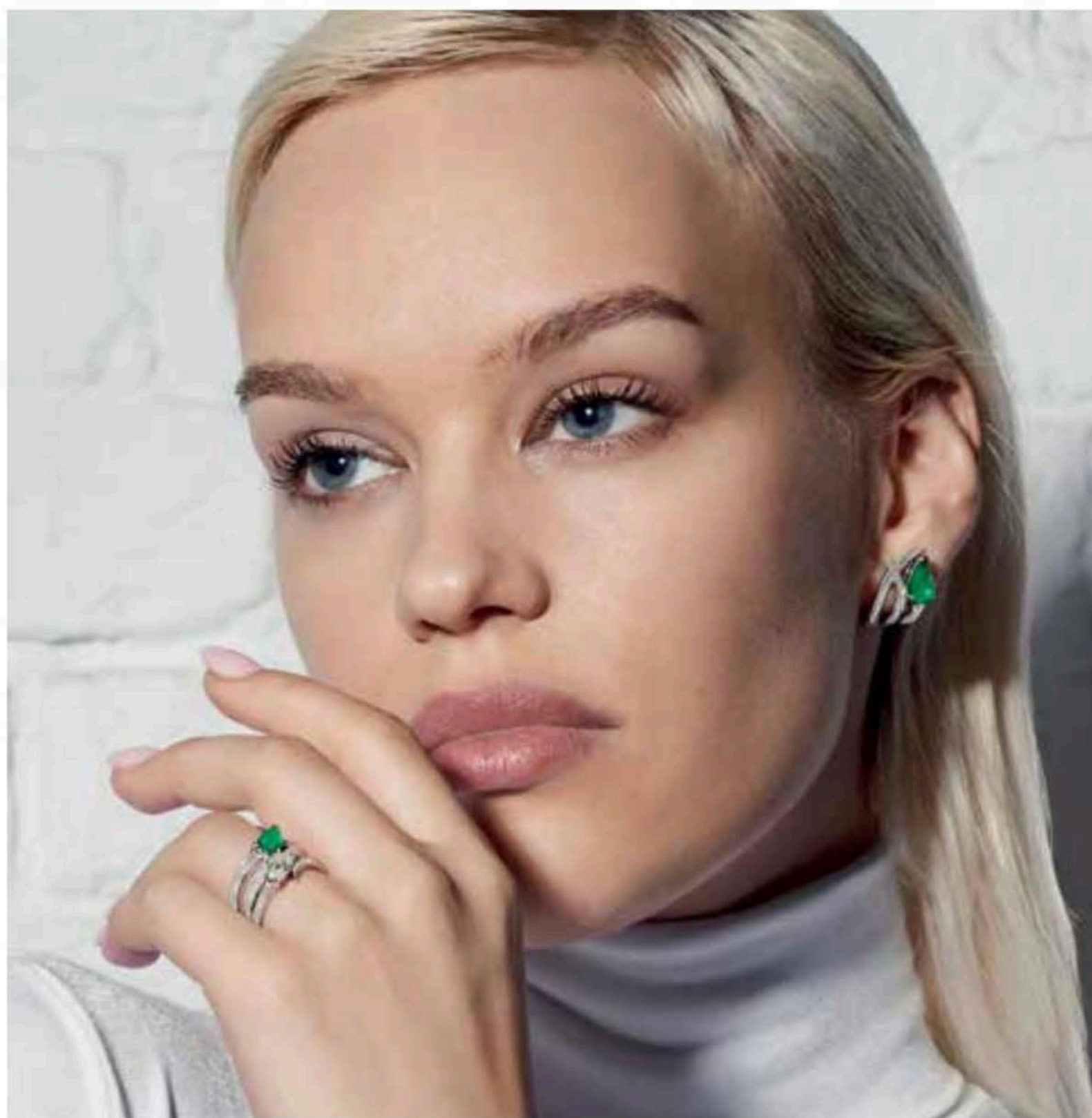
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“I’d wanted to make a crab ring for some time because I really like crabs,” he says. “They’re a bonkers thing; they’re like a little tank.”

In its first year, Webster says he probably sold three crab rings. Then, the diamond, quartz and sapphire-studded band was featured in a brand campaign starring Christina Aguilera.

“The image was so striking,” Webster recalls. “And the crab became the biggest selling ring for about five years. And none of us could fathom that. It was great, but it was still a crab.”

In recent years, the designer has made headlines for creating the engagement ring that musician Machine Gun Kelly gave to actress Megan Fox.

This past spring, he collaborated with Kelly again to design “Gossip,” a cocktail ring that was inspired by his sold-out “Seven Deadly Sins” collection. Named after and visualizing the modern-day eighth sin, the chunky, distorted star-shaped band showcases three-dimensional mouths, eyes and ears, all captured in splashes of brilliant pinks, greens and blues with a mother-of-pearl inlaid gossip bubble.

And that crab? Well, it makes a comeback in Webster’s “Sworn Enemies” series. This line of five limited-edition brooches depicts pairs of creatures in battle.





There is a sparring duo of iridescent hummingbirds, crafted from titanium, white gold and blackened silver and shimmering with black diamonds, a rainbow of sapphires, tsavorite garnets and opal. The serpentine titanium and gold forms of two menacing king cobras twist and wind in a deadly dance, while sparkling diamonds add luster to green agate and mother of pearl. And blue fiddler crabs lock claws in a dangerous battle. Their titanium and white gold bodies are inlaid with turquoise from the Sleeping Beauty mine in Globe.

But no matter what he's designing or what materials he's using, one thing is certain: All Stephen Webster jewelry is guaranteed to be made to the highest of standards.

"In order to qualify as fine jewelry, it's got to be precious, so therefore it should be beautifully made," Webster explains. "Just because it's a bit rock 'n' roll doesn't mean it suddenly doesn't need to be exquisitely crafted. If you have a skull that's beautifully carved by one of the best gem carvers in the world and it's on a handmade 18K ring, that's still rock 'n' roll — but it's fine jewelry rock 'n' roll."

## MEET THE DESIGNER

After more than 40 years of rock 'n' roll — and rocks and minerals — Webster shows no signs of slowing down

In early 2024, he'll be returning to Arizona to search for more sparkling treasures at the Tucson Gem Show. But prior to that, he'll be at Grace Renee Gallery in Carefree. The gallery, the only one in Arizona to carry Webster's jewelry, will host an exclusive artist's reception on Jan. 26.

"I will definitely have new designs, which is exciting," Webster says, noting that he'll be bringing the "Sworn Enemies" collection to the gallery. "They're great conversation pieces and proper art pieces. I'll be bringing everything I got."

[gracereneegallery.com](http://gracereneegallery.com)

*Experience*

## 'Stephen Webster: Electrifying Jewelry with No Regrets'

Friday, Jan. 26 | 10 a.m.–7 p.m. | Private appointments available  
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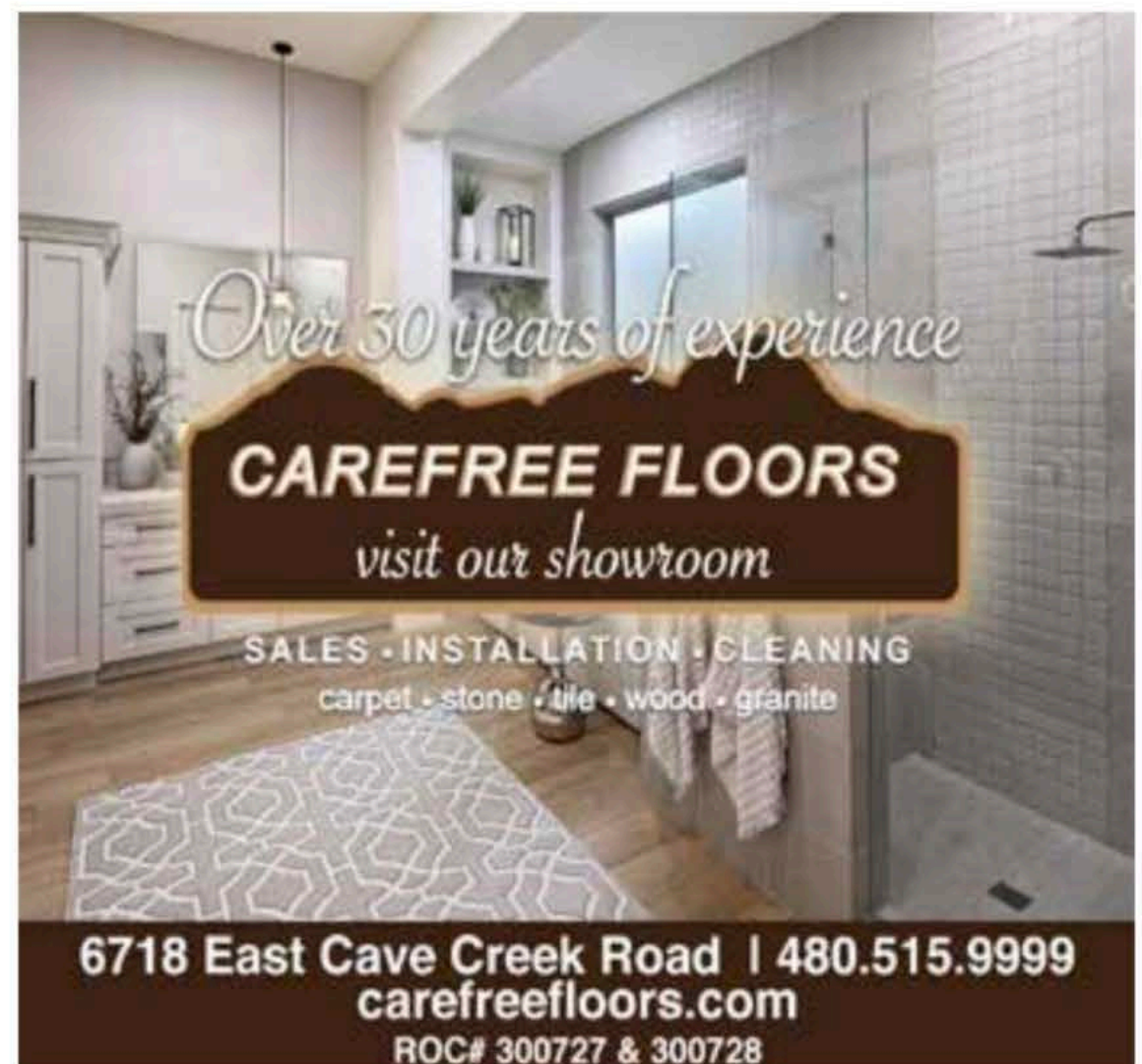


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