

## ALEXANDRITE

*The most coveted examples are linked to a long-depleted mine in the Ural Mountains*

STYLE  
JEWELS

# WHO'S THE RAREST OF THEM ALL?

A trio of uncommon gems  
— Paraiba tourmalines,  
padparadscha sapphires and  
alexandrite — are poised  
to be the next red-carpet stars

By Victoria Gomelsky  
Produced by Lisa Bradkin

### Omi Prive

Alexandrite (2.96 carat)  
and diamond pendant.

The gem is named  
after **Czar Alexander II**.

According to an  
apocryphal tale, it was  
discovered on his  
birthday in 1830; \$95,000,  
[omiprive.com](http://omiprive.com)

**A**T THE 2013 GOLDEN GLOBES, **Salma Hayek** accessorized her glitzy black Gucci gown with a borrowed pair of earrings by **Martin Katz** set with 25 carats of Paraiba tourmaline, an electric and esoteric blue gem named after the Brazilian state in which it's mined.

Katz, a seasoned red-carpet jeweler, says he rarely lends pieces featuring the exotic stone — the most prized variety of tourmaline, it can retail for as much as \$100,000 per carat — because it's simply “too special.” He doesn't love “blasting them in every newspaper,” he says. “People don't even know what they're looking at.”

Red-carpet jewelry has come a long way since Katz loaned **Sharon Stone** a diamond choker to wear to the premiere of *Basic Instinct* in 1992. Since then, classic white diamonds have had their power challenged by colored stones, from emeralds to opals. Now, more rare gems are gaining attention. Take padparadscha, an orangey-pink sapphire that is to gem connoisseurs what Domaine Romanee-Conti is to wine snobs. Named after the Sinhalese word for lotus blossom, “pads,” as they're known in the trade, are famously found in Sri Lanka. Despite, or because of, the market's dearth of sizable, gem-quality specimens, jewelers are besotted. A quality 10-carat pad set in a ring easily could fetch \$1 million, says **Walter McTeigue** of fine jeweler McTeigue & McClelland.

A third stone, alexandrite, is a variety of chrysoberyl that changes from green in daylight to red or mauve in incandescent light. The most coveted alexandrite is linked to a long-depleted mine in Russia's Ural Mountains, though East Africa and Brazil are more common sources. “You can hardly get your hands on any Russian stones,” says **Arun Bohra** of Arunashi, a designer of one-of-a-kind jewels. “A gem-quality 10-carat Russian alexandrite would retail for upward of \$100,000 a carat.” While a gem-quality 10-carat diamond could cost as much or even more, diamonds are much easier to find. An alexandrite of that size could take years to locate.

For gem lovers without access to a Swiss bank account, there is hope, at least when it comes to Paraibas. The stone was discovered in a Brazilian mine in 1989, but that deposit quickly was tapped. During the early 2000s, a mother lode of similar-looking tourmalines was unearthed in Mozambique. The African goods tend to be larger but lack the same vibrancy and trade at a discount. Such designers as **Erica Courtney** and **Irene Neuwirth** have made the Mozambican examples a staple of their current collections. Which works just fine for stylists and their star clients, who tend to appreciate jewels for their aesthetic rather than gemological qualities. “When you see something that's new, your eye is drawn to it,” says A-list stylist **Lawren Sample**. “Rarity isn't a factor.” Some purists would beg to differ. **VIR**

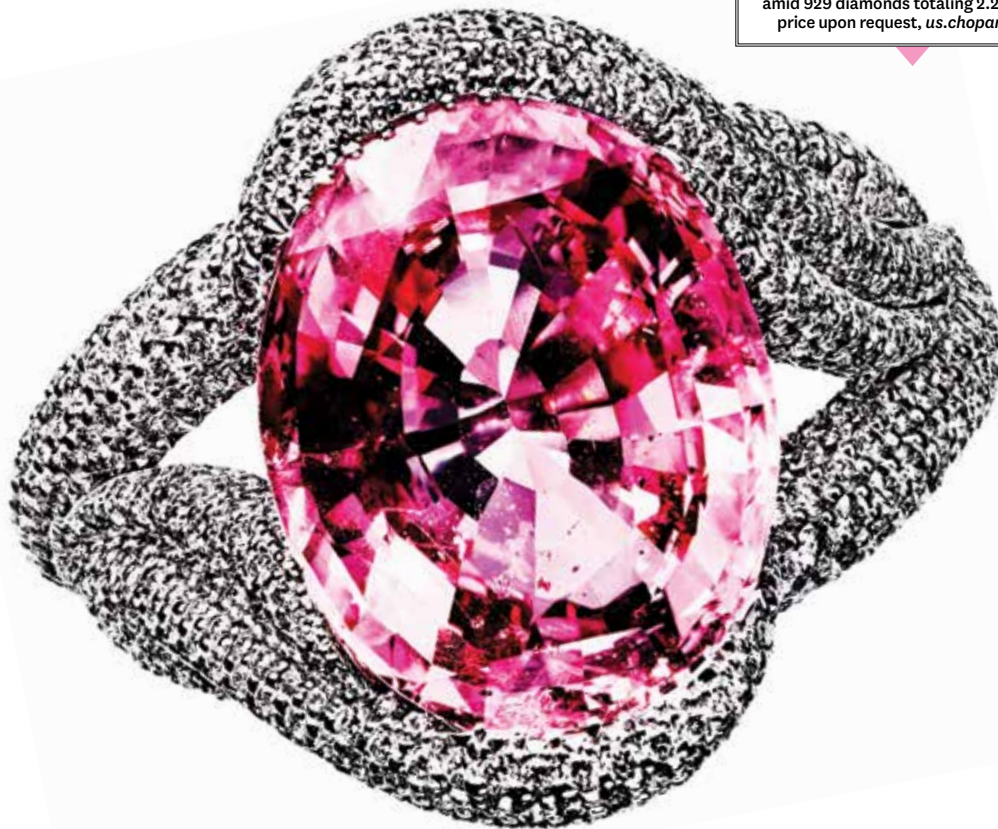
**McTeigue & McClelland**

Padparadscha sapphire and black opal drop earrings in 18-karat yellow gold boasting 13.79 carats of opals and 6.13 carats of sapphires. “Pads” are one color variety of the mineral corundum, which also appears in red (rubies) and blue (common sapphires); price upon request, [mc2jewels.com](http://mc2jewels.com)



**Chopard**

The Cannes Film Festival sponsor, a favorite jewelry choice of **Marion Cotillard** and **Penelope Cruz**, created a ring in 18-karat white gold featuring a 7.83-carat padparadscha (pronounced “pad-pa-ROD-sha”) sapphire stone, which shines amid 929 diamonds totaling 2.21 carats; price upon request, [us.chopard.com](http://us.chopard.com)



**PADPARADSCHA SAPPHIRE**

Originally found in Sri Lanka, these gems run along a color spectrum from pink (seen here) to orange

## STYLE JEWELS



**Sutra**  
Earrings in 18-karat white gold with 15 carats of Mozambican Paraiba (pronounced "pah-rah-EE-bah") and 13 carats of diamonds. **Katy Perry, Rihanna** and **Halle Berry** have worn jewels by the brand; \$60,000, [sutrajewels.com](http://sutrajewels.com)

**Leon Mege**  
Blue Fin ring featuring a 12.75-carat cabochon Mozambican Paraiba tourmaline set in smaller Paraibas and diamonds. A concave mirror in 18-karat antiqued white gold set with blue sapphires directs light into the stone; \$55,000, [leonmege.com](http://leonmege.com)



**Chopard**  
Earrings in 18-karat white gold feature 30 pear-shaped Paraiba tourmalines (28.3 carats) and 24 diamonds. The element of copper gives the stones their Windex-blue hue; price upon request, [us.chopard.com](http://us.chopard.com)

**Mish**  
Arden ring with a cabochon Brazilian Paraiba tourmaline, pavé brown diamonds and 18-karat yellow gold; \$16,000, [mishnewyork.com](http://mishnewyork.com)



## PARAIBA

*This most prized variety of tourmaline can retail for as much as \$100,000 a carat*