

The Jewels In the (Gear) Crown

Gear Technology's bimonthly aberration — gear trivia, humor, weirdness and oddments for the edification and amusement of our readers. Contributions are welcome.

Over the years the Addendum Staff has brought you odd, little known and sometimes useless facts about almost every conceivable topic concerning gears. This month, as part of our never-ending campaign to upgrade the *tone* of the industry, we are venturing into the world of high fashion. Lose those pocket protectors, gear fans. Welcome to the land of gear *haute couture*. Appearing now, in select magazines, are ads that rival those of Bulgari, Cartier and Tiffany. These gear "gems" come courtesy of Winzeler Gear, Chicago, IL.

The ads, shot in elegant and understated black-and-white, feature fashion model Bodil wearing Winzeler gears in her ears, on her arms and around her neck. John Winzeler, whose company specializes in small plastic gears, had some of his end product made into jewelry to be modeled by the lady in question. The reason for this venture into industrial chic? Winzeler wanted an ad campaign that would be noticed.

Winzeler and Dan Kennedy, president of Kennedy Advertising, Winzeler's agency, have been doing traditional gear ads for years, and doing them very well. One of them was *Design News'* Best Ad for 1997. But Winzeler was ready to move beyond the usual charts, cross section drawings, specs and product photos that are the staples of most manufacturing advertising. Winzeler's interest in fashion photography and art led him in a different direction.

Winzeler and Kennedy had talked about a new direction for their ad campaign for some time, but the jewelry concept came to Kennedy "about 3:00 in the morning." Why not draw a parallel between the craftsmanship and precision required to make fine jewelry and that demanded of gear makers, specifically those at Winzeler Gear?



A risky idea? Maybe, especially in an industry that tends to be conservative at best. But Winzeler, never one, in his own words, "to fly in formation," was intrigued by the notion and decided to run with it.

For Winzeler and Kennedy, the goal was to get the ads noticed and remembered. What better way to do that than to have a picture of a beautiful woman with a delicate worm gear dangling from one ear, right there among the formulas and photos of machine tools? Readers might not like what they saw (although early indicators are that they do), but they'd remember it.

But the execution of this great idea turned out to be more complicated than it first appeared to be. Over a year of consultations between jewelry and gear designers, photographers, Winzeler and Kennedy went into the production and development. Ultimately the gear jewelry was made of plastic resin painted silver and fitted with jewelry hardware—earring backs, bracelet clasps and neck chains and ribbons—to make them functional. *Voila!* Worm gear earrings, a bevel and miter gear ring, spur gear bracelets and a gear sector necklace.

Next, after the gear jewelry was completed, up-and-coming fashion photographer Michael Voltattorni was brought on to do the photos. He took more than 400 shots of Bodil wearing the jewelry. From these, the pictures were chosen for the first three ads in the campaign. Several others were mounted and framed and are presently displayed in the lobby at Winzeler Gear.

The ad campaign was treated with all the secrecy of a hot new product release. Not even the staff at Winzeler Gear knew what was up. "Everyone knew something was going on, but didn't know what," says Winzeler.

Once the ad campaign was ready, Winzeler and Kennedy took another leaf from the world of high fashion and unveiled the new jewelry and the ad series with a big party attended by the Winzeler Gear staff, people from Kennedy Advertising, Michael Voltattorni, Bodil, and friends and clients of the company.

Since the kickoff, the first ad in the series, one featuring Bodil wearing worm gear earrings (gear-rings?), has run in *Machine Design*, *Design News*, and *Auto World*. Other gear jewelry ads are to follow.

Winzeler is committed to the series. "We have about 400 other photos," he says. "We could be into this for the long haul." says Winzeler.

Winzeler Gear jewelry ads don't yet have the instant recognizability of an Absolut vodka bottle, but that's the direction Winzeler, never one to think small, would like to go.


Hey, it could happen. Look out, Tiffany. Here comes Winzeler Gear! 

Photo by Michael Voltattorni.

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