

March
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FASHION

**EUPHORIA'S
MAKEUP
EXPLAINED**

**THE POWER
of WIGS**

Spring's **MOST
FUN** FASHION
TREND



the **NATURAL
DEODORANT
DILEMMA**

#UNAPOLOGETICALLY DILONE

**THE SUPERMODEL ON SELF-ACCEPTANCE,
SOBRIETY *and* GROWING UP WITH 9 SIBLINGS**

HIDDEN Gems

Jewellery designers have joined the adaptive-fashion movement.

Get to know some of the trailblazers who are designing for people with disabilities.

By **ANNIKA LAUTENS**

Thanks to the global pandemic, jewellery designers seem to be a dime a dozen. There's the famous-for-being-famous influencer who sells minimalist chains for prices that rival big-city rents. Invariably there's the friend of a friend who creates nostalgia-inducing beaded pieces that evoke memories of Toys "R" Us art kits and summer camp. There's the OG middle-aged maker who uses kitschy materials and larger-than-life pendants that have a tendency to cause neck pain. And then there's the new wave of jewellery designers—those who are stylish. (But that's beside the point.) They're winning us over with talent, innovation and purpose-driven designs geared toward the disability community.

According to the World Health Organization, roughly 15 per cent of the world's population—about one billion people—is living with a disability, a figure that hasn't gone unnoticed. The adaptive-fashion industry, which caters to this group and more, is expected to reach \$366.8 million by the end of 2026, and jewellery designers are emulating their counterparts, creating inclusive pieces with modern flair. With that in mind, here are a few of our favourites.



YVMIN Prostheses aren't new to Chinese influencer and model Xiao Yang. Having worn one for over 20 years, the Chengdu-based talent has struggled to express her fashion identity because stylish prosthetic limbs have been very limited. Enter Xiaoyu Zhang and Min Li—the two designers behind Chinese jewellery brand Yvmin. While the duo have a history of creating delicate earrings and pendant necklaces, they saw an opportunity to conceptualize an idea they had while in university and collaborate with Yang in the process. "We had the design concept of 'jewellery prosthetics' when we were in uni, but it was never fully realized," Zhang and Li wrote in an email. "So when we discovered Xiao Yang on social media, we thought this was a great opportunity to make our idea come true."

Strictly speaking, the minds behind Yvmin don't make the entire prosthesis, due to technical requirements, but they design the outer shell using scans of Yang's legs as a starting point and then 3-D print the structure out of nylon or resin. According to Zhang and Li, "all the prosthetic designs reference past Yvmin series," including their use of "purple gems, flowing metal forms" and heart motifs, which were a key element in their ElectricGirl collection.

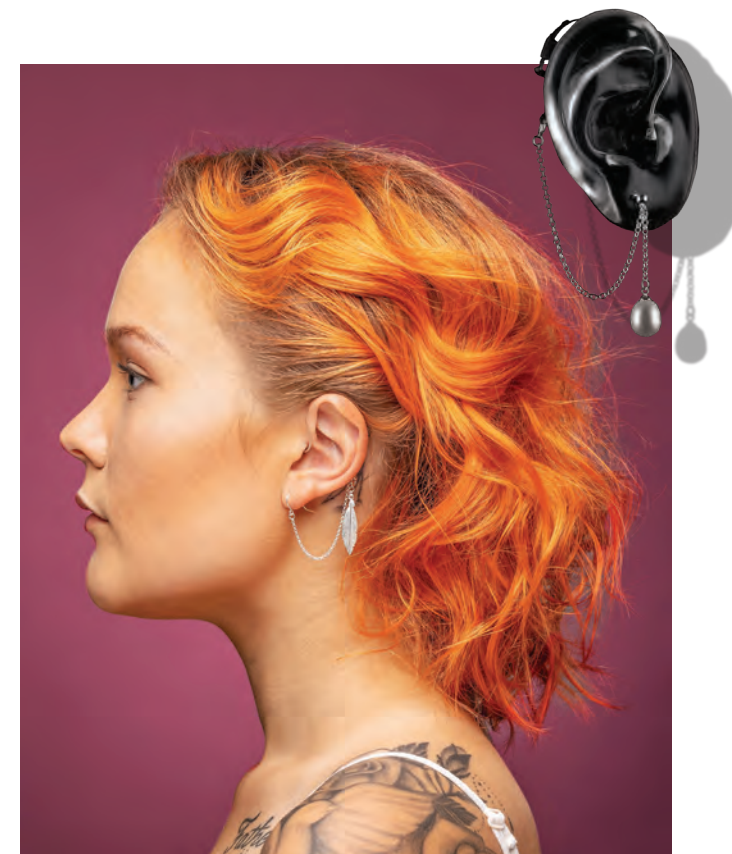
Since posting their collaboration on social media, both Yvmin and Yang have received an outpouring of support. But for the team, it was never about creating a viral moment. Zhang and Li hope their work will encourage more jewellers to cater to the needs of people with disabilities. "We hope that our designs and creations can give people more choices and let them wear their favourite accessories, no matter which group they belong to."

PHOTOGRAPHY: YVMIN COURTESY OF YVMIN; CONQUERING BY CATLIN CHRISENEE PHOTOGRAPHY; DEAFMETAL BY TAPIO AULU

CONQUERING Fidget-ring brand Conquering was born out of love. American founder and CEO Tammy Nelson co-created it with her son Jake to design jewellery that not only looks good but also does good. "Our mission is to help others feel empowered," Nelson wrote in an email. "We were motivated to create a product that would always be close at hand, ready to provide a spark of encouragement whenever needed"—and that's exactly what the rings accomplish.

The stylish older sister to the once-viral fidget spinners, fidget jewellery is classified by its spinnable element, such as a rotating bead or pendant. Nelson says that while the rings "aren't made exclusively for those with anxiety, depression, ADHD or autism or those who struggle with body-focused repetitive behaviours like nail-biting," the pieces have been embraced by the neurodivergent community. "Every day, we hear from customers about how our jewellery has helped them feel less anxious and more focused," notes Nelson. "We set out to design a beautiful piece of jewellery that also just happens to be a fidget—something that comes without the negative stigma that other more toylike fidgets sometimes have."

Conquering's heartening mentality is evident not only in its branding but also within the rings themselves. Shoppers can choose from a variety of uplifting phrases, which are only visible once the discs are spun. Nelson hopes the words will inspire shoppers to conquer their day. "Our rings won't change the world, but those who wear them will," she says on the brand's website. "If we can help them feel focused and empowered to live with purpose, then we've accomplished our mission."



DEAFMETAL "We are not only selling jewellery; we are selling empowerment." So goes the philosophy behind Finland-based hearing aid accessory brand Deafmetal. Founder and creative director Jenni Ahtiainen started in the fashion industry as an apparel and costume designer, having created garments for Marilyn Manson, Snoop Dogg and Bono. But everything changed when she suddenly lost her hearing in 2018 and required hearing aids. "If you have bad eyesight, you can choose from many different glasses styles," Ahtiainen wrote in an email. "But if you have bad hearing, you're stuck with ugly and medical-looking machines for the rest of your life."

Hence the launch of Deafmetal, which offers fashionable earrings that can be worn with behind-the-ear hearing aids as well as with cochlear and BAHA implants. "Hearing aid stigma is one of the major problems Deafmetal addresses," says Ahtiainen. "By offering personalized designs, we're significantly improving the self-image and self-confidence of hearing aid users." The brand's loyal client base fervently agrees. A particularly pleased user posted "I have had a really difficult relationship with my hearing aids and their 'old lady' look. I am so happy that I now found a way to make them look cool."

While Deafmetal's pieces also serve a practical purpose—they make hearing aids more secure through the use of safety chains—Ahtiainen's hope for the brand is to give the hearing impaired community more visibility. "You never see anyone wearing hearing aids in fashion magazines," she says. "But hard-of-hearing people love fashion and design, too!" ■