



Putting on the Ritz: PMC Cufflinks

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Introduction

There was no “eureka” moment recorded in fashion history for the invention of the cufflink. Their evolution can be traced as far back as garment pins with decorative heads from the Bronze Age. This was followed by safety pins, which were developed by the Romans. Sometime after this, buttons were used for decoration. The ancient Greeks and Romans both wore shell buttons, and Europeans wore decorative buttons in the 12th century. It wasn't until fitted garments became popular in the 13th century that buttons went from decorative to necessary.

The earliest cufflinks were initially metal buttons joined with string, which was followed by chain links. This progressed to elaborate handmade buttons made of precious metals and gems. The term Cuff Link dates back as early as 1788. With the advent of the machine age, Victorian age stamping machines made cufflinks available to the masses aspiring to middle class respectability. This was followed by the standardization of the men's barrel cuff shirt. The barrel cuff had a two to three inch band and later, when folded over, became known as the French cuff.

In the 20th century, the trend has waxed and waned, but hasn't completely died out. They are still very much a symbol of the well dressed man. Women as well have been wearing cuff links, but they are very much closely associated with the sharp dressed man.

For the PMC artist, it is a new frontier. Most of what is being made by artisans are primarily for women-earrings, necklaces, bracelets, et cetera. While some men can and do wear bracelets, earrings and pendants-the vast majority of PMC art is more for feminine sensibilities. In my experience, many of the cooperatives and craft fairs, the artists simply are not making very much jewelry for men. I have found that cuff links are a great way to help set oneself apart a little bit. Juries have seen hundreds of earrings, but don't see many cuff links and that can make them sit up and take notice.

Types of Cufflinks

(Only first three of these styles are practical for the PMC artist)

Bar

This is a one piece cuff link in a slightly curved bar shape-often resembling a mini bar bell.

Pro: very easy for the beginner make. Can be made with 100% PMC.

Con: requires a lot of PMC, not the most comfortable style to wear.

Chain Link

Either two matching pieces or a front piece attached to a toggle by a chain.

Pro: another easy style to make, comfortable to wear.

Con: Durability issues, if snagged, PMC loop can snap.

Swivel Back

A design with a post on the back with a swiveling bar. This backing can either be fixed, or can be jointed to allow for movement.

Pro: easy to wear, can be easy to make with findings.

Con: not as easy to make for the beginner, unless using epoxy-ideally should be soldered.

Snap

A two part cuff link each half joined in the middle by use of a two piece snap.

Pro: very easy to wear, easy to put on.

Con: snaps must be soldered, difficult to find sterling silver snaps.

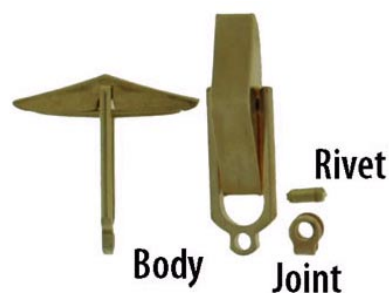
Making a Pair of Jointed Swivel Back Links

1. Make the front of the cuff link out of PMC+ or PMC3, approximately 5 cards thick. The fired pieces should ideally be not much larger than 5/8" of an inch.
2. Scratchbrush and tumble pieces in stainless steel shot.
3. Solder the C-joint to the backs of each piece, pickle, then scratchbrush and tumble again.
4. Oxidize pieces(if desired.)
5. Using a bench vise, gently hold piece in place while using a center punch and riveting hammer to rivet the swivel back into the C-joint. Take care not to scratch the fronts of the pieces.

Supplies

Most jewelry supply companies will carry many of the findings needed for making cuff links, the following places I've either researched, or purchased from:

- Rio Grande (www.riogrande.com)
- G & S Metals (www.gsgold.com)
- Ballou (www.ballou.com) Please note, Ballou is strictly wholesale, however, there is a list of dealers that they sell to, and one can use that to find a local dealer.



Parts of a commercial cufflink finding.