

# Custom gowns increase choices

By Debbie Wallis Landau  
special writer

**C**USTOM BRIDAL salons as well as quality fabric stores can assist a bride-to-be with designing and creating the dress of her dreams.

Debbie Pollak-Zimberg of Pollak's Bridal in West Bloomfield and Rochester, believes "there's the right dress out there for everyone. Some women are more articulate about describing what they want. Often we can suggest something, a particular design or perhaps just one change in a design they have seen to better flatter their figure and their skin tones."

Her salon, which offers both retail and custom dresses, doesn't charge for consultations. "We urge brides to allow us four to six months for custom orders. If an engagement is shorter, we can alter or change a dress that is on one of our racks."

**POLLAK'S DEALS** with fabric houses out of New York and Paris as well as Michigan. Custom dresses start in the \$800-\$1,000 range. The retail line ranges from as low as \$300 on up to about \$3,000.

Pollak-Zimberg and her mother, Midge Pollak, who is co-owner, specialize in the couture look. The salon's own line of bridal gowns is called "Creations by Pollak's."

"What we strive for are designs that

are lovely and chic with beautiful detail. That doesn't necessarily mean heavily beaded," said Pollak-Zimberg. "It can be a very understated, sophisticated look."

Stewart Fabrics in Birmingham has many pleased customers not only in Michigan, but Ohio, Indiana and Ontario.

"They know we will send fabric swatches and large orders," said Rod Griford, proprietor. "We do a lot of special orders, so future brides can rest assured that if a desired lace or satin or silk is not in the store in the right quantity, we will get it for her."

Stewart has been assisting bridal parties for decades, not only with quality fabrics in every price range but with a referral list of local dressmakers who can do the actual custom work. It also has a sewing room on the premises for brides who want to sew their own dresses or make parts of their own dresses or headpieces.

"WE CAN assist brides with widely varying price ranges," Griford said. "If a young lady loves lace but is on a tight budget, we can steer her to a lovely domestic lace. Or, contrarily, we can offer French Alencon, too."

"What I would like to stress to brides," Griford said, "is to be openminded. If you love the look of silk, know that you can also obtain it with, for example, a good tissue taffeta. If you're looking for satin for

bridesmaids' dresses, you can purchase fabric for \$5.98 or jump to peau de soie for \$36."

Stewart regularly conducts seminars on creating headpieces and bridal gowns. Sewing classes to make them are offered, too.

**TOBY HABERMAN**, of Haberman Fabrics in Royal Oak, urges brides considering a custom dress "to try on different styles at the very best bridal salons and come in with pictures. Everyone working in our store is a seamstress, and we can offer woman creative perspectives on designs they like but might need to modify."

Changing a neckline, a color or a waistline can make a big difference in suiting a dress to an individual, she said.

"What's wonderful is you don't have to be an heiress to have a custom bridal gown. There is such an infinite variety of fabrics to choose from that no woman has to feel she has compromised her 'dream dress.'"

It's possible, for example, to recreate a gorgeous \$2,500 or \$3,000 designer gown for about \$1,000.

"Don't get misled by fabric names," Haberman said. "Whether you want a romantic Southern Belle look or a sleek contemporary design, there are fabrics in your range to accomplish your goal."

**LIKE STEWART** Fabrics, Haberman Fabrics offers various programs to educate brides about the wide choices and styles available to them.

For example, Haberman Fabrics offers bridal headpiece classes. "In the first week, different techniques are demonstrated. In the second session, students bring in materials and work on them," Haberman said.

Dominant right now is the flora look. The contemporary look of a headband with floral sprays sporting beads and/or lace is also popular.

"We sell parts to make flowers for a spray," Haberman said. "We can show you to gather up veiling to get the look you want."

**IN THE** five years since Kathleen Kolacz and Michele Merrifield, both dressmakers, opened Specialite de Bridal in Plymouth, Kolacz has observed, "You can't talk a bride out of what she wants. But if you don't drastically change her vision, she will be receptive to slight modifications."

"We can do an informal dress for several hundred dollars," Kolacz said, "or an elaborate design for thousands. The main thing is the bride should allow us a good four months — from creation stage, through beginning and final fittings."

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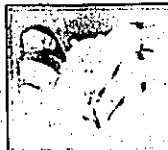
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