

Heads up: New ways to top off your wedding-day ensemble

BY SHARON MOSELY
Copley News Service

When Maria Miller Preston went in search of a headpiece to wear with her wedding gown, she couldn't find a thing to wear.

"I searched all over New York," she said, "and all I found was an \$800 tiara."

That was not quite the crowning touch that she had in mind. So she created her own company — Heavenly Headpieces — four years ago and has been whipping up little pieces of heaven ever since for brides who are intent on being "queen for a day" — without the expense of crown jewels.

Indeed, today's brides are seeking unique ways to head up their wedding-day ensembles. And, no, they don't necessarily want to weigh themselves down with too much grandiose sparkle.

"I've found that most of today's brides want a stunning, simple headpiece," says Preston, whose signature tiaras and headbands are inspired by elegant simplicity. "They do not want something too overdone." Her trademark designs, often custom-made for each individual client, are fashioned of gemstones, Swarovski crystals and sterling-silver wire.

While the headdress may be one of the last accessories

chosen by a bride, usually after she selects her gown, the decorative statement made by the bridal headpiece may be one of the most important elements of the overall wedding picture.

"I think tiaras have become popular because they can be very individual," says Preston, who crafts headpieces designed to be worn with or without a veil, another important option for bridal head-dresses. "Everyone likes to feel like a princess on their wedding day."

Here are a few other ways to look regal on that special day:

■ Flower power. Flowers, fresh or silk, can complement

a bridal gown when worn as a wreath in the hair or sprinkled with jewels and placed on a headband. One large, spectacular blossom can also make a dramatic impact. A word of caution: Make sure the flowers in your hair coordinate with the flowers in your bouquet.

■ Barrettes and other baubles. Decorative hair ornaments — bows, barrettes, combs and headpins — detailed with pearls, gemstones, feathers and crystals are often a chic way to give hair a touch of glamour.

■ Hats on! A charming reminder of days gone by, hats chosen to complement a wed-

ding dress can be a memorable addition to the bride's ensemble. However, keep in mind that the hairstyle is critical and will affect the way a hat will look and feel. Snug, tight-fitting Juliette caps, encrusted with beads or jewels, may also be considered as an alternative to a wider-brimmed chapeau. For spring and summer, organdy, straw and silk fabrics are delicate choices to accessorize a wedding dress. For a bride who chooses a more casual approach, hats can also dress up an informal wedding suit or less traditional gown.

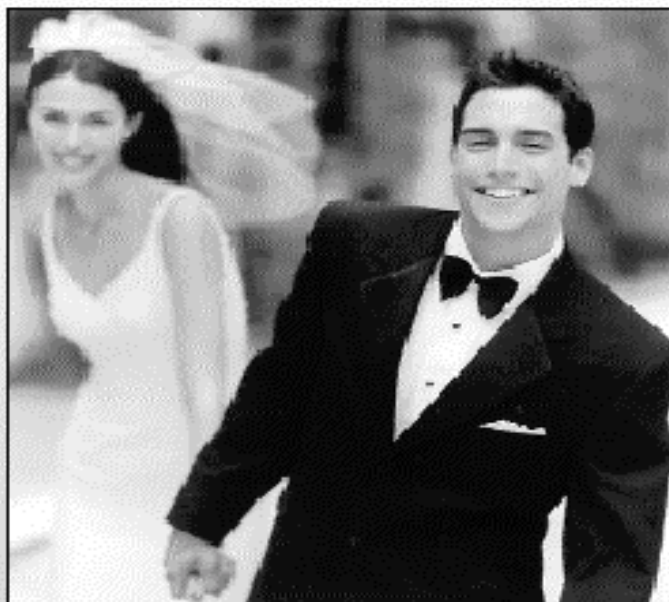
■ Head wraps. In silk or satin, plain or embellished,

reminiscent of Flapper days, head wraps are another unusual way to top off a bridal ensemble.

No matter what kind of headgear you choose, however, you must choose the right hairstyle to go with it. Your choice of whether or not to wear a veil is another important consideration. Jewelry should also be kept minimal if wearing an embellished headpiece.

■ The best advice: Keep it simple. Wear pearls or small diamonds. Leave the sparkle on top and you'll look like a queen.

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