

## Mixed Success at Major Spring Trade Shows

The fallout from the worldwide recession has been evident at recent jewelry trade shows. Expectations were low going in to JCK Las Vegas, held May 30 through June 2. The amount of exhibitors dropped from about 3,100 in 2008 to 2,600, and attendance was down.

Well priced jewelry at low price points sold well, while bigger stones and high-end designs were more difficult to move. *Rapaport* predicted that "cash tight buyers are expected to focus on bridal-driven purchases, filling specific orders, rather than on building inventory" which attendees ultimately confirmed. Exhibitors gave the show marks ranging from moderately successful to terrible.

BaselWorld, which is considered to be the preeminent trade show, also received varied reviews. Attendance for the eight day event, which opened March 26 in Basel, Switzerland was down about 12% from the record 100,000 who visited in 2008. American attendance, typically 7-8% of the total, was down as much as 60% according to some estimates. Despite the drop in traffic, exhibitors generally agreed that the buyers were there, just with smaller delegations.

Classically designed watches in muted colors from established brands were popular. Mid-range stones did well, and sales for the high end were brisk. Some exhibitors complained that the eight day schedule was too long and that they only participated because a significant deposit was made prior to the economy souring.

JSIS Insurance, June 2009