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BREAKING NEWS | THIS WEEK'S ISSUE

Tiffany counterfeiters arrested

by catherine curan

Tiffany & Co. is striking back against counterfeiters on Canal Street.

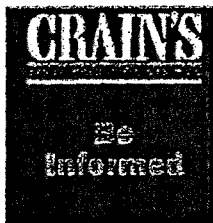
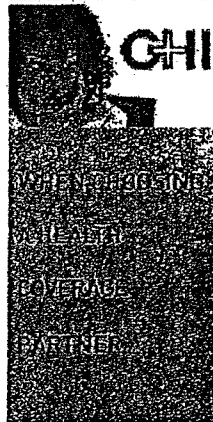
Following an eight month undercover investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, law enforcement officials last week raided three stores on Canal Street, seizing 6,900 pieces of counterfeit merchandise, including bracelets and necklaces with a street value of more than \$1.3 million, as well as knock-offs of Tiffany signature robin's egg blue packaging. Three alleged counterfeiters were arrested.

Yaniv Shamir and his wife Nadine Vargas, proprietors of Starglam.com Inc., a Staten Island-based website that allegedly sold counterfeit Tiffany merchandise bought from Canal Street were arrested last Tuesday. They have since been released on \$250,000 bail. Their lawyer, Mario Gallucci of Helbeck, Nappa and Gallucci claims the couple were running a legitimate business selling various types of jewelry and did not know the merchandise they sold as Tiffany brand was counterfeit.

Chee-Soon Tai, the owner and operator of Enddi Silver, at 251 Canal Street was also arrested and arraigned last week, found with over 4,000 pieces of allegedly counterfeit merchandise. His attorney did not return a call seeking comment.

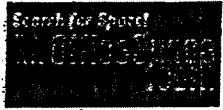
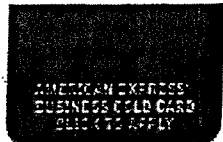
The rise of Internet shopping has added to Tiffany's counterfeiting problems, according to James Swire, a partner at law firm Dorsey & Whitney LLP, which has defended Tiffany's intellectual property over the past several years.

At Tiffany's request, the FBI began to investigate Starglam last September. In December, FBI agents found approximately 600 pieces of sterling silver jewelry and boxes of shopping bags bearing Tiffany logo while searching Starglam's Staten Island location. Tiffany officials



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said that genuine merchandise with similar designs would have a market value of about \$90,000, according to the complaint filed against the three defendants.

Michael Asaro, an assistant U.S. attorney for the eastern District of New York says his office is deciding whether to indict on criminal charges. Mr. Swire says he expects that Tiffany will file civil charges.

Tiffany, which had \$1.7 billion in 2002 sales, is also fighting other alleged counterfeiters, with legal actions pending in Philadelphia and Chicago. While the dollar amount of the alleged Canal Street counterfeits is relatively small compared to Tiffany's overall sales, Mr. Swire says counterfeiting hurts the company in several ways. Beyond lost sales, the company also suffers ill will from consumers who seek redress after discovering they did not purchase genuine Tiffany merchandise.

"This is an important first step to tell the people who do this they are at risk criminally and civilly, and to alert the public to be careful," he says. "The only genuine Tiffany merchandise is in a Tiffany store or on Tiffany's website."

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Interpublic strikes deal to sell NFO WorldGroup

by Claire Atkinson, AdAge.com

Interpublic Group of Cos. has struck a deal to sell its NFO WorldGroup unit for \$400 million in cash and \$25 million in stock to Taylor Nelson Sofres, a U.K.-based research company.

Taylor Nelson Sofres emerged as a front-runner after it confirmed talks with Interpublic on March 31. Interpublic purchased market research firm NFO in April 2000 for \$493 million in stock and assumed \$180 million in debt.

Interpublic's chairman-CEO, David Bell, indicated that the recent war in Iraq had played some part in altering the valuation of NFO. In a statement Mr. Bell said, "During the course of these negotiations, world events have adversely affected the top-line performance and profitability of certain project-based marketing services firms."

Goldman Sachs & Co. represented Interpublic on the sale, which is expected to close this summer. One year after the deal closes, Interpublic is to receive an additional \$10 million cash payment subject to the value of TNS' shares. Interpublic also said it expects to realize an accounting gain of \$100 million.

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Pataki proposes slot machines in NYC

Proposing an alternative to city tax hikes, Gov. George Pataki has offered a fiscal plan to aid New York City that includes installing thousands of video slot machines in Manhattan.

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NEW YORK POST

ONLINE EDITION

BOGUS TIFFANY 'RING' IS CRACKED

By SUZANNE KAPNER and MARSHA KRANES

April 22, 2003 -- The folks at Tiffany & Co. were as blue as their trademark boxes - until the FBI busted a team of shady peddlers who were hawking knockoff sterling-silver jewelry over the Internet, federal investigators said yesterday.

Following complaints from the prestigious Fifth Avenue emporium and a nine-month investigation, the FBI arrested a Staten Island couple for claiming to sell "pre-owned Tiffany & Co. items . . . acquired from liquidations and/or estate sales," according to a criminal complaint.

In fact, the complaint said, the jewelry they were selling on their Web site, www.starglam.com, were counterfeits that had been supplied by a Chinatown merchant.

During the course of the FBI investigation, agents raided the home of the couple - Yaniv Shamir and Renee Vargas - and seized 600 pieces of sterling-silver jewelry along with boxes of shopping bags bearing the Tiffany logo, the complaint said.

Tiffany experts examined the confiscated goods and found that the markings and labelings were counterfeit, the FBI said.

The value of the 600 items - if they had been authentic - would have been \$90,000. Similar counterfeits and Tiffany packaging were found when the FBI visited Enndi Silver, the Chinatown shop of Chee-Soon Tai at 251 Canal St., the complaint said.

Shamir, Vargas and Tai were arraigned last week in Brooklyn federal court on charges of conspiring to infringe on a copyright for personal gain - which is punishable by up to five years in prison.

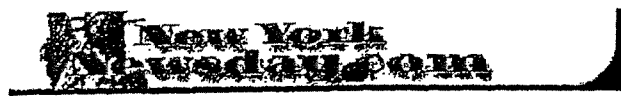
FBI Special Agent M. Irene Ho, of the agency's Computer Crime and Infrastructure Squad, visited the starglam Web site on several occasions late last year and found more than 20 different Tiffany & Co. copyrighted sterling-silver jewelry designs, according to the complaint.

An FBI undercover agent made several purchases, sending payment to a Staten Island P.O. box that was later traced to Shamir and Vargas.

A lawyer for Shamir and Vargas said his clients believed the merchandise was real.

"They were legitimate business owners who had no idea they were doing something wrong," said attorney Mario Gallucci.

A call to Tai's attorney was not immediately returned.



http://www.nynewsday.com/news/local/manhattan/nyc-tiff0421_0_3205611_story?coll=nyc-manheadlines-manhattan

3 Arrested In Tiffany's Knockoff Scheme

By The Associated Press

April 21, 2003, 4:46 PM EDT

Tiffany & Co., with the help of the FBI, has cracked down on alleged peddlers of knockoff jewelry.



Acting on complaints from Tiffany, federal agents last week arrested a Staten Island couple, Yaniv Shamir and Renee Vargas, on charges they sold counterfeit sterling silver necklaces, bracelets and rings over the Internet. A Web site claimed the items were "acquired from liquidations and/or estate sales," a criminal complaint said.

In a raid at the couple's home, agents seized 600 pieces of jewelry, some in counterfeit versions of Tiffany's trademark light blue packaging, the complaint said. Some jewelry allegedly was supplied by a Chinatown merchant, Chee-Soon Tai, who also was arrested.

A lawyer for Shamir and Vargas said his clients believed the merchandise was real.

"They were legitimate business owners who had no idea they were doing something wrong," said the attorney, Mario Gallucci.

A call to Tai's attorney was not immediately returned.

The three defendants were arraigned on charges of conspiring to infringe on a copyright for personal gain. If convicted, they could each face up to five years in prison.



2 Islanders arrested in cyber scam

Friday, April 18, 2003

By SETH SOLOMONOW
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Two Staten Islanders and a Manhattan man have been charged in a scheme to sell bogus Tiffany jewelry over the Internet.

Yaniv Shamir, 32, of Travis, and Nadine Renee Vargas, 32, whose local address was not known, were arraigned Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Brooklyn in connection with the counterfeiting plan.

Manhattan jewelry shop manager Chee-Sonn Tai, 31, was arraigned yesterday, prosecutors said.

They face up to five years in jail and fines up to \$250,000 for conspiracy to infringe a copyright, according to William Muller, a spokesman for the U.S. Attorney's office in Brooklyn.

According to the complaint, Ms. Vargas purchased fake necklaces and bracelets at Tai's store, Enddi Silver, at 251 Canal St., then unwittingly resold the items to an undercover FBI agent last fall. The purchases were made through a Web site she operated with Shamir -- www.starglam.com -- which has since been disabled.

The counterfeit jewelry was delivered to the agent in a package bearing a Staten Island post office box as a return address. Agents later determined that the post office box was registered to Starglam.com at 439 Travis Ave., Shamir's residence.

An FBI raid of that location on Dec. 19 turned up about 600 pieces of counterfeit silver jewelry and boxes with phony Tiffany logos.

According to the complaint, Tiffany representatives told investigators that if the items were authentic, they would have been worth about \$90,000.

Ms. Vargas and Shamir were released on bail and Tai was held on the charges, according to prosecutor Michael Asaro.

Seth Solomonow is a news reporter for the Advance. He may be reached at solomonow@siadvance.com.

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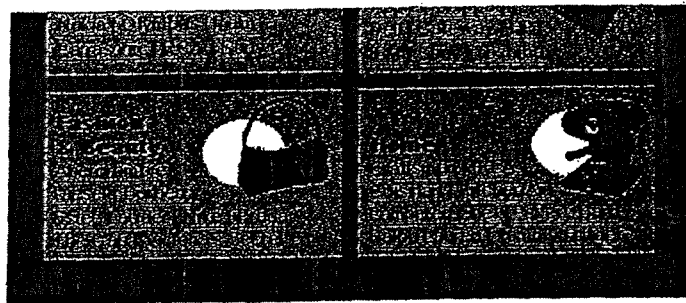
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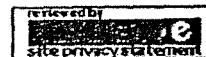


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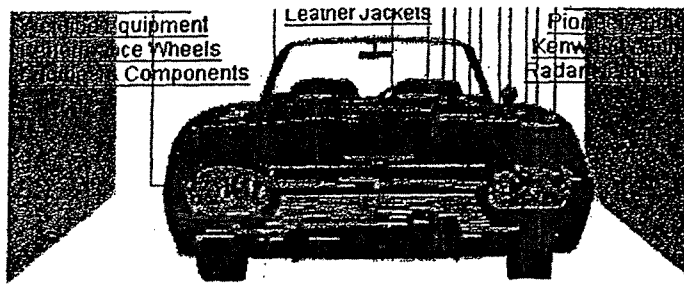
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