

## Trio robs jeweler in San Fernando Valley

A high-end Studio City jewelry store that caters to celebrities was robbed Wednesday by a trio of bandits who escaped with watches and cash just as police arrived, authorities said.

Barin's Fine Jewelry, which has been featured in numerous fashion magazines, was held up about 11 a.m. by three men, one of whom was armed with a gun, officials said.

"They certainly had planned this out," said LAPD Capt. Justin Eisenberg. "These people were in and out within minutes."

The robbers grabbed a "significant amount" of cash and jewelry and ran out the back door of the store at 12236 Ventura Blvd., and into a car waiting in the alley, Eisenberg said. The car, described as a white, newer-model Dodge Charger with tinted windows and paper license plate "ELLIS" fled eastbound on Ventura Boulevard.

"The officers were very close to catching them in the act," Eisenberg said. "We were just literally arriving at the front when they were running out the back."

Authorities did not provide a description of the robbers, or explain how they were summoned to the site.

Several people were in the store at the time of the robbery, but no one was injured despite a brief struggle, Eisenberg said. The store's glass display cases were intact, although a pair of potted plants had been overturned.

A man who answered the phone at the store and identified himself as owner Michael Barin declined comment.

"I'm not going to give any statement - I'm in a crisis right now," he said, before hanging up.

According to the store's website, Barin designs the jewelry - his "special passion" is for rings and necklaces - using platinum, 22-karat gold and colored diamonds.

The store, located on a busy stretch of Ventura Boulevard, is surrounded flanked by clothing stores, furniture and antique shops and several restaurants.

Passersby seemed unaware of the robbery and a pair of women admired jewelry in the front windows even as police conducted their investigation inside.

"I haven't had any cause to worry for my safety," said Wendy Caysing, a Studio City resident who runs errands and shops on the street about three times a week. "I've never heard of anything like this."

Jose Curioso, who works at Franco Inc. Fine Optical Boutique, said he hadn't even known about

the robbery in the store next door until he heard a helicopter overhead and saw reporters outside.

"Of course we're going to be nervous," Curioso said. "They could have run here, and who knows?"

Abby Rose, the owner of Architexture, a furniture store on the other side of Barin's, was less worried.

"I'm not very happy and it doesn't make me feel very secure, but it's not going to change what I do," said Rose, who has operated the store for 16 years. "They're not going to come in here and run off with a pillow, and they're certainly not going to run off with a sofa."