

Swag or Peacocking? Rappers Use Big Bling to Show Off Clout



By Steven Zangrillo

As August winds down and we start to tuck away our beach bodies, once again the focus returns to Fall fashions and lifestyles for 2011. It's interesting to see how the dating world is affected by our turbulent economy. Since we now need to tighten the strap, we also need to re-evaluate the way we spend money on that special someone – you know the drill... flowers, drinks, dinner, a new outfit. That new outfit, in particular, can really bust the bank and cause a headache or two. However, if you reside in the “young and wealthy rapper” demographic, chances are that you can still use that chunk of bling to woo the lady of your dreams.

It's difficult for most of us to work up the cash to don a

\$3000-\$8000 chain and pendant. Rappers of the right means, however, have the ability to display their fiscal clout. Financial stability displayed through ostentatious mediums is a tried and true recipe for romantic success (although it may not always attract the right partner). Psychologists call this bold style of dress for the purpose of attracting a romantic partner “peacocking”, but if you ask a rap artist... they’ll flash a gold and diamond encrusted smile at you and utter one word.

“Swag.”

According to Andrew Streyer, Director of Evaluations at Pawngo.com – the new online pawnshop by the founders of Groupon at Lightbank – you might be surprised at the cost for some of these pieces.

Below are three signature styles, the MCs who popularized them, and the estimated worth of each piece:

Rapper: Nelly

Bling in Question: Silver (iced) nameplate and St. Louis Rams Chain

Estimated Appraisal: \$6000+ each

The “Grillz” hitmaker and St. Louis native is known for showing his NFL team pride in concerts via his signature 18-inch pendant, which he couples daily with an 18-inch nameplate pendant. Further showing his taste in high-end luxury, Nelly said in a 2000 interview, “Where I’m from, this Rolex could take care of the whole block for a year. It’s crazy like that, but this is something you work for.” Also, just to clarify, Nelly’s aforementioned hit song about grills wasn’t expressing the love of a fine hibachi. Which brings us to...

Rapper: Kanye West

Bling in Question: Permanent Gold and Diamond Stud Grills

Estimated Appraisal: \$5000+ not including dental work

Artist. Producer. Songwriter. *Metalmouth?* In 2010, Kanye West followed in the steps of friend Lil Wayne by having custom-made permanent grills, or molds, imprinted on the bottom row of his teeth. Kanye premiered them on *The Ellen Show*, insisting that the diamonds were real and not cubic zirconia, as rumored. While it's unclear whether this gold is the "40 Carats" dropped in his Lil Wayne collaboration, gold is nevertheless one of the safest precious metals to have in one's mouth, as it's relatively non-toxic and rustproof. Who knew?

Rapper: Lil Jon

Bling in Question: Various handmade studded glass and Metal Pimp Cups

Estimated Appraisal: \$1000-\$2000

Lil Jon often calls upon Chicago artisan Debbie "The Glass Lady" Harrison to create lavish signature glass-blown and 24 Karat gold chalices exceeding the thousand-dollar price range. He made no exception for his second annual Crunk Cup Ball in Las Vegas in 2008. The Atlanta rapper and *Celebrity Apprentice* contestant premiered a custom gift from Debbie that was molded from metal and sported Debbie's encrusted name, with imprinted crystals on the handle and a studded crown on top. Of course, all of the cups are fully drinkable and non-toxic. For protection, Lil Jon uses a custom padded carrying case to tote each of his goblets when traveling.

About Pawngo:

Pawngo is the first full-service online pawn shop in the US and allows individuals immediate access to the cash they need for life's countless unexpected moments without leaving the comfort of their homes. As evidence of the market for this unique lending model, the company to-date has funded over \$2

million in 46 states. Pawngo is venture-backed by Daylight Partners, Access Venture Partners and Lightbank, the \$100 million fund started by the founders of Groupon