

From Gangster to GENTLEMAN

:the renovation of the Hip hop artist.

By Deborah Williams



WS

There's a new face joining the Hip-hop elite that's gaining more street credentials than ever before. The modern gent's mentor and our Designer Of The Year, Tom Ford, has been dressing high-profile musicians for years and because he's been on his suit and tie sh*t longer than I could imagine, it's no surprise he was name-dropped in the song. Creating the artwork for JT's 20/20 album, Ford has even designed a 600-piece wardrobe for the 20/20 World Experience tour. A\$AP Rocky included him in his 'Fashion Killa' single and the big boss himself, Rick Ross, told everyone what he wears to the Grammys in Rihanna's 'Pour It Up' remix. If that's not enough proof of his initiation into the Hip hop world, then Jay-Z even dedicated a song about him on his 'Magna Carta Holy Grail' album. The Tuxedo King even said that his favourite part of the song was, "I don't pop Molly, I rock Tom Ford." Going on to say "I love that he gets a 'high' from my clothes."

However, the Hip-hop worlds stance on fashion has never been its ultimate claim to fame. Coming from the urban youth scene dominating the USA in the 70s, founding father, DJ Kool Herc gave a new way of life to the inner city youth. Afrika Bambaata and Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five channelled inspirations from the rock, disco and funk genres, before Hip-hop had gained its own personal style. The 80s never saw so much two-piece tracksuits and fedora combinations until rapping crew; Run-DMC "walked this way." The Afrocentric's came along with sharp hi-top haircuts, braids and medallions and Kangol hats never looked cooler than when LL Cool J showed us why all the ladies love him. Leading us into the 90s, Tupac, Snoop Dogg, Notorious B.I.G and Diddy (Puff Daddy back then), all looked to the iconic film gangsters and rocked the 'real Miami' – silk shirts and gator shoes to match, better than Al Pacino did in Scarface. Hoodies, du-rags and Timberland boots were also a part of the 90s hip hop style. The lifestyle that came with the clothing and music didn't fall far from the tree. The 'nobody can tell me attitude' was rife and the whole gangster character came to life. Still believing that "even if you agree with

authority, you should still question it." – Lupe Fiasco.

"Now, many artists are noticing that the conveying of wealth has changed. People don't want the overindulgence of big chains and fat rings anymore, they just want the mature subtlety of the suit and tie." With the swapping of baggy jeans for tapered trousers, oversized t-shirts with crisp white tuxedo shirts and thick gold chains longer than your girlfriends extensions with bow ties, the success ladder of Hip hop has added a few more steps. Arise the new breed of Hip-hop leaders, the Mogul. Diddy, Jay-Z, Russell Simmons, 50 Cent, Dr. Dre and Ludacris all started on the streets where getting by was the aim of the game and the underline attitude was to always "keep it real." So how are they still able to bring out the latest Ralph Lauren dinner jacket, with loafers to match, while still being able to keep it real? They realised they needed "multiple sources of income" and could not just keep their craft to one specific audience.

Let's take a look at our favourite gazillionaire, 50 cent. He started of as what I like to call 'hood rich.' Releasing his G-Unit clothing line and his film 'Get Rich Or Die Tryin' but then realised in order to get somewhere he needed to clean up his image. So what did he do? He slipped on a suit and tie, became a philanthropist, organising community projects, creating energy drink, 'Street King' to raise money for world hunger, invested in a vitamin water company sponsored by Coca Cola, launched SMS Audio, selling a range of headphones and joined the league of extraordinary 'movie star' gentlemen, starring in several films including 2013 action-thriller, 'Escape Plan' with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone.

Whether a gangster or a gent, don't worry, it's possible to be both. Take your queues from the Hip-hop moguls themselves. Find several moneymaking ventures to expand your empire and add a whole load of Tom Ford into your life and go take on the corporate world, Chinchilla coat and all. 