

# The Crown

STANDING THE TEST OF TIME: THE WATCH THAT HAS DRAWN IN ANDY WARHOL, 2PAC, VIRGIL ABLOH AND A\$AP ROCKY



WORN BY EVERYONE from US Presidents to best-selling musicians since its launch in 1956, Rolex's Day-Date has become something more than a simple timekeeper. It has become a universally recognised status symbol, a piece of personal iconography used by many of its wearers to communicate wealth and success to the rest of the world. A fact Rolex happily acknowledge itself with its own description of the Day-Date as, "the watch par excellence of influential people."

Only ever commercially produced in precious metals, namely gold alloys and platinum, the Day-Date itself is best described as an 'everyday' watch with conventional three-from-the-centre hand configuration and day and date windows at the 12 and 3 o'clock positions respectively; hence "Day-Date". Rolex currently offer the Day-Date in two case sizes - the original 36mm 'mid-size' (Day-Date 36) and a 40mm 'large size' (Day-Date 40) introduced in 2015 - and with a range of strap/bracelet options, chief amongst which is the 'President bracelet'.

The President bracelet is synonymous with the Day-Date. It was in fact designed specifically for the watch and debuted alongside it in '56. With rounded three-piece links and a concealed clasp maintaining a smooth unbroken silhouette, the President is easily one of horology's most recognisable and accomplished bracelet designs. Notably, the "president" moniker has extended to informally cover the Day-Date as a whole with the watch commonly referred to as the "Rolex President/Presidential".

It appears Rolex gave the President bracelet, and ergo the Day-Date, its executive title during the mid-1960s in honour of then POTUS Lyndon B. Johnson, a Day-Date wearer. Since then the Day-Date has been worn by renowned individuals as diverse as Miles Davis, Bill Clinton, Madonna, Virgil Abloh, Michael Caine, the Dalai Lama, Warren Buffett, Kim Kardashian, HRH The Duke of York, A\$AP Rocky, and Jay Z.

The Day-Date has actually found particular popularity in the hip-hop community, with a remarkably high concentration of both wearers and lyrical references. Some rappers have even gone so far as to bespeak rings and necklaces inspired by the President bracelet's links. It appears that any remotely successful rapper quickly

purchases a Rolex Day-Date as a totemic mark of pride. Early adopters include The Notorious B.I.G. and 2Pac, with the later attesting to his penchant for the Day-Date on his track Out On Bail with the lines: "Ay pass me my motherfucking Rolex/Yes, bitch, that's a Presidential".

The Day-Date has since racked up innumerable mentions in rap music's more braggadocio inclined lyrics, personal favourites include A\$AP Ferg's: "Tourneau [a US-based fine watch retailer] for the watch/Presi' plain Jane [slang for a watch without diamond-setting]", and The Game cutting straight to the point with: "Got a Rolex Presidenti".

Hip hop aside, other stand-out references to the Day-Date in popular culture include Alec Baldwin's much-quoted cameo in the Oscar nominated Glengarry Glen Ross (1992) that sees his character remove his Day-Date President and proclaim: "You see this watch? That watch cost more than your car" when his professional success is questioned. James Gandolfini's Mafia boss protagonist wore a Day-Date in every episode of critically acclaimed TV show The Sopranos (1999-2007) too. Giuseppe Zanotti's recent collaboration with Christian Cowan has a pair of women's sandals featuring straps that clearly pay homage to the Rolex President. And, there's even an Andy Warhol sketch c.1983 of the Day-Date.

To cater to its eclectic customer following, Rolex has produced countless variations of the Day-Date over the years. There is the option of either a fluted or a plain bezel, for instance, and a list of 26 languages for the 12 o'clock day indicator (including Italian, Arabic, Chinese and Latin) to choose from. But, on an altogether less conservative level, there are also the lesser-spotted exotic versions ranging from a plethora of exquisite precious gem-set examples (diamond, emerald, sapphire and ruby) to truly beautiful examples with hard-stone dials (the likes of onyx, opal, meteorite, marble, malachite, tiger eye, lapis lazuli and petrified fossil).

Standing the test of time for over six decades, the Rolex Day-Date has certainly proved its staying power and lasting appeal. To quote a still relevant 1975 advert for the Day-Date: "In an age of instant obsolescence, the classic Rolex endures". And long may it do so.

Story by Alan Seymour