

## **Bling king sentenced to 30 months**

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N.Y. jeweler to forfeit \$2M after helping drug gang founded by Detroit natives hide profits.

By Paul EganThe Detroit News

DETROIT — A Manhattan jeweler, dubbed the "**King of Bling**" because of a clientele that includes stars in the hip-hop and pop star world, was sentenced to 30 months in prison and fined \$50,000 in federal court Tuesday for his role in helping a drug gang conceal millions in ill-gotten gains.

Jacob Arabov, 43, pleaded guilty last fall to providing false documents and false statements to federal agents who were investigating the Black Mafia Family drug gang.

He also agreed to forfeit \$2 million.

A money-laundering charge against Arabov was dismissed as part of a plea agreement.

U.S. District Judge Avern Cohn dipped slightly below the sentencing range set out in federal guidelines but said a prison sentence was warranted.

"The nature and circumstances of the offense were deeply serious," Cohn said. "He willingly participated in a mammoth drug conspiracy."

Arabov apologized to the court and his family.

"I feel ashamed that I broke the law," he said. "I'll carry that shame for the rest of my life."

Arabov was indicted on federal charges in June 2006 and accused of helping the drug gang, founded by Detroit-born brothers Demetrius and Terry Flenory, conceal over \$5 million of their more than \$270 million in alleged drug profits. More than 60 people were charged in the massive probe, a joint operation of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the Internal Revenue Service.

Arabov, also known as "Jacob the Jeweler," has sold tens of millions of dollars worth of extravagant watches and other pricey gems to stars such as Elton John, Madonna, and much of the hip-hop world through his company, Jacob & Co. Inc.

Arabov won't have to surrender to federal prison until January. Cohn said he may need drug treatment while in prison since a urine test after his arrest proved positive for cocaine.

Under a plea agreement, Arabov faced 37-46 months in prison.

Cohn said he had to impose a sentence that reflected the seriousness of the crime and would deter others, but said he tempered his sentence with leniency because of Arabov's personal qualities. "He's a very charitable man," Cohn said.

Benjamin Brafman, Arabov's New York City attorney, filed documents detailing the rags-to-riches story of Arabov, who came to New York with his family at age 14 from the former Soviet state of Uzbekistan. Arabov's father had a hotdog stand in Manhattan.

Arabov's story is one of "relentless hard work, sheer genius and raw talent which allowed him to become one of the most successful and widely respected jewelers in this country, and indeed, throughout the world," he said.

Brafman sent Cohn more than 150 letters of support for Arabov from relatives, customers, employees, business associates, and those who have benefited from Arabov's philanthropy. Brafman handed court officials a certified check for \$2 million from Arabov to the U.S. Treasury.

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