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THE AWARD SHOW LETTER

Yes, everyone wants to attend an awards show. They are exciting, they are star-studded, and the red carpet is what everyone (especially a new artist) looks forward to.

Here is my take on what to look forward to and how to plan for a red carpet and an awards show.

First off, the red carpet. Let's be super honest here. The red carpet is exciting, filled with photographers, television crews with famous hosts/hostesses, and you get to wear those fancy duds. Now, if you are a new artist attending for the first time, congratulations. You are either a presenter, performer, a nominated artist, or you have sold enough singles or had a hit record to qualify red carpet access.

Now here is the truth. Your best opportunities on a red carpet as a new artist are the photo pit and anything that is live! Why, because most all interviews that take place on the red carpet are based on nominations and rarely does any of that footage make it on air. Why? Because those same outlets are backstage waiting to capture the winning moments and reaction of the winners. Think about it. When you see follow up news coverage of an award show, what do you see? A recap of the winners and any of their comments. Have you really seen coverage of the red carpet where new artists are the focus? No! But you have seen photos from the photo pit and if the outlet interviewing you is live, well, then you know it is making it on the air.

I typically have informed artists to not clog up the red carpet just to feel the excitement. Go and do the photos and anything live and leave. Make way for the other superstars to do their thing and with all the entourages, the more you hang around, the more you will be noticed as a 'hanger on'er".

Now if you are nominated. Congratulations! I can't imagine anything more exciting than that early morning phone call you got telling you you'd just been nominated for an American Music Award, CMA Award, ACM Award, or a Billboard Music Award but the award show date will be here before you know it. If this is your first time, you'll be amazed at how much work you have to do until then and how quickly the time will pass.

As a nominee, you'll have the added responsibility of having every journalist and every viewer judge your date, your outfit and, of course, your acceptance speech come show night.

I'm already booked that night so I won't go as your date, and you don't want me to be your stylist, but I can help you with your speech. And trust me: Your best friend, your agent, and your manager certainly aren't going to tell you the truth (they all want to hear their names read in front of millions of people from the stage). So it's up to me. You're not going to be thanking me anyway.

Have you been watching some of the recent awards shows? Is there anything more boring than hearing one of your otherwise talented fellow entertainers reading off a long list of names from a crumpled piece of paper in bad light without reading glasses on network television? I think not.

With a little planning and honest introspection, there's no reason you can't say something memorable, quotable and moving. Like all the best "spontaneous" public moments in TV history, this one takes some careful planning.

THE AWARD SHOW LETTER CONTINUED..

Before you prepare your speech, you need to ask yourself a few questions about the nomination.

Is this a project that might only get one or two awards or is it likely to be a major award winner? Was this a passion project that you nurtured for months or something where you finished it in a few weeks? Were you the star and the creator or were there more players that made it a bigger success?

What is your personal place in the awards show constellation? Are you an octogenarian finally getting recognition for a lifetime of work? Are you a lucky neophyte? Are you Vince Gill, who has had to add on a well-deserved trophy room to his home? Whether this is your moment or one of many moments will help set the tenor of your remarks.

Just because everyone you know has heard your music, don't assume everyone has actually heard it. Tragically, in many other parts of the country, most people do not have access to "advances or promo copies." This is not just an award, it is a chance to position and market your work. Say something meaningful. Even if your project had an impressive multi-platinum sales record at the sound scan checkouts, less than 10% of the country has seen it. This is a chance to introduce them to a great work or inspire them to go buy it.

It is OK to thank the one or two people who really made a difference in your life and this project. Don't make it the centerpiece of your remarks, but do acknowledge someone's genuine contribution without mentioning their job title or the name of their company.

If you want to thank your agent, manager or publicist, think about Dom Perignon, flowers, dinners, expensive presents and, in the case of publicists, raising their monthly retainer fees. Or simply say thank you in person, with a handwritten note or with years of loyalty.

There are some don'ts in this business:

- * Don't go beyond the time limit or the orchestra will start with the theme song and someone will drag you and your dignity off the stage.
- * Don't be dull. Think of this as a performance. If you really do win, you'll have enough adrenalin and emotion that it's sure to show and you'll be glad you have a little something prepared.
- * Don't let your outfit overshadow what you have to say.
- * Don't worry. Even if you do forget to acknowledge your spouse, you can make up for it in the press the next day.

Finally, even if you think you don't have a chance in hell, be prepared. I share two words with clients who think they'll never win and have no reason to prepare: "Marisa Tomei."

Besides, every nominee should have the right to give an acceptance speech, even if it's just in the shower or to the dog. That's part of the fun of the awards process--to dream of the possibilities.

