



The Talent and the Talented (adventures in swagland)

By **Jenny Price** | September 15, 2010

When I got a media invite to the Operation Smile benefit swag lounge for the Emmys a couple weeks ago... Well, saying yes was a no-brainer. Swag! I'd read about it, sneered at it, drooled over it. Celebrities! Free stuff! Celebrities *with* free stuff! As a cultural critic, I of course wanted to learn more about this outgrowth of popular culture. Also, I wanted a wide-screen TV.

Herein, a report back:

****Class Acts:** The swag lounges operate by a caste system—the two castes being the Talent (the actors) and the media. While my media buddy Lynn and I tried to explain that we are very talented—in fact, maybe more talented than some of the Talent—the caste barriers remained impermeable. What this means: the Talent gets cooler swag, and a lot more bags of it.

****What I didn't get, therefore (among other things):** the Hawaiian vacation, the Caribbean vacation, designer heels, Bullets 4 Peace jewelry, pirate-themed vibrators, a digital guitar, free spa treatments. Or the wide-screen TV.

****Best pitch:** "The diamonds are cut and polished in a retrofitted Heritage Bank building in the heart of the Canadian prairie."

****Runner-up:** "It's an eyelash growth serum. It's all natural."

****Tip for the Talented:** It's OK to laugh when someone says that. They don't pick up on why you're laughing. It turns out that people giving free stuff to celebrities are extremely serious and single-minded.

****Meanest to the Talented:** Digital Playground, giving free pirate-themed phalluses to the Talent

****Nicest to the Talented:** California Exotic Novelties, which had truly nice and fun sex toys, anyway, versus the creepy pirate ones

****Star sightings:** Kevin Sorbo... and at least a couple dozen beautiful teens I couldn't identify. And I do watch a lot of TV.

****What I got (aka The Haul):** 4 Giving Band bracelets, high-heel gel cushions, *Caribbean Living* magazine (minus the vacation for the Talent), Las Vegas Cut Diamonds playing cards, 5-pack disposable breast petals, some "perfect solution" bra accessories that I don't really understand, CalExotic "masseur" vibrator, "amorous" vibrator that looks more complicated, vibrating thong, soy massage oil candle, CalExotic keychains, CalExotic calculator (use your imagination), massage oil with pheromones, universal lube, Vermont maple mini-donuts, french fries with garlic mayo, cupcake with Butterfinger on top, acai drink, *New Beauty* magazine, total B complex super liquid vitamin supplement, face blotting paper, mini nail files, hair styling elixir, herbal mask, lash gel, sweet apple foaming botanical cleanser, pore reducer, cuticle

conditioner, sateen-velvet moisturizing lotion, white oak facial cleanser, face masque, vitamin E oil, exfoliating solution, creme d'orange lotion, travel kit for the last half-dozen items, advanced night skin repair, collagen booster, hydrating skin mist, antioxidant moisturizer, oil-free moisturizer, teeth whitening system, skin recovery complex, age-defying Arctic cloudberry day creme, 3-pack of lip shine oils (Devotion, Reflection, and Fantasy), firming toner, anti-frizz shampoo, eye gloss, Moroccan hair conditioning oil, travel puff face makeup, peel off mask (these last dozen items from a kit for the actually cool New Beauty TestTube program—Get 4 kits a year!), \$20 SpaLook coupon, and the book *Stop Worrying If You'll Ever Meet Him*.