

new girl in town

Houston through the eyes of a Tampa Transplant

What's hot and fabulous in the Latin Grammys swag bags?

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It seems everyone I meet is getting in on the Latin Grammy action this week. My co-workers will be reporting from the red carpet, and many of my friends either bought tickets to the show or are working as seat-fillers and ushers.

But what is Houstonian Jennifer Joseph doing?

"I'm a personal shopper for the celebrities," said Jennifer.

Yup...that's right. Jennifer has one of the coolest volunteer jobs that I've discovered so far at the Grammys. She and a bunch of other volunteers, including Cynthia Alcocer, Guadalupe Velasco, and Zhenia Angles, will be personally guiding the Latin Grammys nominees down an aisle filled with vendors to help them pick out what they would like in their gift bag.



"We get to meet them AND help them shop," said Cynthia.

So...is there anyone in particular they really want to meet? Most of the girls were too shy to tell me, but Guadalupe had her favorite celeb already picked out.

"Eugenio Siller. He is in a Mexican Telenovelas," said Guadalupe.

While I wouldn't mind meeting Eugenio myself, I wasn't there for the Latino eye-candy. I was there to find out what free stuff they would be getting -- with the help of Jennifer and her newly acquired celebrity shopping skills.

SO WHAT'S IN THE BAG?

In total, there were 10 vendors who had merchandise ready to give away to the presenters and nominees. The cost for each of the items is approximate, but based on the retail values we found on the internet -- a full swag bag would contain close to \$1,200 worth of merchandise, not including the free trip.

If you were Latin Grammy talent, here is what you would get:

Maru and Friends Doll

Maru and her friends are new to the doll market, but are becoming popular among the celebrity class. Each doll is sculpted by award-winning American doll artist, Dianna Effner, who has been making collectible



porcelain dolls for over 25 years. The dolls are famous for their realistic childlike features and each one of the dolls is one of a kind.

"They have the detail of a porcelain doll, but are safe and fun to play with like regular dolls," said Maritza Gutierrez, Creator.

The Latin nominees can pick out a doll of their choice and a "Forever Friends" story book. Together, the doll and book are worth approximately \$100.00



Houston's Own Xtreme Lashes

Xtreme Lashes is a Houston-based company that usually does shows like this in other cities. But this time they were thrilled to have the opportunity to "extend" their services to the 9th Annual Latin Grammy Awards.

That's because in addition to providing presenters and nominees with a gift bag filled with eye makeup remover, a heated lash curler and more, the stylists will also apply eyelash extensions of the talent's choice (\$300

and up value) for free.

"We have a booth set up and can apply the lashes right now if they want, or we can do it in their hotel room later on," said Jo Mousselli, company president. "With celebrities like Jennifer Lopez and Gloria Estefan coming to the show, you never know who will need our services."

The semi-permanent lashes are available in various lengths, colors, thicknesses and curl, so the Latin stars have the chance to go as wild, or as natural, as they want.

GoChi Juice

GoChi is the juice of the stars. Retailing at \$50 a bottle, just four ounces of this stuff will help you sleep better, relieve stress, and increase your energy. The berries are harvested from the Himalayans and are packed full of nutrients.

Latin celebs will also get to try Chi3 which is a new powerful energy drink that has only 16 calories and 3 grams of sugar. Not bad considering Red Bull has 110 calories and Rockstar has 420.



Luxury Vacation in Cabo Villas

Ah...the trip. After working hard all year long, what Latin performer doesn't need a luxury vacation in the "heart of the Cabo?" Cabo Villas Beach Resort is giving away gift certificates for three day and two night vacations at their beach resort and spa. But they aren't just giving away a traditional room. The celebs will get to stay in one bedroom deluxe suites.

"If you have never been, you need to go there. It's heaven," said Sabrina Franchini, Marketing and PR Manager for the resort.

Thirsty Bathrobes

I must say, these were nice, and range in price from \$100-\$200 depending on which one you picked out. Made from Turkish cotton, the bathrobes felt soft and luxurious.

"We're a family owned company from Pennsylvania. My mom is the owner," said Duygu, who was there at the show. "For the celebrities, we are featuring a special Swarovski crystal robe."



Redken Hair Products

Redken was offering celebs their complete line of "Real Control" hair care products. The Latin superstars could get everything from shampoo and conditioner, to the hair repair and leave-in treatments.

"The line was especially designed for dense, coarse hair to help keep it in control," said Kaz Amor, who is one of Redken's partners from West Hollywood. "But some of them, like the overnight treatment, works for all hair types."

The total line is worth approximately \$75.

Chi Flat Irons and Other Chi Products

Chi is famous for their ceramic flat irons. But when it comes to handing out celebrity treats, the company holds nothing back. The lucky Latin nominees will receive a Chi Digital Ceramic Flat Iron that comes in a little bag (\$80), the full color line of Chi nail polish (\$50), a Miss Chi bath and perfume gift set (\$50), and a scented candle. Men can choose clippers and trimmers.

"We use NASA technology to develop our products. Even our nail polish is made using CHI ceramic for long lasting durability," said Jessica Marie Gutierrez, Public Relations Manager for the company.



Gayle Gaston Jewelry

It's not a true swag bag unless it has a little bling, and Galye Gaston's jewelry designs have the shine to make it happen.

"The women will be getting rhodium plated sterling silver earrings with high intensity cubic zirconia," said Santago Postigo, who works as the company's International Director of Sales & Marketing.

But if the \$40 earrings weren't enough, the celebrities could also choose from a wide array of necklaces, bracelets and rings.



Cubavera Clothing for Men

Now, this was something strictly for the men, but something that the women would love. Cubavera clothing is a men's line that embraces the Latin culture. The clothes are modern, stylish and casual. Priced around \$60, Latin Grammy presenters and nominees could pick out a shirt -- or two -- so that they would not only look good during the show, but anytime.

Oh, and the clothes not only look good, but they are environmentally friendly. They are made from 100% organic fibers.

Sinceramente Hallmark

The Latin Grammy swag bag offers something for everyone. There are even Spanish singing greeting cards with actual famous singers such as Luis Miquel.

"This collection is new from Hallmark and we are giving the Latin Grammy celebrities a gift bag with 10 Spanish singing greeting cards," said Noeida Kuhnert, Business Manager of Sinceramente Hallmark. "We also have boom box cards that are really loud."

SO MUCH TO CHOOSE FROM

With so many things to choose from, what happens if a celebrity just wants one of everything?

"No problem. We can do that," said Jennifer. "They can have whatever they want."

Jennifer and the other volunteers will be leading the celebrities through the booths until 9pm on Tuesday and then again on Wednesday afternoon.

Distinctive Assets is the company behind this year's Latin Grammy gift bags (they've done for the last eight years). They said that the gifts that I saw were for only one of the two gift bags the celebs will receive.

Talent will also get another bag full of fabulous items from companies such as Pardon By Spanglish by Bill Santiago, Verizon Wireless, Banyan Tree Mayakoba, B&B Fit, Context Global, The Sports Club, Hilton Los Cabos, Traveling Bear and more.