



MINORITY RETORT

Alec Mapa

I'd like to thank

As we take a breather between the Oscars and the Daytime Emmys, I for one am exhausted. One of my life's greatest ironies is that I've always dreamed of experiencing the glamour of the red carpet, and now that I'm actually receiving invites to such events, I never want to leave the house. Believe me, I'd rather be curled up on the couch eating a bowl of macaroni and cheese watching a *Project Runway* marathon.

Awards shows are work. Think of them as great big office parties held in a shark tank. Unless you're able to navigate the waters, you will end up as chum. Nobody knows this as much as yours truly. As the third banana on a sitcom running on a network that is about to go under, I know my place in the Hollywood food chain. I once had a photographer yell at me to "get the fuck out of the shot!" The celebrity he so desperately wanted to snap?



Tip #3: Stand next to the star

The Taco Bell chihuahua. Unless you're Cameron Diaz, the awards show carpet can beat your ego to a bloody red pulp. Here are some D-list tips for getting in and out of the auditorium with your dignity intact.

1. Arrive early. Really famous people arrive minutes before the show starts. If you arrive the same time as Sharon Stone or a famous fast-food mascot, don't expect anyone to pay attention to you. Your goal as an attendee is to get your picture taken and to talk to as many media outlets as possible. Photos of you in magazines and footage of you on the 11 P.M. news make it seem as if you're famous, even though

you've achieved absolutely nothing. Just ask Nicole Richie.

2. Don't go alone. Why experience the horror alone? I always bring a pal and play "Celebrity Photo Safari," where you try to get as many photos as you can of yourself with your head next to someone famous. Not only that, a good friend can make sure you don't look like an asshole. I once attended an awards show solo and spent half the evening posing for pictures with salad in my teeth. Not a good look.

3. Touch the money. If you find yourself on the carpet with a celebrity you actually know, touch them as much as possible. Hug and kiss them as if you were never going to see them again. This also guarantees coverage. I once attended a premiere with Nia Vardalos, and I did everything but put her entire head in my mouth. The result? A full-page photo in *The Hollywood Reporter*.

4. Don't take anything personally. You will only get your feelings hurt. My very first Hollywood event was the GLAAD Awards in 1999. I had written a solo show called *Pointless*, which was about my Internet dating experiences, and I was a nominee for Best in Los Angeles Theater. I arrived at the check-in table, and an intern with a headset told me I wasn't on the list. I said, "Are you sure? I'm a nominee. My face is in the program and everything." Again, he insisted he couldn't find my name as two other publicists elbowed past me to walk Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Jay Leno, and Elizabeth Taylor into the auditorium. I was all set to leave when a GLAAD representative, awash in apologies, rushed out to escort me in personally. I could've stalked out furiously and denounced my own community as the biggest bunch of star-fuckers, but I got it. It's not always going to be about you. Besides, I really wanted to meet Elizabeth Taylor. ■

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SHORT ANSWERS

■ Gomez: "Equal parts macho and femme"

Marga Gomez

"There were only a handful of us in the '80s, and a lot of girls to sleep with," recalls Marga Gomez, talking about doing stand-up in the "B.E." (Before Ellen) era. "Honestly, we didn't even have to be that good," recalls the out Latina comedienne, laughing. "I remember this terrible mime, and she was noisy!" The pansy performer has also toured the country with six solo autobiographical plays. Now she's back with her latest, *Los Big Names*, about her late showbiz parents and her misadventures in Hollywood, running at New York City's 47th Street Theatre April 1 through May 14.

What's it like to be channeling both your parents onstage?

I feel they are with me all the time now. The problem is when I'm on a date, I feel equal parts macho-Cuban comedian and femme, vain showgirl from Puerto Rico.

They have featured in your shows before. What's different this time?

I was writing like a child before—now I get it. It's about what happens when performers come home. How could I be mad at them? They went into show business because they were hungry for something. But instead of trying to get applause, they should have worked on a relationship.

What about your Hollywood career?

I was poised to get the break my parents never did. The irony was that the movie *Sphere* was a big flop. Queen Latifah and I play Navy personnel, and we both die in the first half hour, because they always kill women of color first. In my mind we are lovers. That's not in the actual dialogue. You just see it in my eyes—because I'm an actress!

—Gerard Raymond

MAPA AND VARDALOS: GETTY IMAGES; GOMEZ: PAI JOHNSON