

Oscar-Worthy Gifts

The right packaging will get your product into the most coveted gift bags.

By **MARIE REDDING**
Senior Editor

As all of us in the beauty business know, any event worth attending ends with the goodie bag. Everyone wants one, no matter what is inside. If you've ever seen guests scrambling under tables or beside chairs looking for a missing one, you know what I mean.

Even celebrities look forward to the gift bags handed out at extravagant events. The beauty products that end up in these bags have all gone through a rigorous selection process—and a product's packaging is a major deciding factor.

Essencia's Lavender Mint Shaving Syrup, with a wooden razor tied around the bottle's neck, was chosen to be given out at the Grammys and the Night of 100 Stars, an annual VIP Oscar viewing party held at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Essencia packages many of its products as gift sets, minus the usual frills and cardboard boxes.

Alison McCloskey, cofounder of Essencia, explains, "We try to choose things to go with our products to enhance their look, but not take away from the products themselves. It was important that we find a

wooden razor, to keep our natural image, and if we can't attach something in a simple way, like with one ribbon, we don't do it."

At some events, there are entire gift rooms. At the Night of 100 Stars party, promotions company Hollywood Connection created a Product Showcase Room. All of the freebies were displayed on tables, and guests were invited to make their own gift bags. Guests waited in line for nearly a half-hour to get into the room.

Michelle St. Marie, an account executive at Hollywood Connection, says the firm receives hundreds of product submissions from companies hoping their products would be brought to the next celebrity party. She chose Essencia's product because, "We want to give guests something they might not have seen before. A shaving syrup is unique, and once the razor is attached, it looks like a gift."

How can you make sure your product is chosen to attend the next star-studded gala? St. Marie advises:



"Presentation is so important, and lots of companies just don't get it. Single bottles don't make an impact. Clean, simple looks are appealing. I see firsthand what an impression a great package makes, even with a celebrity."

McCloskey says that she has already received a call from a spa wanting to sell Essencia products because of an article written about the items included in the Grammy gift bag. Enjoying the time Essencia has spent in the spotlight, McCloskey says, "I am always looking for indicators of how people perceive our brand. Celebrities get to see everything out there and could buy any product they want—so if our product catches their attention, it means a lot."

McCloskey can be sure her wooden razor was a hit among celebs at the Night of 100 Stars event. Doris Roberts, an actor from the television show "Everybody Loves Raymond," was overheard saying, "I love this razor—it's just like the old-fashioned kind." ■

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