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By Charles Masters

Dec 11, 2007

[COMPLETE DUBAI FEST COVERAGE](#)

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates -- In a sign that the Dubai International Film Festival has secured its spot in the global festival firmament, the celebrity gift lounge has landed.

Behind the heavy wooden door to a suite in the Al Qasr palace lies the DPA Gift Lounge, an Ali Baba's cave of goodies destined to be given to visiting stars.

President and CEO Nathalie Dubois has been running similar movie-related operations from Los Angeles to Cannes to Venice for the past few years, and this year she was asked by the Dubai event to bring the concept to the Emirates.

"Dubai is growing up as a film festival," she said. "This is very high-level marketing, and the opening is huge for any brand you're going to bring. We want to make a big splash."



Dubois admitted that the notion of handing out high-end branded products in this shoppers' paradise has so far confused some of the local invitees. "It's very strange for them," she said. "They're all wondering what's going on."

For those unfamiliar with the gift lounge, "the concept is to expose brands which are intended to interact with one another," Dubois said. "The main goal is for them to be exposed in the media and be associated with the stars."

The rule is, the more famous you are, the more swag you get to take home.

The flagship gifts in Dubai are 30 first-class safaris in Kenya, each worth \$30,000, plus another 30 in India. The suite also has 15 limited-edition red Nespresso Le Cube coffee machines for the festival's VIP guests. One of the top accessory handouts is a tiny crescent handbag by London designer Bracher Emden specially created for Dubai's red carpet. Only a dozen of the \$800 bags have been made.



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The 100 or so VIPs with access to the emporium are invited by the festival. "It's been a big hit already," Dubois said.

First through the door was director Michael Cimino, who is on the festival's Muhr Award jury for feature and short films. Other early guests were Steve Hickner, co-director of "Bee Movie," who left a bee sketch in Dubois' visitors book. Others expected to drop in include Gloria Estefan, Michelle Yeoh, Laura Ramsey ("Whatever Lola Wants"), Egyptian heartthrob Khaled Abol Naga, Hayden Christensen and Rachel Bilson.

Dubois said she likes to showcase several local brands for each festival. On this occasion, the suite features Abu Dhabi designer Sara Rasheed, who has provided a few exquisite Arabian gowns and a gossamer olive-green shawl, and Dubai perfumer Ajmal, with its range of all-natural Oriental fragrances.

Barcelona skin-care company Natura Bisse is offering stars a diamond experience menu, including its diamond dust exfoliating cream. The company's top service is the so-called million-dollar treatment, which involves diamonds placed in the body's chakras to remove negative energies.

Fendi has thrown in the sunglasses, and there are clothes from New York fashion label Pink Tartan, costume jewelry from Denmark's Pilgrim, beauty and spa products from Sphatika and Jacques Dessange hair products. Those who drop in also can collect a signed copy of Deepak Chopra's latest novel, "Buddha."

The oddest item offered has to be the technique pioneered by German crystal laser engraving company Precise, which, working from a digital photo, can burn a person's likeness inside a revolving crystal block like a suspended ectoplasm portrait.

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