



At the SAG awards, unlike at the Oscars, guests dine during the ceremony.

# Precious Metal



The SAG awards dinner at the Shrine and an after-party hosted by *People* and the Entertainment Industry Foundation got a luxe metallic look.

Metallic colors made the dinner tabletops pop.



A

ny nostalgic movie lover can appreciate the glamour of old Hollywood—but no one loves it more than the Screen Actors Guild, which has traditionally asked event planners to evoke the spirit of the movie industry's golden age come awards time. And with the January 27 ceremony—the first big bash of this award season—marking the 75th anniversary of the thespians' union, the watchwords for the evening were old-fashioned elegance and precious metals.

Technically, 75th anniversaries should be celebrated with gifts of diamonds. But gold, silver, and platinum are eye-catching, too, so for the 14th annual Screen Actors Guild awards at the Shrine Auditorium, SAG awards production designers John Shaffner and Joe Stewart designed a stage with a gold backdrop flanked by columns bedecked with gold and silver. Unlike the Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which seats stars in an auditorium for the Oscars, SAG mercifully feeds its members during the proceedings. So SAG awards art director Keith Greco of Greco Decor was charged with coordinating his tabletop design, which he accomplished with classic golden place settings.

Working with SAG's executive in charge of production, Benn Fleishman, and awards event supervisor Andrea Wyn Schall of A Wynnning Event, Greco dressed 86 tables that stretched as long as 18 feet in custom-made gold-on-gold-striped silk cloths accented with 1,100 black chiffon napkins, gold flatware, and gold-rimmed fluted white china chargers and glassware. Centerpieces of white orchids and roses and yellow calla lilies stayed true to the regal hue.

During the show, 1,100 guests sipped Dry Creek Vineyards wines and Taittinger Brut Champagne La Française while they munched on chef Alan Jackson's tuna niçoise with deviled eggs, black olives, haricots verts, pesto, and tomatoes; chicken bisteeya with figs, mizuna, and pomegranates; poached lamb loin with basil mousse and lentil salad; and grilled vegetable terrine with sherry and dry-cured olive focaccia. Jackson's ministrations called for 1,200 quail eggs, 15 gallons of Beluga lentils, and other treats in super quantities.

Greco and Wyn Schall also collaborated on a red-carpet moment for the show's champagne sponsor, Taittinger. *The Closer's* Jon Tenney, flanked by two models in black strapless gowns, popped a magnum and poured 75th-anniversary "diamonds"—actually Swarovski crystals—into a four-foot-high flute.

For Greco and Wyn Schall, the evening's challenge lay in working within the union's modest budget (the event also benefits the nonprofit SAG Foundation) and still creating enough of a spectacle for the show's telecast on TNT and TBS. But at least the dinner was inside the waterproof Shrine—a major plus during Southern California's rainy season.

Alas, for *People* magazine's elaborate after-party following the awards, event designer Stanlee Gatti did have the weather to hassle with—although he also had Time Warner's big corporate pockets to assuage his headache. Even before the event, cohosted by the Entertainment Industry Foundation, the week's heavy rains had doused the carpet in the corridor leading to the main pavilion, requiring a replacement before the party even got started.

For this year's collaboration with Cyd Wilson, director of creative development for *In Style* and *People*, and the event's executive producer,



The after-party's platinum palette picked up on the award show's metallic color scheme.



Taittinger staged a red-carpet stunt to kick off the awards.

Eric Nicoll of Azure Pacific Event Management, Gatti also took his cue from the award show's celebratory palette of rich metallics, dressing the 80- by 140-foot tent in platinum gray. *People* Group editor Martha Nelson selected the shade.

"People talk about shades of gray, and there are so many shades of gray, it's funny," Gatti said. "For a couple of months, Martha Nelson and I went back and forth. We finally came up with the right shade. Now we're calling it Martha's gray."

With Martha's gray dominating the clear-span tent, Gatti used textures to amp up the luxury factor, with elaborate draping of the tent's interior and the lush deep-pile carpet. Lining the perimeter were 30 five-foot-tall gill columns topped with golden urns, each holding 2,000 white roses from Ecuador. (The design called for 150,000 roses in all.) Rose-encrusted beams formed a large rectangle just below the ceiling's center, and beneath those were smaller, graduated sections, also covered with white roses, trailing down golden columns.

Booths, benches, and ottomans covered in gray fabric and white piping created a mammoth lounge area, although singer Michael McDonald's set drew a dense crowd of dancing fans to his stage beneath the roses. Meanwhile, guests cruised buffets of high-style comfort food that included pad thai, chicken pot pie, and the ever-popular mac and cheese. And their appetites were undisturbed, thanks to a smoking tent with portals lined with Gatti's trademark gardenias.

At the time, SAG had been the only surefire host of an awards spectacular this season, thanks to the actors' union's strong support of the striking Writers Guild. But Gatti says the spotlight didn't make him nervous. "I view every job as though all eyes are on it," he said. —Irene Lacher