

3rd Annual BET Awards The Journalist

Written by Kellen Kash ID1309

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Most people dream of sitting and talking to their favorite stars. A lot dream of becoming famous and accepting an award on center stage. Many go bankrupt in futile attempts to dress exactly like these superstars.

During the summer I experienced the Third Annual BET Awards, not as a fan but as a journalist, thanks to my job with Xplosive Magazine, a hip-hop publication that focuses on new, up-and-coming and emerging talent.

This was an experience I wish everyone could have at least once in his or her lifetime. I wasn't dumb-struck at seeing and talking to such stars as rap artist 50 Cent and Monica, but I was particularly flabbergasted to see megastars like James Brown and Michael Jackson and such positive role models as Greg Mathis, known as "Judge Mathis" on television.

The awards were really a two-day event that consisted of photo shoots, interviews and backstage performances before the actual show June 24 at the Kodak Theater in Hollywood.

Journalists were confined to the media center, where the TV, print and radio outlets conducted backstage interviews.

Surprisingly, that area was the most crowded with fans, and with groupies willing to do anything to get next to such artists as Beyonce or Tyrese.

Before you walked inside the media center, there were free gift bags with BET items such as books, pens and shirts. Once you went through the metal detectors, as media representatives as well as the stars, called "talent," had to do, it was like stepping inside Hollywood. The "talent" was sprawled in the lobby area.

Xplosive Magazine's five-member crew, which included two photographers, two writers and the main man, editor-in-chief Ron Hood, quickly found seats in the middle of the media frenzy.

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I was surprised by all the talent around me, but shocked that there were some stars I didn't recognize.

"You're standing next to Monica and you haven't said a word," my Xplosive teammate said. On my left, Monica was standing shoulder to shoulder with me. I whispered, "Miss Monica, will you take a picture with me?" The same thing happened with Mya and 3LW, a group that had no business wearing such short-short outfits at ages 14 or 15.

But the highlight of being backstage actually happened the day before, when I videotaped an interview with Wyclef Jean.

I enjoyed this more than the red carpet, free food and after-parties with Paul Pierce of the Boston Celtics, the group Lil' Jon and the East Side Boys and the other stars. Wyclef made the biggest impression on the journalists because he spoke out against the "bling-bling era," calling it fake; and he said that artists need to stop following that trend and start talking about such issues as the government taking our money without us knowing where it's going.

Unlike most of the rap artists, Wyclef didn't dodge questions about how rap is being used by rich men who never thought rap would succeed and who now praise rap in their greed. He took more than an hour of extra time to finish talking with all journalists, in short but thorough interviews.

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