



MEDIA PROFILE: LA's entertainment scene isn't all about the movies anymore

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In a city like Los Angeles, it's tough to get an entertainment client noticed. But the LA Times' Calendar insert is fast becoming the go-to outlet for entertainment happenings. Craig McGuire reports.

The Los Angeles Times has cultivated its event listings section, Calendar, into something of a must-read for many West Coast entertainment-industry types.

Weekdays, Calendar is tucked into the paper's Style section. But the Sunday version is packed full of features and reviews of a wide variety of mass entertainment and high-brow happenings. While the entertainment scene in LA is largely associated with movies, Calendar takes an equal interest in high art, such as architecture and theater. The October 21 cover story, for example, featured composer Arnold Schoenberg.

"Located in Los Angeles, Calendar functions more like an industry trade," says Andrea Kaye, senior media specialist at Golin/Harris International.

The index, located on page two of the Sunday edition, shows how the departments are broken down: movies, theater, performing arts, arts & architecture, and pop music.

On weekdays, Calendar editors are short on time, and even shorter on patience as publicists often blindly pitch the first person that picks up the phone. Once you get through, however, the benefits of a feature can be enormous. Calendar coverage has the advantage of coming with information such as contact details.

"I have pitched them several times with varying results," says Carl Dameron, media relations executive with The Financial Relations Board/BSMG. "They will always ask you to e-mail or fax a pitch to them," says Dameron. "Have it ready and send it while you are talking to them. They hate you to call back to make sure they got it, so if you e-mail it to them while you are on the phone, you can review the pitch right away."

Staff members and reporters that contribute to the section are clearly listed in the section headings. For example, Christopher Reynolds is the Times staff writer on art, while Robert Hilburn is a pop music critic.

Covering so much ground, Calendar section editors are often difficult to get on the phone. That doesn't mean they're unreachable, but just make sure you're prepared. Also, marking your envelope with your subject category helps, as that will direct it to the proper editor.

High-quality photos can also help sell your listing, and make sure to have a full media kit prepared. If the focus of your pitch isn't obvious, make sure to connect the dots. "Lead with your strongest artist, and make sure they know why it is important to their readership," explains Dameron.

"The more popular the artist - or unique or large the event - the more likely they are to be interested."

It also helps to be a bit inventive. Golin/Harris' Kaye explains her tactics in dealing with reporter Susan King on the DVD release of DreamWorks' Galaxy Quest: "What we did was draw attention to the Thermian language track feature," she says. (Thermian is the alien language created for the sci-fi film.) "Because the language angle was so unique and unusual, (King) did a story on it."

Donn Pearlman, senior managing director of ITQ-Minkus & Dunne Communications, works with the Calendar Weekend (Saturdays) edition three times a year on behalf of the Long Beach Coin & Collectibles Expo ([www. LongBeachShow.com](http://www.LongBeachShow.com)).

It's a public event, featuring about 2,000 dealers who buy and sell rare coins and other items, such as sports memorabilia.

"The first thing any publicist must keep in mind when making an approach is that the staff is absolutely swamped with pitches to cover the event of the week, month, or year," explains Pearlman. "From fine art exhibitions to children's violin concerts to hot-dog-eating contests, they have literally thousands of listings to compile each month. It's not an easy job."

Publicists can help their own cause by clearly indicating the basics: name of event, dates, times, admission fees (if any), and public contact names and numbers.

"You might be surprised at how some PR people, in a misguided effort to try and be clever, actually make the editors and staff guess what the event is about by not clearly indicating the basic facts early in the press materials," says Pearlman.

"Finally, whether your submitted item receives full-color, front-cover coverage, or merely a brief calendar listing in the back, always send a thank-you note to the editor and staff member responsible for getting it into print," adds Pearlman. "They did you and your client a favor, so show appreciation with a handwritten note of gratitude."

For submitting event listings for Calendar Weekend or Sunday Calendar event listings, items must be received at least three weeks prior to the event.

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Art writer: Chris Reynolds (staff) and Suzanne Muchnic

Music critic: Mark Swed

Pop music critic: Robert Hilburn

Times TV staff writers: Lee Margulies and Dana Calvo

Dance critic: Lewis Segal

Theater writers: Mike Boehm (staff) and Don Shirley