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This Nov. 15, 2007, photo shows Academy Awards producers Craig Zadan, left, and Neil Meron. AP FILE PHOTO

## Producers: 'Chicago' cast to join Oscar performers

By Sandy Cohen  
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Academy Awards producers Craig Zadan and Neil Meron have run out of rehearsal space. Dressing rooms, too.

The award-winning production duo is planning the most performance-filled Oscar show ever. They promise a "wow moment" in each of its 13 acts, so the show demands a more dynamic stage and more dressing rooms and rehearsal time than previous Oscar productions.

"I don't think any Oscars have been as performance-based," Meron said.

It's no surprise, given the pair's hit-filled history: They produced 2003's best picture, "Chicago," and count TV's "Smash" and the recent Broadway revival of "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying" among their credits.

With an unprecedented number of performances, this year's Oscars could look a little more like the Grammys, which is typically like a three-hour all-star concert with a few awards thrown in.

The Grammys have it easier, of course: It's a show about music wherein the nominees are accustomed to live performances, plus the Recording Academy gives out the bulk of its 81 awards during an untelevised ceremony that precedes the main event. The Oscars televise the presentation of all 24 of its awards.

Packing the Academy Awards with performances of various kinds should up the entertainment factor.

"Some of them are musical, some of them are dramatic and some of them are comedic," Zadan said, adding that running out of space for their A-list roster of performers — including Barbra Streisand, Adele and Norah Jones — is "a great problem."

Just added to the list of stars who may need spots? The cast of



Beads and other trash litter Jefferson Street as street sweepers clean in downtown Lafayette Saturday following the Krewe of Bonaparte Mardi Gras parade. LESLIE WESTBROOK/LWESTBROOK@THEADVERTISER.COM

# MARDI GRAS TRASH

## Public Works has big cleanup after the big party

By Lanie Cook  
Special to The Advertiser

Three leftover slices of king cake oozed Bavarian cream atop the break room table. In the single-story building housing the Lafayette Public Works Streets Division, the clock read 8:14 a.m. It was two days before the Krewe of Rio parade, the kickoff of Lafayette's Mardi Gras celebration.

"It's our busy season," observed Streets Superintendent Jeff Olivier.

For Olivier, "busy" means distributing 5,500 barricades and 121 portable toilets, delegating the manpower of about 20 Lafayette Parish Correctional Center inmates and 140 public works employees and removing the 3.9-mile stretch of repugnant refuse generated by 250,000 revelers.

Behind the scenes at Mardi Gras, someone's got to suffer for the sin.

"You'll find garbage bags. You'll find barbecue pits that are broken, ice chests that are broken, baby diapers, some people's dinner that didn't agree with them," Olivier said from an office cluttered with city maps, his grandchildren's artwork and such knick-knacks as chattering teeth and wind-up holiday figurines. "We have to clean all of that, and I mean all of it. Some people are just too drunk to go use the Port-a-Let. That all has to be cleaned up."

Olivier's crew follows Rio's final float with an arsenal of front-end loaders and backhoes, street sweepers and dump trucks. What the machines don't catch, arduous manpower does, and the streets and sidewalks are left "probably cleaner than they were before the parade," he said. "By the next morning, you can't tell we had a Mardi Gras here."

Just outside the brown brick building, more than two dozen government employees and just as many orange-clad inmates stood in a gravel lot awaiting direction.

"We've got 420 of them being delivered today," he said, pointing to clustered barricades. They were loaded on trailers that day and lined the streets the next.

"We lose a lot of (barricades) each year to vehicles running through them and

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crushing them, trucks running over them and dragging them about half a mile down the road — 60 or 70 of them sometimes," he explained. "One location, they destroyed 30 of 'em in one shot."

That costs Lafayette Consolidated Government around \$110 a pop.

By Friday afternoon, the prep work was complete. Barricades lined the streets. Multi-hued portable toilets were stationed at strategic intervals.

No additional waste containers are distributed along the route. And whereas an event like Festival International de Louisiane merits recycling bins, at Mardi Gras, recycling is "an absolute joke," grumbled Mark Pope, manager of Lafayette Consolidated Government's Environmental Quality Division. Pope recalled finding decidedly non-recyclable matter in designated recycling bins, once vomiting after discovering rotted meat shoved among aluminum cans and paper goods.

"It's really hard, when there's a lot of people out there having fun and drinking, to try and get them to think of recycling," agreed Mauri Robichaux, manager of the for-profit Recycling Foundation of Acadiana.

Saturday arrived, as did Olivier's 53rd birthday. He celebrated with his family for lunch, and by 7 p.m., he stood on Surrey Street alongside thousands of cardboard boxes and plastic bags left behind by float-riders. The air reeked of stale brew.

This stretch of Surrey before Evangeline Thruway marks the staging area where floats queue up before the parade. Riders tear open bead-filled bags and boxes and toss them into the street.

"They have to. They have no place to put it," Olivier said. "It's not as bad as (Mardi Gras Day). The boxes are gonna be about 8 foot tall."

There was only one parade that evening. Today there will be three.

And that's where responsibility magnifies for the foremen along the cleanup route.

"Our main thing is to make sure our guys don't get hurt," said Leroy Hebert, one of 20 foremen out that night. "On Tuesday night, you have to watch out for the people behind you, watch out for the drunks. They're having wrecks all over the place. Traffic control's the worst on Mardi Gras night."

Hebert stood on a Johnston Street corner waving a glowing orange baton at vehicles attempting to enter the blocked intersection. A pickup approached, and a bar-hardened woman hung hollering out the window as the vehicle veered a hard right in front of Hebert.

"Sorry, baby!" she croaked, slightly slurred, above the clamor of street-cleaning machinery. "Don't work too hard now, ya hear me?!" Her voice trailed off as the truck sped away.

By midnight, the crew finished an hour behind schedule (one of five street sweepers gave out before the job even began) and congregated at Cajun Field. The blasted wet asphalt of South College Road glistened debris-free beneath the amber streetlights. At midnight tonight, the cleanup will have just begun.

The workers were exhausted, but in good spirits. For everyone's hard work: Paid overtime, shrimp po'boys.

A gaggle of men stood around Hebert, sodas and sandwiches in hand, as he described an incident when a carful of young adults began mouthing off at a blocked intersection downtown.

"They wanted to pass through. I said, 'No, you can't.' It was two guys wanting to give me problems, saying, 'Are you drunk? Or are you just an idiot?'" Hebert said he called for an officer, who came to the scene and asked the young female driver if she had any problem waiting. Hebert mimicked the girl's spooked response.

"No, sir! No, sir!"  
Gut laughs all around.

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