



NO. 1 IN THE USA

■ Money: Businesses bow to celebrities

Getting the star treatment is ever-present in Hollywood. Inquiring minds want to know why people who make a lot of money get a lot of free stuff. 1B.



Cover story

Stars live in a cushy world of special treatment

But there's a catch

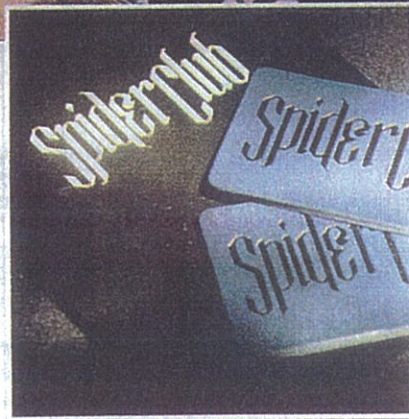
By Matt Krantz and Chris Woodyard
USA TODAY

LOS ANGELES — Britney Spears isn't your everyday car buyer. Even in star-struck Los Angeles.

So when Spears recently shimmied into Toyota Santa Monica and went gaga for a green Scion xB — Toyota's oh-so-hip youth-mobile — she never had to sit in a cold cubicle to fill out paperwork. Instead, a dealership manager zoomed off to her Santa Monica, Calif., home, where Spears could sign the paperwork without the riffraff.

Welcome to special treatment, Hollywood style.

Southern California businesses of all sorts are inventing new ways to roll out the red carpet to their famous customers, hoping that rubbing shoulders with celebrity royalty will boost their image and their income. While only 1 in 1,000 — or maybe 10,000 — customers may be a bona fide celeb, how



Photos by Dan MacMedan, USA TODAY

Members only: CSI star Melina Kanakaredes and her husband, Peter Constantinides, enjoy the festivities at the Spider Club, which is only for stars who have VIP cards to prove it.

a company treats them can affect everything from media coverage to how the company rates on the hush-hush and very unofficial network of celebs' most-favored business spots.

Sometimes, it's as simple as free eats. "I haven't paid at a Greek restaurant since the movie came out," says Nia Vardalos, who burst from obscurity in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* two years ago. She gets free designer clothes, too.

Other times, it's as lavish as free, round-trip tickets to the other side of the globe.

For the 125 hotshots who received complimentary gift baskets at the Academy Awards in February, Air New Zealand tucked in a set of free

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► **Celeb nights out.** You wouldn't expect Brad Pitt, Jennifer Aniston, Paris Hilton or Justin Timberlake to fight their way into a busy nightclub, would you?

And they certainly don't have to at Avalon Hollywood, an oh-so-cool nightclub that's so popular that lines often wrap around the block.

But here, anyone who's anyone can bypass the hoi polloi by ducking into a secret entrance on the dark side of Avalon. The door swings open and a set of blue stairs lit by candles lead up to the top floor of the club into a separate, Moroccan-themed room called Spider Club. Here there are no crowds; instead, ample stools, booths and cushions. And the bartenders already have your drink ready before you even order.

Want to take an out-of-town friend to impress them? Tough. Getting past the velvet rope is nearly impossible. Stars on the exclusive guest list get in by flashing a faux leather "Spider Club" card only given out to roughly 1,500 of Hollywood's elite. "It's hard to get past the doorman," says owner Steve Adelman, who masterminded similar concepts in New York.

Even celebrities, though, have to play by some rules at Spider Club: No bodyguards are allowed. "It doesn't look right. It doesn't fit the room," Adelman says.



By Dan MacMedan, USA TODAY

Back at the Spider Club: Juliette Lewis (*Starsky & Hutch*), left, and Bai Ling (*Star Wars: Episode III*) chat.