



Poparazzi's owners, l-r, Irwin Daniels and Alan Roland

Photo Credit: Micahl Wyckoff

Irwin Daniels and business partner, Alan Roland, co-owners of a successful barber-shop franchise in the Galleria, never imagined that 17 months after opening the doors of their newest venture, a gourmet popcorn business, that their array of popcorn, boasting a selection of more than 170 different flavors, would be chosen for inclusion in the swag bags at the Annual Daytime Emmy Awards.

# Houston duo's **business** venture a "popping" success

Irwin Daniels and Alan Roland, knew they were on the right track when the orders for their multi-flavored gourmet popcorn began flying off of the shelves of their Houston-based business.

Opening their doors a little over a year and a half ago, their retail concept of providing a selection of over 170 flavors of gourmet popcorn, was proving to be a growing hit with customers.

In addition to developing a growing base of customers, their gourmet popcorn shop recently captured the attention of researchers for Off-the-Wall Gifts, the official producers of gift bags for the Daytime Emmy's.

Daniels was the first to read the email informing the business partners that their gourmet popcorn had been selected to go into the swag bags at the upcoming Emmy awards show hosted by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in June.

"When I first read the e-mail I thought it was spam and almost deleted it, but shot back an email asking if this was real," said Daniels.

He soon received a response back confirming the email's authenticity, with a message stating that they would love to include their popcorn in the show's swag bags.

The rest for the business partners is history, as they prepare to

attend one of the entertainment industry's most recognized primetime awards programs and walk the "Red Carpet" as members of the show's audience.

Both Daniels and Roland feel honored to have been selected and are excited about the growth of their business in such a short time, despite early skepticism.

When they started the business they received a lot of questions on whether a business "selling" popcorn could be successful.

Daniels himself had his own doubts and admits to initially tossing out the idea two years ago when he and Roland had begun brainstorming ideas for a new business venture.

Daniels and his sister, and former business partner, Jackie, had enjoyed years of success as co-owners of more than 80 quick loan businesses across the U.S., but he was burnout and looking for something new.

"I was tired of doing what I was doing and we started popping out ideas," says Daniels.

Daniels bounced ideas back and forth with Roland, owner of a local barbershop where Daniels was a customer.

He suggested they start a popcorn business, the idea stemming from Roland's memories of his mother taking him to a small popcorn shop in Austin growing up. He worked

several jobs when he was young and would spend all of his paycheck on popcorn, says Roland, and always dreamed of one day owning his own popcorn shop.

"I personally thought the idea was kind of dumb, because I don't like popcorn," says Daniels.

That thought quickly changed, when Daniels began to do a little research and discovered that popcorn was the No. 1 snack in America.

Business-minded since his early teens, the, then, 29-year-old began putting the numbers together and calculating the business potential and liked what he saw.

"I told him, well, if you truly believe in this, it's worth a try," said Daniels.

No strangers to hard work, the pair, with the help of several family members, learned the ins and outs of the business and worked 7 days a week in the opening year of business.

"And here we are, we just pretty much blew up over night," says Roland.

As they prepare to transport 1,500 bags of popcorn down to Las Vegas, Nev. for the awards show ceremony, their family members will be manning the storefront and serving up the store's flavored popcorn selections.

With 170 flavors of gourmet popcorn, customers have an exhaustivelistofselectionsto chose from, including spicy hot cheese, loaded bake potato, bubble gum, cheesecake, banana pudding, butterfinger, mac & cheese, white choco-

late pretzel and strawberry cheesecake, to name a few.

"We come up with new flavors on a weekly basis and our popcorn is popped fresh daily," says Roland.

During the business' first Super Bowl celebration, they came out with a flavor called Buffalo Wing and Ranch, which has since become a signature flavor. "As soon as we came out with it, we had people lining up to buy it," said Daniels.

Other top sellers include their strawberry cheesecake and cinnamon roll-flavored popcorn.

Keen business owners, they admit to studying their competition.

"I think what makes our popcorn so different is that the flavors taste exactly like whatever it is called," says Daniels, who taste tests all product selections.

The shop also features a nostalgic line of hard-to-find candies and drinks that people grew up with, such as Tahitian Treat, Delaware Punch, Old Fashion Stewart beverages, Old Henry Candy Bar, Bubble Gum Coins and Mary Janes.

For both Daniels and Roland, the Emmy's is icing on the cake of their success, which they attribute to many hours of sacrifice and hard work.

Both look forward to attending the Emmy Awards show and walking the "Red Carpet" with a mix of nervousness and excitement.

"I don't know what to expect, but I am excited. It would be great to get a



chance to meet Oprah, because I hear she likes popcorn," says Roland.

Garrett's Popcorn out of Chicago made Oprah's List of Favorite Things in 2010, according to Roland.

"If we get the chance to meet her, we are going to win her over to Poparrazis."

# It's in the SWAG!

Three years ago Val and Mike Wilson, a husband and wife team from New Hampshire, and owners of a promotional gifts business, called Off-The-Wall Gifts, created the S.W.A.G. Bag for various National Academy of Television Science and Arts awards shows.

Tasked with developing a sponsorship concept for the Academy, the Wilsons' came up with the idea for the bag as a tool to raise funds for the non profit.

The bag also provided a way to provide a gift for audience members of the Academy's various awards shows and gave small businesses the opportunity to position themselves in front of a national audience, major television executives and celebrities.

**"We were seeking a way to create a "win-win" for every-**

**body," says Val Wilson, whose company also provides product placement for The Today Show on NBC.**

Compiled of up to 30 different products, swag bags are given to award recipients, presenters and audience members at the Daytime Emmy, Sports Emmy and News and Documentary Emmy awards shows.

Wilson and her husband consider the bag a way to 'pay it forward' by giving small business owners, like themselves, an opportunity to gain valuable exposure to entertainment industry executives, celebrities and others, who might have an impact somewhere down the road in providing greater exposure for their products.

Throughout the year, a team of researchers conducts independent searches for unique

products and also accept submissions from business owners seeking to nab a coveted spot in the swag bag.

**"What we look for are items that will complement an awards show's image, and right off, the name Poparazzi's fit the bill for a red carpet national awards show, says Wilson.**

Researchers scour the Internet and use other sources to select products to go in the swag bag.

Submissions also are accepted from small business owners from across the U.S.

Business that are emerging and seem to have growth potential are selected by researchers to be included in the bag.

Finalists undergo a personal interview to assess the quality

and uniqueness of their product and brand.

Some past S.W.A.G. bag items have included:

- Gourmet treats, chocolates, pretzels and candies
- Scarves
- Cosmetic products
- Mirrors
- Custom-made handbags

This year, the bag will include **Poparazzi's Gourmet Popcorn.**

**For more information: visit [www.offthewallideas.com](http://www.offthewallideas.com) or send an e-mail inquiry to [info@offthewallideas.com](mailto:info@offthewallideas.com).**

**Off-The-Wall Gifts:**  
Producer of the Official Emmy Gift Bags and Talent Lounge.

