

Some of the most famous trophies in the entertainment world get their finishing touches in Grove

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Before an aspiring singer can be presented with the microphone-clutching hand sculpture that goes to the winner of the reality show “The Voice,” before an internet sensation can mark millions of followers with a YouTube Creator Award, before a musician can marvel at receiving the silver-colored astronaut that is the MTV Video Award — all these objects must pass through Grove, Oklahoma.

It is here, in a large warehouse hidden away in a small industrial park on the east side of town, where literally thousands of awards — including some of the most famous and iconic trophies in the entertainment world — are given their finishing touches before being sent out to worthy recipients.

Society Awards is a company founded in 2007 by David Moritz, a New Jersey native who spent his teen years living in Grove, graduating from high school there in 1999.

The company specializes in the design and manufacture of high-end awards, from the Heartland Regional Emmy Awards that some local TV personalities have earned to such nationally recognized prizes as the American Music Awards.

“We started out in New York City, and we still maintain our headquarters there,” said Jeff J. Lien, manager of marketing for Society Awards. “We were also doing our production there as well, but we quickly outgrew the space we had. And with the cost of real estate being what it is in New York, we couldn’t find a place big enough that we could afford.

“David’s parents still live in the Grove area, and it made sense to establish this facility here because David was familiar with the area,” Lien said. “And the community has been great about welcoming us from the start.”

Lien said the company tries to repay the town’s hospitality by offering its outdoor event space for community events. The roof of this open-air pavilion is lined with solar panels that provide most of the facility’s power.

Society Awards opened its Grove facility in 2010, and in 2017, expanded the space to more than double its original size. The building has three main components: the front office area, with a conference room and break room; the manufacturing area; and the warehouse, which is stacked with rows and rows of boxes of myriad awards.

While world-famous awards that honor those who work in film, television and music may be what Society Awards is best known for, the company also creates trophies for a variety of clients.

“Every profession has some kind of award,” Lien said. “We also do things for the community, like the award that’s given for the annual ‘Taste of Grand’ event. We even have our own line of custom awards that we call Exclusives, that are only sold through us, that we use to make special awards.”

The actual awards are manufactured at locations in the United States and internationally and are then shipped to Grove for the final steps in the process.

“When we get an award in,” said Kristine Reed, warehouse manager, “it is closely inspected to make sure it is perfect. And before we ship anything out, it is inspected again to make sure it’s perfect. We work to make sure the tiniest detail is exactly right.”

The Grove facility employs about 20 people, most of whom work with the high-tech computerized machines that fill the front half of the facility, such as the various printers — laser, ultraviolet and 3-D — that on this particular day are being used to engrave row after row of YouTube Creator Awards.

There are three such awards. Most of them are Silver awards, for YouTube users who have at least 100,000 subscribers. The Gold awards go to those with at least 1 million subscribers. Diamond awards, whose winners include such celebrities as Jimmy Fallon, are given to those with at least 10 million subscribers.

When finished, with the winner's name engraved on folio-size slabs that have the YouTube "Play" button floating in a clear TV-shaped window, the Gold and Silver awards are slipped into plastic bags and fitted into special boxes, complete with a letter of congratulations in the recipient's language.

The Diamond awards, on the other hand, are more compact but much more solid. When properly engraved, they are fitted into foam-lined briefcases that look like the sort of thing mysterious, muscular men in suits and sunglasses would have chained to their wrists.

"Every individual award has its own specific level of packaging," Reed said. "It may be paper, it may be bubble wrap, it may be cloth, or it may be some combination of things."

And that degree of fussiness in packaging is reflective of the company's attitude toward everything it does.

"I think because we focus on getting all the little details right, the people who work here have a great deal of pride in their work," Reed said. "We know we are making things that are going to be very special to the person who receives them, and we want everything about it to be perfect."