

# Busy Esmer wiped out

## Oz on The Listener also a splashy host

So who does Ennis Esmer think he is, the new Bob Barker?

"Wow," said Esmer, loving the comparison. "That's heady praise, absolutely."

Esmer — best known to Canadian TV viewers these days for his role as Osman (Oz) Bey on CTV's *The Listener* — actually is becoming well known for his hosting abilities, too.

A former standup comedian, Esmer not only is hosting this year's ACTRA Awards — which take place Feb. 25 in Toronto — but he also will be one of the humour-supplying hosts on *Wipeout Canada* when it debuts this spring on TVTropolis.

"Hosting is a totally different skill set from acting," Esmer said. "And it's a good amount of work, too, although I'm getting better with teleprompters and stuff."

"So it's fun, and why not, you know? You have to diversify."

Is there a way to combine Esmer's two upcoming hosting gigs, like maybe having the ACTRA nominees try out the *Wipeout Canada* course?

"That would be funny, but I'm not sure if their union would cover it," Esmer warned. "There must be some sort of liability issue."

OK, even shelving that idea, Esmer is plenty busy.

"We have two episodes left to shoot for this season of *The Listener*, we've shot 11," Esmer said. "This is the first time I've actually been on something, an episodic drama, that is airing while we're shooting it, so that's kind of cool. And the numbers have been pretty good apparently, so hopefully we can keep building on that."

Esmer also had a recurring role in the first season of *Covert Affairs* (which originates



on the USA network and airs in Canada on Showcase), so he has to be ready in case they call him for Season 2.

"I had a part in the pilot as a CIA polygrapher, and I joked to one of the producers, 'I guess if anybody else lies, you'll have to call me again.' And they called me back twice more," Esmer said.

"So it stands to reason, as they're shooting the second season, they might have somebody else tell a lie."

Esmer admitted he really isn't used to having this much to do.

"But this is what you hope for," he said. "Lots of people work crazy hours, but I have the benefit of doing things

I feel good about. The challenges that come with that are challenges I welcome.

"I actually haven't done standup in years. I'm good with a confined audience, so I can get up and make jokes about specific things that I know will work in a room full of actors, like at the ACTRA event or when I hosted the industry night for the Gemini Awards.

"But once we're finished with *The Listener* and *Wipeout*, it's my goal to get back up in front of five, 10 strangers at a time and humiliate myself."

The truth is, people who can do some acting, do some standup and also host events tend to be able to work in the entertainment business forever.

"There you go!" Esmer said. "Someone figured it out!"

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ENNIS ESMER

# Smirnoff has just the tonic to shape up

Dancer Karina Smirnoff of *Dancing with the Stars* has a new fitness DVD she claims can help you achieve a dancer's body in four weeks.

Karina, you must not have seen some of the bodies out there.

"This workout is what a lot of dancers do to stay in shape, to have lean, long muscles," said Smirnoff, who will appear on Canadian TV coast-to-coast Friday on *The Marilyn Denis Show* on CTV. "It's almost like the secrets of dancers to keep our bodies the way we want them to be."

Results notwithstanding, Smirnoff believes dancing to stay in shape is a lot more fun than, say, running on a treadmill.

"I know personally, if I had to go to the gym and do the same thing over and over again, probably on about Day 4 I'd be like, 'This is too much, it's boring, I'm done,'" she said.

Smirnoff has turned herself into quite a brand, with new makeup and shoe lines in addition to the DVD, thanks to the heightened profile *Dancing with the Stars* has provided. In the past few seasons Smirnoff — who was a champion ballroom dancer before she joined the show — has been paired with the likes of Billy Ray Cyrus, Aaron Carter and Mike (The Situation) Sorrentino.

But Smirnoff hasn't won *Dancing with the Stars*. Yet.

"It would have been very nice, and I'm still working very hard for it," Smirnoff said. "Of course, everyone wants to go to the end and get a partner who puts all the time in that we need to rehearse with them."

"But there are so many other good things that come with the show. Winning would be the cherry on top of a sundae."

— Bill Harris



KARINA SMIRNOFF