

The corporate banquet, the live theatre, and the unusual venue...

Gala's and Banquets. Beauty and the Beast...or the Perfect Match made in Event Heaven? Adrian Silas investigates what's involved in making the night a success

Parties are for fun. And enjoyment, and if nothing else, are the best way to entertain! Banquets are for celebrating and reward. And with no risk, you reap no rewards. Or do things always end up the same way, however you throw the dice? Maybe not, eh?

The definition of a "party" is simply this: "a company made up for an occasion"...RIGHT! And a "banquet" is "a feast with sumptuous entertainment". Mmmn, I like that word a lot...

Methinks they sound very different indeed.....one is a let-your-hair down affair with plenty of music and drink. The other a more stylish and sophisticated event where it's all about effect. And without cause, we have no effect. Emphasis on the word effect as opposed to affected as it's the overall sense of final style and delivery that brings the two together.

Like I said once before in the magazine, films and storylines are great to get a party off the ground and going but a banquet needs far more attention to detail, a great venue to start with and some really stunning food! Food for a King to feast on indeed. More of food in a future issue, but right now, lets con concentrate on the venue and the location and most especially the unusual venue, the Historic Palace, the Stately Home, even the day to day Public Museum too as there are now a cornucopia of venues and places, open to

the public by day, that close their doors at 6pm and open themselves up anew and after hours as the best landmark spots on the ever-growing corporate event management map for Banquets and Gala events and even just a plain good old Ade-style party!

Again, the classier the event and the higher the event stakes, the more costly the venue and surely if the money is there to hire it, then the Corporate Banquet needs to be the Gala Party of Gala Parties. There are no limits here and truthfully there should be no limits for once you have engaged the right venue for you. You need to start the painstakingly singular and dynamic task of bringing the venue to life and giving it that personal and human touch that will guarantee a few hours of fun and enjoyment after the initial "wow" factor of entering it.....albeit through a moated gatehouse, or through a 50ft red-carpeted flame-lit walkway or even, dare I say it, by helicopter onto its pristine Lawns and Gardens. Those made famous by Capability Brown and Sir Humphrey Repton, or even, Sir Ade Silas...(ha ha!!)

So, in the same vein of previous articles, here's my top tips to help you out when planning your next banquet, i.e. the pros and cons of what to do, expect and find, and where to make the mark for a truly tip-top event. At Masquerade we call it the "M-Factor", for the X-Clusive kind of event we all

dream of. As Courvoisier say, "Because You've Earn't it!", and as L'Oreal say (not about my hair of course...)..."Because You're Worth it!". I am happy with both outcomes since I feel we are all able to earn it and we are all worth it, every event, every day, every party.

After all, you want to be the Beauty, not the Beast and aim for a perfect match of event and client to make things happen from the minute go. So, let's get started with



a Top 3 Podium and pitch list for venue and event, banquet style:

Firstly, select a venue that best suits the theme and event reason and people coming to the event at all.....who are they, why are they coming and who invited them in the first instance anyway?

The venue, although not the most important part of the recipe, has a massive effect and role to play in the event you stage and how you do it! Don't just think big, posh and OTT as I have said before, just because it's a Banquet! Or small because budget dictated that to be the case.

Match the venue to the event and the rhyme to the reason from the "off" and you will honestly find the rest will just flow naturally.....

Think laterally, outside the box and find a location that not only compliments the theme you have chosen, but more so articulates what you are going to stage and pull off. It's the planning corporate bird that catches the right venue worm and most of all, learn the subtle art of good contract and venue negotiation as, with all due respects to each and every venue that exists out there, they will want to maximize their yield, take and profit and margin from you from the initial site-inspection and recce and needs dictate that you need to be sharp, smart and on-the-ball when it comes to pinpointing the £ for £ spend and per capita bottom-line price that you both agree on. Beware...

After that its mock-ups, layouts, productions specs, table-plans and hey ho, you are there.....but not till you have done a full and thorough food and wine tasting, and, with your client too. Beware again....you are what you eat, so, please, no mistakes here that could backfire on the night itself.

And as for at my favourite venue ever.....? Well, that would be telling, but here are a few words from a lady who is considered a venue expert and PR Numero Uno by our Publisher. (ADD YR LADY'S WORDS HERE WES)

Secondly ensure on having the best in entertainment, music and cabaret for the night... and banquet ahead, all will flow on! And a gala banquet deserves 1st class entertainment (just look at some of these pictures enclosed to see just how far you can go and just how original you can be when you think about the phrase "Expect the Unexpected!"). I have for many many years advocated and pioneered the art of funky, off-the-wall entertainment, performance-art and a style of creative event management where not a lot is left to the



imagination as the artists and acts and cabaret are literally coming out, non-stop, and in your face. That's what people remember and that's what will make it a gala or banquet with a difference.....the memory of the night that people take away with them and the "wow" factor or "M-Factor" you create.....hence, Area 51 would always be my top choice for entertainment, but always under the guiding eyes and direction of a "live" Event Director on the night to keep it sharp and flowing at all times. It's just like a piece of Theatre, and you get no repeat dress rehearsals on a one-off gala event either!

So, to recap then...

By tantalizing the palate with a fun food and beverage menu, of royal proportion, you will enhance the venue's classic ambience...A feast fit for a King is a must here, and, let your banquet be the Queen of all Killer Queen events.....Freddie Mercury said it all when he intimated, and probably meant every word of it, saying "We will, we will, Rock You!". And



by entertaining with some degree of art-led creativity, again, you will have the royal audience captivated by you, and the "Jester's" play and company and troupe of acts will help it come to life and breathe some fire into the event, always and forever.

Finally, Dr Masquerade's master tip and advice from years of seasoned party organizing and attending as a guest, columnist and maverick is to.....make it different, make it real and make sure they come back for more! And that goes for the clients and guests alike too. And that's tip no 3.....so bear them all in mind and yes, feel free to add to them and create your own top 5, 6 or 10 list. the more, the merrier!

I cannot think of a better way to spend an evening, whatever the season, wherever the event, and no matter what the venue is or what the budget amounts to.....the more unusual, the better.....the bigger the banquet, the higher the stakes.....but most of all, in the infamous words of Harry Potbelly, my great friend from the planet Azam, and spoken to me once, but now remembered forever more:

Be Good...
Be Wise...
and
Be Aware.

And, Mr. Publisher, Happy Banqueting..... after all, don't we think its time for the Inaugural Prestige Events Magazine 2007 Awards Dinner next year? Mmnn, I'm getting hungry now Wes.
LET'S DO IT!