

# CELEBRITY PLAYGROUND

BY MICHAEL SHULMAN



Ice-T arrives at Vegas' Player's Ball in his Mercedes Gullwing.

MICHAEL SHULMAN

## PLAYING WITH ICE-T & COCO AT THE PLAYER'S BALL

Until recently, my only exposure to a Player's Ball had been those I had viewed on-screen, in films like the Dan Aykroyd comedy *Doctor Detroit* (1983), which actually featured a choreographed dance routine set to James Brown performing "Get Up Offa That Thing/Doctor Detroit." Or better still, *The Mack* (1973), produced by Harvey Bernhard (or, as my mother has always known him, "Uncle Harvey").

So when I was invited to attend a Player's Ball here in Las Vegas, where Ice-T and his goddess-like manager/girlfriend, Coco, were going to be honored with a trophy, I couldn't resist. I had to check it out for myself.

The Original Gangsta (along with his coterie of Coco and a bodyguard) arrived exhausted from Europe and checked into Peter Morton's ever-popular Hard Rock Hotel (like the Mortons, Ice and Coco are big fans of the Hard Rock's signature comedian, Jeff Beacher of *Beacher's Madhouse*). On the day leading up to the ball, Coco got her nails done, the couple dined at Lawry's The Prime Rib (it's *still* the best, you know), and popped into The Forum Shops at Caesars Palace for a spot of shopping.

Saturday night came, and I was all aflutter! What the heck was I gonna wear

to a damn Player's Ball? I settled on a duchesse-satin frock coat in gold (a runway piece by Gianni Versace Couture) accessorized with a pair of oversized gold-framed sunglasses by Dolce & Gabbana, a Bvlgari dinner watch, and the pièce de résistance: my 100-some-carat emerald-cut CZ ring by Armen Ra for Todd Oldham. Imagine having to repeat *that* 50 times in an evening ("Oh—it's Armen Ra for Todd Oldham." "Why, thank-you! It's Armen Ra for Todd Oldham.").

Hooray for me! I was the belle of the Playa's Ball! Although it occurred to me, what do you all think "the overs" are that I was also the only little Jewish boy from the Upper East Side at this affair? This could explain why people kept asking to have their photos taken with me. Hmmm. Well, who cares? I was about to meet Ice-T and Coco!

I was led to a table set with a plate of chicken wings and an ice bucket, complete with a bottle of Hennessy. I was then introduced to a number of delightful ladies. While Sylvia's up in Harlem is one of my favorite restaurants in New York, Hennessy is not really my drink of choice, and since wings and duchesse satin do not a good combination make, I decided that now was as good a time as any to meet the man of the hour. So I made my way to my host, Paulie Mac.



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Paulie took me to Ice, who is extremely charismatic: all smiles, really. Then, as soon as introductions were made, the whole group (Ice, Coco and three other girls) got up and snaked their way into the main room of Seven (the venue where the whole shebang took place). I was told to grab a spot at the end of the serpentine conga-esque line and follow along. So I did.

Upon reaching the main room, I immediately started chatting up Coco, whose most amazing asset is that brain she's got in her head. As gorgeous as she is (and let me put it this way: If you could put Coco into pill form, Pfizer would go broke. I'm amazed that she doesn't set off the overhead sprinklers when she walks into a room), she's even smarter, 'cause she recognizes that people often discount what's above a lady's neck for what she's got below! A word to the wise: Don't even try to diss this Miss. Ice has one rule: In order to get to him, people must go through Coco first.

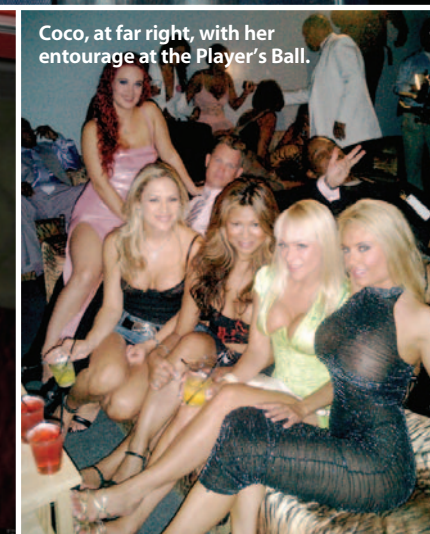
Noticing that we'd been kiki-ing in the booth for some time, Ice broke up our *kaffeeklatsch* and asked if we'd like him to take some photos of us. So Coco and I giggled a bit, got up, and posed. After vogueing for a few shots together, I gave her my card and she promised to e-mail me the snaps when they got home. I stood to let some other folks into the booth to pay homage to the OG couple, and decided to wander the premises. At that moment, the DJ called Paulie Mac to the stage. His group, Hooded Figures, performed their new single, "Hustle 'Til I Die," as a tribute to his dear friend Ice-T, the Original Gangsta. The night was a fantastic happening, and as usual, I was just happy to be there! ♣



Coco and Ice-T, the Original Gangsta couple, receive their trophy.



Tony Stone.



Coco, at far right, with her entourage at the Player's Ball.

TOP: TONY STONE: MICHAEL SHULMAN.



Ice-T, Gaby Gooch and Paulie Mac.

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