

# DIVA LAS VEGAS

BY MICHAEL SHULMAN

## Bright Lights, Big Charity *Fabulous Benefits, Sparkling Couture and One Rather Unusual Film*

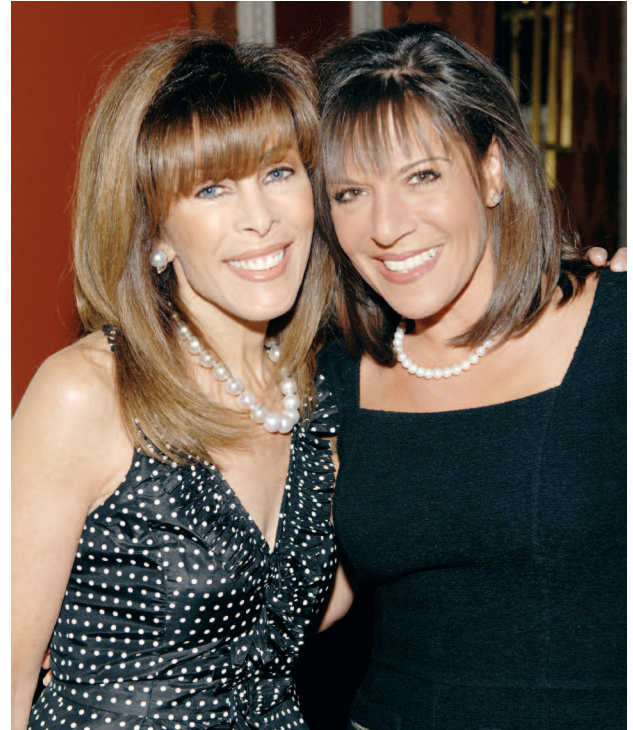
When we last took leave of our errant adventurer (me), I was spinning a fanciful little yarn about **Cher**. So, here 'tis: Cher's 62nd birthday brought all sorts of fans out of the woodwork. Some I never would have expected—little old ladies with blue hair from the U.K. and the like—alongside die-hard fans of the here-and-queer variety that you just knew were going to be there. Now, months before Cher queried about turning back time, my friend **Jimmy James** already had bought tickets on-line to this concert. Jimmy had also (by way of his long-time best-y, **Larry Edwards**, a.k.a. Hot Chocolate) booked a gig at **Piranha**, arguably the chicest gay bar to hit our shores in some time, very hip, very swanky and overseen by a kid with a good head on his shoulders named **Johnny Bacon**. Who knew that over the past couple of months, La Bacon had smuggled a bevy of gaiety (**Britney Spears**, **Andy Dick**, **Janice Dickinson**, **Perez Hilton**, etc.) into the club's posh little voyeuristic mezzanine sky boxes? Smart cookie, he... So I dragged my new pal **Billy Gilbane III** to Piranha (my first time), and we had a blast. Jimmy's show was cute, quick, and when he sang his hit single "Fashionista," he had those boys singing along to every word. When the show was over, La Bacon brought over a number of Cher's dancers. They were sweet as the day is long: **Marlin**, **Tovariss** and his friend **Komodo** and one of Cher's awe-inspiring aerialists, **Max**. We then played a quick round of "It's a Small World" because just nights earlier I had met two of Cher's girl dancers, **Melanie** and **Suzanne**. This conversation was the first time I had heard **Tom Breitling** referred to as "Vanessa's husband," and I got a particularly big chuckle out of it. By the end of the night, we'd



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been offered after-show passes, so after the following night's concert, we got to go backstage and partake of Cher's birthday cake (which was a fabulous confection). After cake we headed to **Spago** and dined on **Eric Klein**'s delicious Wiener schnitzel and that chocolate soufflé that brings a tear to my eye (and adds an inch to my ever expanding waistline). Talk about going out on a high note!

Moving right along, we come to one of my favorite charitable endeavors, the annual Flair for Care luncheon and fashion show to benefit the **Nathan Adelson Hospice** and co-sponsored by **Vegas** magazine. What really does it for me is that one can visit the hospice and see the people who are affected by one's donations. It's really quite incredible. So, every year, **Susan Molasky**, **Jane Schorr** and **Beth Weinberger** team up and bring



Clockwise from left: Oscar de la Renta's "blue bride"; Jane Schorr and Leora Blau at Wynn Las Vegas for the Flair for Care fashion show; Gloria Fine at Wynn at the Flair for Care raffle to benefit the Nathan Adelson Hospice.



DE LA RENTA/BRIDE FINE: MICHAEL SHULMAN. SCHORR: ERNIE SPICKLER.

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Clockwise from above left: Jewelry designer Scott Kay and Saks Fifth Avenue's Scott Martin with Allison Zeiss at Wynn Las Vegas for the Couture show; George Maloof and Gillian Wynn Early at Simon Restaurant & Lounge for the *Harper's Bazaar*/Bertolucci dinner; Elizabeth Blau, Bertolucci CEO Philippe Belais and Miss France 2008, Valérie Bègue, at the dinner; Nancy Houssels and Susan Molasky at Wynn Las Vegas for the Flair for Care event.

together some of the brightest lights of Las Vegas philanthropy, and with the invaluable assistance of **Nelman Marcus** and **Wynn Las Vegas**, they put on an honest-to-goodness fashion show. It's an afternoon of *prêt-à-porter* realness, served up with an appetizer of frenzied raffle buying and a dessert of raffle winning. This year's fashion show featured the Fall '08 collection from **Oscar de la Renta**, highlighted by his sending out the ceremonial bride in cascading ruffles of royal blue—a "blue bride," if you will. Oh, the irony! Meanwhile, nearly \$800,000 was raised that day, and some good fun was had, as well. Brava, ladies!



Sticking with my always prevalent theme of luxurious tidings from the land of things that sparkle in the night, I find myself reporting on the goings-on at the Couture jewelry show that took place for a week at Wynn Las Vegas. I was fortunate to have as my guide **Saks Fifth Avenue's** senior buyer of fine jewelry, Mr. **Scott Martin**, who is a veritable rock-'n'-roll star in the trade. At one point I looked at him, saying that I was convinced people were pointing and at any moment someone would rush over and ask for his autograph. His droll response: "It happens all the time: It's called a purchase order." Don'tcha just love a guy who's quick on his feet? Every big name in the precious-jewelry game was there: **de Grisogono** (boasting the prototype for **Fawaz Gruosi's** new \$350,000 digital watch with mechanical movements and a cuff in the form of a starfish constructed of sapphires

and diamonds), **Damiani**, **di Modolo**, **Judith Ripka** (thanks, **Lovee**), **Stephen Webster** (whose muse, **Christina Aguilera**, performed in his honor at **Pure**), **Kwiat** (showing off their incredible 100-year-anniversary collection, wherein their gifted director of design, **Janice DeBell**, went through the house's archives, selected one classic piece from each decade and reinterpreted it with a contemporary flair—that '30s rock-crystal necklace with tapered baguettes is screaming out to me, "I'd look great on a red carpet!"), **Shamballa Jewels** (whose **Mads** and **Mickel Komerup** were known to all as those two hottie twins from Denmark who combined beads of emerald, ruby, sapphire and wood with balls of pavé diamonds, resulting in Zen-influenced jewelry

with a disco slant—it was the closest this Jewish boy might ever come to gleefully fingering a rosary), **Doris Panos** (who just gets better and better), **Rosalina Lydster** (launching her new **Roses and Thorns** collection), **Ilias Lalaounis** (whose Grecian designs remind one that yellow gold, while having come back into fashion, never ceased being stylish to those in the know), the convivial **Scott Kay** (who is reinventing men's jewelry), **Marco Bicego** (whose creations are imbued with so much joie de vivre that it's akin to taking a huge dose of St. Johnswort) and that clever **James DeMattei** and his peeps at ViewPoint, who showed in their booth everything from two of **Oprah's** faves—Toy Watch (think the Jelly Kelly of ceramic watches) and **Philip**



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PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL SHULMAN

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Stein (brings peace and well-being to wearers)—to two of mine, DEOS Diamond (which allows personal expression in a whitewashed world) and **Sevan Biçakçı**, better known simply as Sevan, who might possibly be the most mind-blowingly brilliant artisan I've ever met. I know a lot of people, and more per-capita "creative" sorts than most, and then I met this man, who floats effortlessly to the top of the sea of designers. This year, at the 13th Annual *Town & Country* Couture Design Awards, Sevan received his in the coveted category of Best in Colored Gemstone Design, as he has done for each of the past three years. His designs are so intricate and beautiful, in fact, that nobody at the convention begrudges him his success (and lemme tell ya, this can be a rather catty group). To the contrary, Sevan continues to generate the highest number of votes in the history of the Couture design competition.

Toward the beginning of the show, **Elizabeth Blau** reigned proudly over a dinner party at her recently opened **Simon Restaurant & Lounge** at **Palms Place** thrown by *Harper's Bazaar* and **Bertolucci** (I know what you're thinking: Bertolucci shows at JCK and not Couture—but a guy's gotta eat...). On hand to fete Bertolucci CEO **Philippe Belais** were the jeweler/horologist's comely directrix of marketing and communications, **Beatrice Rouhier**, **Kevin Martinez** (associate publisher of *Harper's Bazaar*), **Kate Davidson Hudson** (*Harper's Bazaar* accessories editor), **George Maloof**, **Gillian Wynn Early**, **Jenna Morton**, **Meital Grantz** and Bertolucci's ambassador, **Valérie Bègue** (Miss France 2008), who allowed me the opportunity to show off everything I had learned once upon a time while studying en France. I spent a good ten minutes of *parlez-ing en français* in a rather animated fashion with the lovely mademoiselle, and after our little tête-à-tête, I caught sight of Frau Blau just standing there quite gobsmacked, as though she was shocked that I had actually paid attention in class once in a while.

Finally, it was CineVegas time once more. The highlight for me found me zipping to the Wynn again. This time was for an evening dedicated to the work of



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wine director, **Danielle Price**, looking very red-state sexy in one of the most tasteful ensembles I've ever seen from the house of **St. John**, a pink bouclé suit. The movie aired, and I was flummoxed. I don't want to be all *Emperor's New Clothes* about this, but it appeared as though the Las Vegas cognoscenti had assembled to watch a cartoon about magic poo. I promise you this: If my friends are gonna start showing up at cocktail parties and black-tie galas with poo clutches and turd-shaped jeweled *minaudières*, then I am definitely calling them out on it. Of course, if Mr. Murakami has not yet had this brainstorm, I'm available as a creative consultant. *Domo arigato*, Takashi-san. Call me! ♠

Clockwise from top left: Timothy Greenfield-Sanders with Robin and Danny Greenspun at SW Steakhouse to celebrate Takashi Murakami's film at CineVegas; Nicole Ruvo and Billy Richardson, Jr., at the Murakami dinner; Takashi Murakami and Libby Lumpkin at the Louis Vuitton reception.

**Takashi Murakami**, whose new collection for **Louis Vuitton** is known as "Monogramoflage" (monogram plus camouflage, get it?). The night began with an intimate reception at the Vuitton boutique on the **Wynn Esplanade** followed by a dinner at **SW Steakhouse**, where we would witness Murakami's animated short that has had artsy folks from Brooklyn to Los Angeles all atwitter. So there I was at the store, wondering, Am I fat or is it hot in here? (an answer to which was indubitably somewhere in the middle), and then I proceeded down to SW. Of course, I didn't sit for the first hour, too busy schmoozing was I. What a room! Jane and **Marc Schorr** with **Audra Hendley** and **Bobby Baldwin**, **Billy Richardson, Jr.**, with **Frank Tucker** and **Greg Jarmolowich**, **Susan Fine** and **Max Spilka** with **Lieuchi** and **Jeff Fine**, and **Kea Elvester** and **Jonathan Fine**, **Ori Marmur** with Murakami's hip-hop stylist and a table full of suits, **Libby Lumpkin** and **Dave Hickey**, **Robin** and **Danny Greenspun** with brilliant portraitist **Timothy Greenfield-Sanders** (*XXX: 30 Porn-Star Portraits*), **Dennis Hopper**, Murakami, and **Elaine** and **Steve Wynn**. Where was I? Sitting alongside **Nicole Ruvo** at a table hosted by Wynn's wonderful