

Colin Cowie dishes on Atlantis bash

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When it comes to planning the perfect party, nobody does it better than legendary lifestyle expert Colin Cowie.

So it should come as no surprise that the world-renowned party planner, who has successfully executed Oprah Winfrey's birthday bashes and several Hollywood A-lister weddings, has been brought on board to orchestrate the \$20m Atlantis opening bash.

tabloid! gives you a lowdown of the fantastical night. Here are the excerpts from an e-mail interview ...

What is the theme behind the Atlantis grand opening party?

Our 1800 guests are going to experience a roller coaster ride of fantasy and magical special effects never seen before. Seated on a 75,000 sq. ft. floating deck attached to the pool terrace, guests will marvel as the myth of Atlantis comes alive with theatrics and pageantry.

Our buffets are fashioned like Atlantean creatures, for example the Nobu Matsuhisa buffet is a 60-foot-long dragon, 15-feet-high featuring three moving buffet tables on wheels, that moves and snakes its way through the guests. Restaurants by Giorgio Locatelli and Michel Rostang feature their cuisine on giant floating jelly fish.

Santi Santiago's food is showcased on a large fish that also moves between the guests. Poseidon and his Falcon Warriors along with a retinue of drummers, summon the guests to the dinner pavilion for a seated dinner featuring traditional Arabic cuisine.

Nawal al Zoughbi will perform and is followed by a command performance by Kylie Minogue. The Goddess of Atlantis, none other than Bollywood Star Priyanka Chopra, will greet guests and introduce the illumination of Palm Island followed by the largest fireworks show the world has ever seen.

The fireworks will be enhanced with high-definition video projected on the Atlantis building, to tell the story of the birth and rise of Atlantis.

A dance party follows with celebrity DJ Samantha Ronson.

Do you normally keep the regional sensibilities in mind, before planning a party?

Always! It is very important to embrace the local customs of whatever region I am in. I also reach out to the local vendors to work on the event with us. It not only allows for a great camaraderie from the start, but it enhances the creative process.

What's the kind of legwork that was involved in planning the Atlantis opening bash? Also, have you made innumerable visits to study the party zone?

This event has been a year in the making. I have been to Dubai numerous times and watched it grow rapidly. However, I was only at the Atlantis two times, but my teams have been here regularly for the past year.

How do you ensure that there an element of monotony does not creep in and that each party/occasion is more spectacular than the last one?

I am blessed with a very fertile mind. My inspiration comes from many walks of life. When designing I always appeal to all 5 senses in everything I do. I manipulate and adjust everything you taste, touch, see , feel or hear.

Timing is the single most important aspect to the success of an event. I am a firm believer in quality of time versus quantity of time. I take my guests on a well-thought out journey, with a carefully planned beginning, middle and end, laced with JDM's [Jaw Dropping Moments] along the way.

You have planned parties for most of the Hollywood A-listers, which has been the most memorable one?

My favorite celebrity to work and collaborate with is Oprah Winfrey. She has tremendous vision and being a producer she understands what it takes to create flawless productions.

My most memorable event was the Legends Ball...I have never been in a room filled with more influential people from around the world: from Tina Turner to our own President-elect Barack Obama. To be surrounded by so much greatness I will never forget. It was an incredible evening.

How tough is it to translate fantasies/idea into action or is frustration a part of the creative process?

I don't really look at problems as frustrating, my rule of thumb is there are not problems, there are only solutions. Every project is collaborative team effort, and egos are left at the door.

We have an amazing team of producers and vendors, and 99.9% of the time we can find a solution to every one of those challenges. Anyone who works on my team has graduated from the University of 'Whatever It Takes.'

While planning do you keep your client in mind, their tastes or do you win them over with your fab ideas?

Always. I am hired to make my clients vision come to life. That's where my inspiration comes from. Of course, there have been times where some of the ideas may not be feasible for various reasons.

But in those circumstances I work with the client to find a solution that they are happy with. Great style comes from ruthless editing – it's important to make sure that every idea compliments and helps paint the big picture.

Earlier you said in an interview that you would change the colour of the sky, if your client wanted it. Is that the secret of your success?

No, is not a word we use with our clients. As long as the idea or request is reasonable, we go the extra mile every time.