

Diana Ross - Coming Out In The Hamptons

By Nicole B. Brewer

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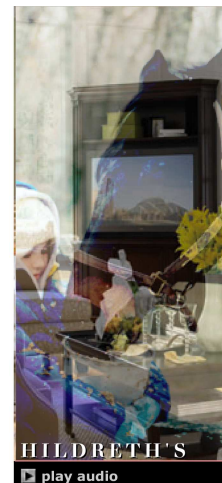
Supreme Lady in Red - Diana Ross at the Evening Under The Stars Gala. Photo by Kurt Leggard

The fog rolled into town but the stars were still shining in Southampton as over 500 people at the Evening Under the Stars Gala for the Diabetes Research Institute excitedly awaited the supreme diva, Diana Ross. The athletic fields at Stony Brook Southampton were transformed for the evening into a massive tented cocktail area and ballroom by none other than event impresario Barton G. Guest glided up the white carpet covered stairs and entered glass doors into a space dressed in chartreuse upholstered walls, elegant white columns, and sleek white curved bars. Waiters passed delicious lamb chops, mini crab cake sandwiches, and scallops casino as the champagne flowed freely. Eager fans tried to sneak a peek into the ballroom but the conscientious security was having none of that – we had to be patient.

As the massive wooden doors opened soft violet and rose colored lighting transformed a once blank white space into a warm and inviting ballroom. Wood panels and more white carpeting gave the room a cozy feel and cascades of tropical orchids elevated the modern décor. Clear chairs and white linens kept the attention on the star for the early part of the evening – the food. Dinner began with a trio of luscious shrimp cocktails and gazpacho. The next course, New York Strip Steak was grilled to perfection and served with a delicious peppercorn sauce. Guests enjoyed their just desserts as a vanilla milkshake and decadent chocolate layer cake appeared with a trio of miniature ice cream sundaes. Champagne and wines donated by Pernod Ricard USA enhanced the delicious evening.

Jill Viner, our gracious hostess, was swathed in a fabulous pink satin ball gown and shimmered as she expressed her heartfelt thanks to all who had come to support the evening. As this cause is dear to her heart she reminisced about her brother, a diabetic, and how she and her husband Cliff Viner are so happy to bring awareness of the epidemic to the spotlight. The chic evening raised nearly \$550,000 with donations still arriving to the Diabetes Research Institute. Then the room began to buzz and we all waited breathlessly for Diana to make her grand entrance.

Encased in a fiery red sequin encrusted gown complete with outrageous red chiffon ruffled cape Diana Ross entered the room to



thunderous applause belting out, "I'm Coming Out". Her amazing vocal range and stamina had us all wishing the concert would never end. She was sexy and powerful and her voice was clear, crisp, and filled with emotions. Unlike other performer of her era she still commands the full attention of any room she enters and gives over 100%. The masses were mesmerized as she continued with "Baby Love," "Stop In The Name Of Love," "Love Hangover," "Can't Hurry Love," and "Touch Me In The Morning".

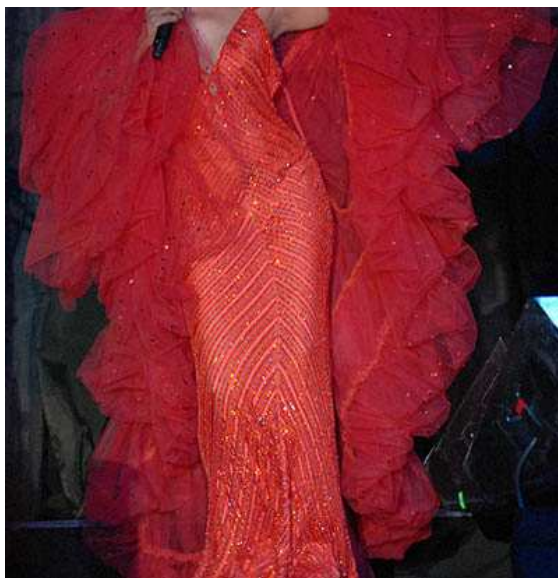


Photo by Kurt Leggard

After a quick break and costume change she emerged in a green dress that played up her curves and highlighted her flawless features. Women in the room were green with envy for her traffic-stopping figure. At 63, she had the energy a songbird a third her age and the stage presence and charisma few can match. She continued with "Soul Right," "It's My House," "Love Child," and "Upside Down." With her signature smile, bedroom eyes, and flirty breathless conversation she held her audience as she performed "Ease on Down the Road" from the musical "The Wiz" in which she starred along side Michael Jackson, Lena Horne, Richard Pryor, and Mabel King.

Another quick change to a provocative black number and she was back for her encores that included "Why Do Fools Fall In Love," the title song "Theme From Mahogany (Do You Know Where You're Going To)," and the resounding "Ain't No Mountain High Enough." She finished her marathon with as much energy as she began with "If You Call My Name." The room exploded and it was clear that the magical night would be remembered for a very long time indeed. Guests could be heard muttering about how amazing she looked and how unreal she sounded. She seemed as if she could go on all night unfatigued and we wish she would have done just that.