



FUN IN THE SUN 2004

> BY CLIFF



ALMOST exactly a year to the day and it was Fun in the Sun week again. For six months after last year's Sicily trip we were making fond references to that one mad week in September 2003. The six months leading up to this year's trip were all fervent anticipation of high hopes. For those who have just joined us in the gay world, here's a re-cap on last year's adventure. Picture it, Sicily, 2003... over 400 gay men gathered for a week of sun, sea, sand, sex, house music, utter indulgence and over-excessiveness. London's premier clubs and DJs (and some dodgy ones) joined an international selection of men, young and old, loud-mouthed and quiet natured. A genuine pic'n/mix of gay blokes. There was laughter... lots of it. You can read the full report online at qmagazine.com/travel so we won't go into details here. Let's just say that after 2003, we'd set the stakes high for 2004. After a long and arduous journey, arriving on the private island of Santo Stefano off Sardinia made up for the hell that was Stansted Airport at 6am followed by the 'experience' of Ryan Air's latest aircraft, designed by Fisher Price. Certainly nothing remotely as 'fun in the sun' as last year's Pam Ann hosted flight. However, sunshine, 26 degree heat, and a stunning setting go a long way to helping you forget the horrors of the last 12 hours of travelling.

So let's get the trivial bits out of the way. Being a Valtur resort, it had all the elements of last year's setting only with the advantage that most of Santo Stefano's facilities were newer and more tastefully decorated. There was no pool which many queens found difficult to cope with. To this we say 'honey, get over it!'; chlorine bleaches that highly desired tan you've worked so hard on and it's so harsh for the skin. Holidays are about beaches and this one didn't disappoint.

The resort was a modern complex of small chalet type rooms set around a gorgeous bay of crystal clear water and a back drop of lush green flora and volcanic stone.

Frequent flyers at Valtur resorts will gladly note that, yes, albergo was back on the menu and all the old favourites were available at meal times as well as some new ones, like one serving by the name of Bruno, who most boys had a taste of during the week. Breakfast was a joy; rising at 9am to find - like last year - we still had to cook our own eggs but, hell, it was put to good use as cruising time. You see dining time was more than just for feeding your hungry gut. Every single gay man worth his earrings used the time to cruise for the next man to fill their hungry hole, or indeed to find the next hungry hole to fill. And so to the real fun! After discovering

that the club, the camp-titled Mamma Mia, was a trek and then some away, most decided to opt for an early night on the first night and save themselves for night 2... the Beyond Beach Party! And what a night. Mamma Mia was transformed into a Hawaïan setting and proceedings were kicked off by mix bitch Paul Heron, followed by Steve Pitron with the last set by Mikey D. The place was buzzing. Only at a Beyond beach party, where you're treated to three fierce DJ divas, can glow sticks and neon wands be considered cool. However, someone forgot to tell the dealers that there were 400 gay men stranded on an island with half a dozen hot London house DJs, so, minus disco treats, many were left to their own creative juices to get the mood swinging. The party carried on till a ridiculous hour, and was only stopped when the resorts staff turned off all power to the club.

The fall out from the Beyond Beach Party was littered across the resort the next morning with queens in recovery splayed across the beach in sun glasses, chugging on cigarettes, sipping iced drinks and crotch watching. The lack of any major narcotics kept most (relatively) sober for the next few nights, bar the hardcore elite who found themselves at every party every night - a noticeably smaller contingent of club bunnies this year compared to last.

The next big event of the week was the annual Fancy Dress Evening, which turned into an excuse for all to discover their inner Tranny. False lashes were slipped into easier than a loose gay boy's back-side in Hard On, heels were donned for maximum effect and big wigs mounted onto heads accompanied by some truly vile make-up. By some weird fluke or some strange esoteric mass subconsciousness amongst the gay scene's elite, hideous drag had found a home in Sardinia and it came out in force on that night. Then again, with a theme by the name of 'Tantrums & Tiaras' drag was inevitable, really. Wigs were most definitely 'in'. Making appearances on the night were Kylie, Nadia and Britney (pale imitations or the real thing... we're still in debate), Siamese twins, Toxic triplets, and some other ghastly excuses for man-drag (myself included). Dinner was a hoot, with mini-photo shoots and camera flashes everywhere. People forsook eating for cat-walking. The BBC were also here with the gorgeous Kristian Digby, filming for the Holiday show. Never have so many queens played up to the camera before! The prize for best costume was stolen from a fabulous Nadia local/key by two locals who crashed the stage in theme-less dress. Still, we weren't to argue with 150 Italians.

Then it was time for our second full-on club experience, the Crash party. The minimal narcotics were rolled out of safe-keeping and swallowed. The crowds descended around the amphitheatre, herded by the house beats of Mikey D. Proceedings kicked off spectacularly, with costumed gay boys dancing the night away. By 4am and one Pitron and one Heron house set later, we'd well and truly done ourselves proud for a second time that week. So proud, that we were closed down by resort management again and the party found itself moved back up to Mamma Mia for a chill out. The next two nights were considerably quieter for most of our group. The evening clubs were busy, people were drinking and if they retired early it was usually in the company of a new male friend.

A true surprise for us all came on the final day of the week. Confronted with the prospect of only having had two fierce club nights to recall, an impromptu Crash party was organised in the afternoon, and since it was the first overcast day of the week, it came at the perfect time. A theme was immediately given to the afternoon's shenanigans and, with the aid of three, umm, glamorous flyer girls handing out Crash CDs at lunch, we announced the 'Crash presents WiggCOT' t-dance. Inspired or insane? At this point it was all the same! So, with wigs donned we all descended onto to Mamma Mia for one last blow out of shocking antics and unruly behaviour. And we did ourselves proud, sending ourselves off on one, off our faces and well and truly off in style.

There's just enough space to credit the excellent entertainment; Tina C was simply hilarious (or 'a hoot' as she might say), Jerry Springer The Opera's Alison Jear was fantastic with a fine pair of claws lugs on her too (although, she didn't sing her big hit for us, I just Want To Fucking Dance!!). Ennio Marchetto was very good but having seen most of his act last year he wasn't the treat he was first time around, the Italian songstress that was compared to Anastacia in the promo material simply looked like she'd eaten Anastacia and the Valtur staff were amazing for service and friendliness. On the whole, there are many finer details I've neglected to tell you... six-somes, sex parties, hung Sardinians, the Hom fashion show, the Mr Gay UK guys, the sunset at the sensational Salvation beach party, French boys, Spaniards & tarty Brits abroad - all the power to them. Ask me for details next time you see me. I'll save the rest for my memoirs.

Compared to last year's very messy affair, this had actually become - shock horror - a holiday. And a relaxing one at that, which was wholeheartedly welcomed. We continued to be the social whores (or should that just be whores) that we were - we just weren't out till dawn every night like we were in Sicily. Haven't said that, we did manage to lose one of our number to a seven day k-hole. We still haven't got him back.

Should you go on next year's Fun in the Sun? Try as I might, with all the persuasion that I have, I can tell you I'll be proverbially blue in the face but you still won't listen, so here it is, in print. Book yourself onto Fun in the Sun 2005... You'd be a fool to miss it.

> Watch Fun in the Sun 2004 on the Holiday Show, Monday 25th October, 7.00pm BBC1

**> Alternative Holidays also organize the annual European Gay Ski Week which celebrates its tenth year in 2005 and runs 28th March - 3rd April in Pila, Italy.
Tel: 020 8902 7177**

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www.riedijkproductions.com

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ALTERNATIVE HOLIDAYS holds its tenth annual gay ski week in the Italian alpine resort of Pila. Featuring a stunning array of entertainment as Alternative Holidays have become renowned for. Prices are from £497 per person based on four sharing (excluding flight). And includes meals, wine at lunch and dinner plus use of most of the hotels leisure facilities.

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