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GOOD COMPANY; A Ball Like Grandmother's, With Skimpier Clothes

By CHRISTOPHER MASON (NYT)

AS guests arrived for a Halloween party at Bacchus House, the Greenwich Village mansion of Enrico Marone Cinzano, they were greeted by young women clad in wisps of lingerie, who led them up a spiral staircase to the drawing room.

"The concept was a little bit like the balls my grandmother used to give," explained Mr. Cinzano, 40, an heir to the Italian Cinzano liquor fortune. "You're greeted properly, someone takes your coat, you're escorted to the host, and then you're offered a drink. Within my own madness, I try to make it as civilized as possible."

The greeters in virginal white negligees, he explained, were "something sexy to get the mood going." Also, he noted, "there's a couple of boys running around in their underwear, to get the other side of the crowd going."

Mr. Cinzano, who described his outfit as "Vietnam vet would-be psycho pimp," was wearing an Afro wig and a green military jacket, open to reveal a garland of fossilized shark's teeth. About 350 guests showed up, some from as far as England, Italy and Germany. They included muscle boys dressed as gladiators, Mr. Cinzano's favorite drag queens and Lady Gabriella Windsor, the daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Kent, who exuded royal charm in a green wig and red sequins.

"I don't have a girlfriend, or a boyfriend, and my family are geographically split apart," Mr. Cinzano said. "So my friends are everything to me. They're my religion, and my support system."

To keep them happy, Mr. Cinzano hired a staff of 61. White-gloved waiters, each with a gardenia pinned to his lapel, kept the libations flowing at four well-stocked bars, and security guards, similarly adorned with gardenias, kept an eye out for rowdy guests. (There were none.) In a quaint, old-fashioned touch, waiters carried silver trays bearing Altoids and cigarettes -- regular and low tar. Ashtrays were fashioned from miniature pumpkins, scooped out and filled with sand.

Mr. Cinzano said the spark for the party occurred over the summer when he was on the dance floor at a disco on the island of Ibiza. "I was having such a beautiful time, with nice people," he recalled. "And I thought, 'I want to recreate this in Manhattan.'" So he had disco music pulsating throughout his five-story house, which has a four-story bamboo atrium and a series of outdoor garden terraces.

"I feel like it's the 70's again," Fernando Sanchez, a veteran of the good old Studio 54 days, said approvingly. "It's the bizarre mixture of people and these extraordinary apparitions." Mr. Sanchez was staring at a bearded, shoeless youth who resembled Jesus and at Prince Dimitri

of Yugoslavia, who was waiting in line for the bathroom dressed in a Los Angeles police uniform.

Adding to the merriment was Baby Marcelo, a celebrated drag queen from Ibiza, whom Mr. Cinzano flew to New York first class for the occasion. Baby Marcelo spent much of the evening navigating the spiral staircase on stilts, steadied by a succession of attendants, some in tuxedos and others merely in skimpy briefs.

Meanwhile, around midnight, a Harlem gospel choir belted out songs of praise like "My God Is a Washing Machine."

Kim Cattrall wore white leather mittens, silver space boots and a white leather jacket. "Oh, really?" she replied laconically, when told that Jason Lewis, who plays her paramour on "Sex and the City," was also present.

Luigi Tadini, 19, a film student with Tazio-like looks, was the youngest reveler present, wearing a white tunic and a red cape as he danced with his mother, Stella Tadini, a curvaceous woman with a permanent friendly smile, who was visiting from Brazil.

"How cute is my mom?" Mr. Tadini asked, as Ms. Tadini repinned a green breastplate to her son's tunic. The Tadinis were the guests of Carmen d'Alessio, the legendary disco diva and former promoter of Studio 54, who clearly has no intention of relinquishing her position at the epicenter of Manhattan nightlife.

"You must write that I brought the most beautiful boy at the party!" Ms. d'Alessio demanded with proprietary glee. Timeless in silver lamé and a matching wig, she watched hawklike as her words were transcribed.

A newly brunette Sophie Dahl towered sweetly over her beau, Dan Baker Jr. They were not in costume. But Murielle Arden, an aspiring actress in beige leather thigh boots and a matching breastplate, had tucked a cappuccino-color vintage skirt into her corset. With a pen and pad in hand, she dashed off 30-second portraits, which she presented to her subjects.

At 4 a.m., the party was still going strong. A school bus showed up to transport the remaining revelers -- 40 or so -- to the Arc, the disco formerly known as Vinyl.

"It was fun," Mr. Cinzano said. "I'll have to do it again."

CAPTIONS: Photos: TRICKS AND TREATS -- Sylvia Martins and Mr. Cinzano, without his Afro wig. (Photo by Patrick McMullan); PLAYING DRESS-UP -- From left, Billy Kornreich, Ann Dexter Jones and Trish Grady were among the 350 guests at Enrico Marone Cinzano's Halloween party. Below, left, some revelers chose very minimal costumes. Below, right, from left, Luigi Tadini, Stella Tadini and Carmen d'Alessio. (Photo by Christophe von Hohenberg); (Photo by Reyez); (Photo by Robert Denning)