

Bringing sexy back

Society
OMESHNIE NAIDOO

DUBBED the "Oscars of the travel industry" by the US-based *Wall Street Journal*, the World Travel Awards made a seriously sexy debut in Durban this week.

It was an evening of glitz and glamour, with the rich and royal, demure London ladies and voluptuous goddesses from dreamy-sounding places like Sunset Beach.

The travel and tourism industry is so hot right now... all about exotic destinations, spectacular views, breathtaking settings and luxury accommodation.

Durban proved to be the appropriate place to celebrate the high life, capturing the sizzling sensation of sun, sea and surf, as well as majestic mountains and authentic, unspoiled surrounds that are so coveted in these circles.

It's a sexy subject and the organisers took full advantage.

Durban's International Convention Centre rolled out the red carpet for a champagne reception on Monday, followed by a gala dinner, show and swift awards ceremony.

Inside the hall, the gold and white theme, with plenty of fresh, white flowers, added sophistication to the air, already heavy with anticipation. The stage was set to a backdrop of the night's sky and tiny star-like lights twinkled behind the speakers.

Beautiful

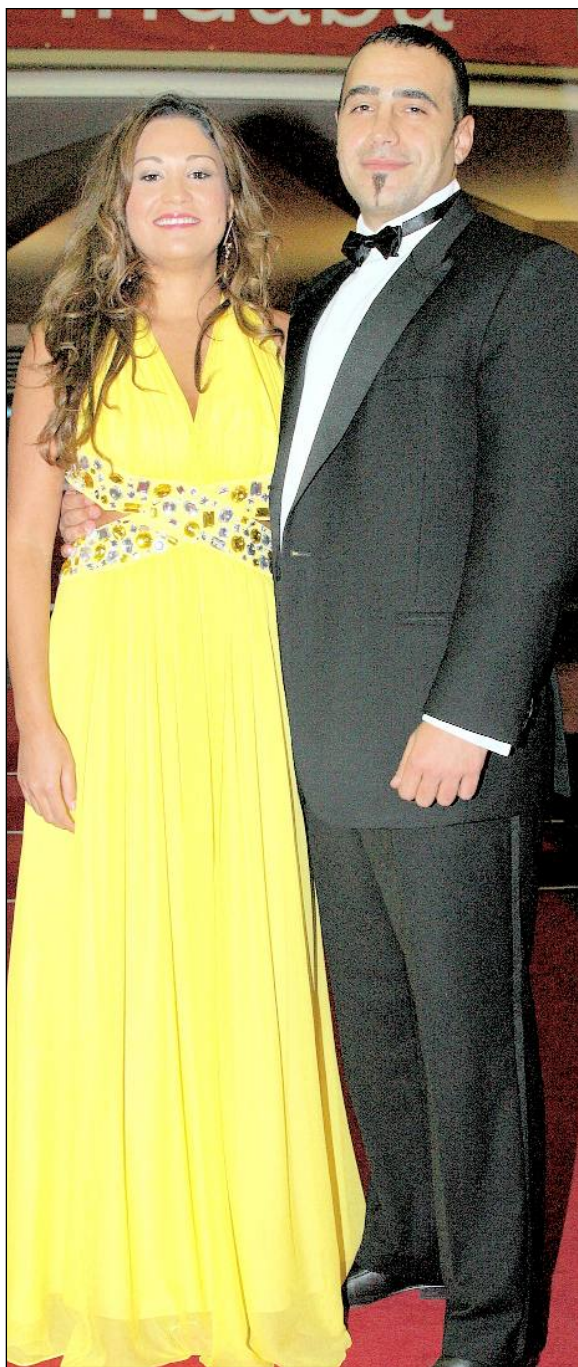
Comper was the gorgeous Gerry Rantseli-Eldson in a pink cocktail dress. Entertainment was provided by Sterling EQ, a classical strings foursome of beautiful young things, while comedian Trevor Noah, of *Strictly Come Dancing* fame, was a roit and MTV-award-winning South African act Freshlyground a hit.

Graham Cooke, founder and chief executive of the World Travel Awards, as well as executive vice-president, the lovely Manon Han, played host to a number of South African and international heavyweights. Among them were Zulu king Goodwill Zwelithini; James Wilson, chief executive of Dubai World; Mariette du Toit-Helmbold, chief executive of Cape Town Tourism; Greg Truman, South African Airways vice-president of marketing to North America; Slindile Xulu, South African country manager for SA Tourism; and Ndabo Khoza, chief executive of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal.

Best dressed included international guest Emerence Geers in a flowing yellow gown and World Travel Awards's Emma Russell in a purple satin dress.

The highlight of the evening had to be when ICC chief executive Miller Matola raised the trophy for winning the award for Africa's Leading Convention Centre. It was a proud moment, especially after it was scooped by the Mother City last year. Matola's wife, Lerato, was there to celebrate with him and the team.

The World Travel Awards, conceived in 1993, is regarded as the very best endorsement a travel product can hope to receive.



EMERENCE Geers and Max Miller



GERRY Rantseli-Eldson and Miller Matola



LERATO Matola and Sharoona Sewnarin



GREGG Truman and Gabriella Truman



ZAIDA Enver, Shaun Brickell and S'indile Xulu



JAMES Wilson, Manon Han and Andreas Wassenaar

Pictures: GCINA NDWALANE and OMESHNIE NAIDOO

Talking Turkey

WineWeek
NICOLA JENVEY

THE southern European countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea have a rich narration of beaches, crystal azure water and a noteworthy wine-making culture – geared for long, lazy days and evenings sipping chilled retsina or complex red blends. Pity then, that the Turkish wines pale into obscurity because the beaches, landscapes and sunsets cry out for something beyond the reasonable local Efes beer.

Travelling with friends is an experience worth its treasure. When it is combined with a week on the southern Turkish coastline with mounting opportunities for tasting the local wines (in the company of both locals and other eager-minded tourists), the concoction is almost lethal.

There are essentially two brands on the Turkish market – Kavaklidere and Villa Doluca – and working through the ranges did little to improve the quality or the taste, but it makes for interesting comparisons and life-long memories.

Almost without exception, the whites were sharp and without complexity – and that was when they were served within an acceptable time frame from production. An incident where a four-year-old sauvignon blanc entered the glass as treacle-yellow with the aroma of rancid butter meant the beer offered a more appealing option.

Among the reds, the consensus was for wines of pale strawberry colour, thin finishes and an overwhelming lack of depth.

Notes on the Villa Doluca reflect a cherry-garnet wine "too rough to drink now" with dominant astringent tones. Those for the Doluca Antik 2004 indicate a pale cherry-red wine with a nose reminiscent of wood smoke, cinnamon and cassis, but a finish best described as caustic.

Yet, drunk as they were, in the lively environs of a Dutch-dominated pub in Olandeniz, they were likened to the nectar of gods – and the creator of hangovers of monstrous proportions.

The Kavaklidere Ancyra Kalecik Karasi 2007 had the vegetative tones of wet wool and forest floors in a red wine bordering on maroon in colour, while the Kavaklidere Yakut (either 2004 or 2005 – depending on what the waiters could find or had the energy trying to do so at the time) was dominated by blue gum and the retsina tones more usually found in Greek white wines. It did promise some growth potential given the tannins and spicy cherry hints, but given the effort for doing so means drinking on the spot has greater appeal.

Seriously, the award for the best of the bunch goes to the Kavaklidere Selection 2004 that, at the current exchange rate, came in around R360 a bottle. Considered the premium wine from the estate, it was a dark plum-maroon wine with a heady aura of black pepper and spice. There was no obvious wooding and the peppery tones carried to the palate for a fairly balanced wine matching the local passion for lamb dishes.

That said, it is still great to be home, drinking decent or outstanding South African wines for a fraction of the price!

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