

Charity spectacle

» The great and good assembled at Battersea Evolution to show the depth of their love

What was the event? The annual Sunseeker International Charitable Trust black-tie dinner, in aid of The Outward Bound Trust. This year's event was held at Battersea Evolution in January and celebrated the music of the Bee Gees, with Robin Gibb and his celebrity friends among the 550 guests.

How was the brief met? Event agency Smyle was briefed to create a glamorous occasion, ensuring main sponsor Sunseeker gained maximum exposure. Guests entered through the glass atrium where young people demonstrated some of the activities they can take part in on Outward Bound courses. An ultra-wide screen projection system displayed Sunseeker and Outward Bound graphics above the entrance to the split-level reception area, which had been sectioned off from the main dining space by a kabuki curtain. Smyle transformed the lower level of the reception space into a dedicated Sunseeker VIP area, with Sunseeker branding and a luxury seating area.

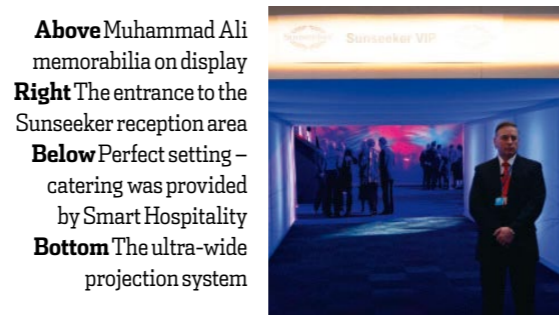
At 8pm the curtain dropped to reveal the elegantly dressed dining area and 30-metre stage set, the biggest the venue has seen, according to its operations director. Down one length of the room was a display of memorabilia, including a Muhammad Ali showcase, which guests could bid for throughout the evening.

After a few introductory speeches and personal accounts from some of the individuals the charity has helped, guests tucked into a menu of twice-baked Orkney cheddar and leek soufflé, a daube of Yorkshire beef, and a bread and butter pudding containing white chocolate-and-cranberry, served by in-house caterer Smart Hospitality.

Auctioneer Simon Hope then took to the stage to auction off money-can't-buy experiences. A silent auction also took place, with lots including afternoon tea with Robin Gibb and his wife Dwina.



Above Muhammad Ali memorabilia on display



Right The entrance to the Sunseeker reception area

Below Perfect setting – catering was provided by Smart Hospitality

Bottom The ultra-wide projection system



Gibb kicked off the evening's entertainment, followed by performances from, among others, former Spice Girl Melanie Chisholm, ex-Atomic Kitten band-member Natasha Hamilton, Lulu, Bill Wyman and The Rhythm Kings, Beverley Knight and lead vocalist of 80s pop band Level 42, Mark King. It ended with all the acts returning to the stage for a joint rendition of *How Deep is Your Love?*

What was good? The way Smyle divided up the venue to make it feel more intimate. Also, the line-up of acts that performed on the evening was a real treat.

What was bad? The auction did seem to go on a little too long, but the main purpose of the event was to raise money for the charity, after all.



Top The split-level reception area, complete with kabuki curtain **Above** The dining area, in front of the venue's biggest-ever stage set

honours Bee Gees

for the band, and raise some money for worthwhile causes. By **Chantelle Thorley**

Supplier file

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Above Ex-Atomic Kitten Natasha Hamilton performed on stage with Robin Gibb **Below** Former Spice Girl Melanie Chisholm was one of the stars who did their bit for charity



On the spot

Dominic Thomas-Smith senior event producer, Smyle

What was the biggest challenge?

As the venue was booked for another event taking place the day before, we had a limited amount of time to set up. This required meticulous logistical and production planning to ensure that the size of show being installed could be achieved. Luckily, the other event cancelled, which meant we had more time for the build.

What would you do differently next time?

If we were to produce the same event again we would look at having dressing rooms. Despite being told by some artiste managers that they didn't require dressing rooms, once on-site they demanded a private space. Luckily we had brought enough kit to create a few makeshift spaces.

What did the event achieve?

The event raised more than £250,000 for the trust from the main auction, silent auction and raffle. A lot of press coverage was also secured, both before and after the event, with national TV and newspapers picking up the story.

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