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To find out more about monthly singles events coming up or to register your details, visit www.bestsinglesevents.com



Ever complained about how hard it is to meet someone in Cyprus? One couple now organise singles events to get people together. ZOE CHRISTODOULIDES gets dressed up and goes along to an evening

Look at me, I'm single

I'm shown an image of two animated cherries embracing and soon enough I've been put on the guest list for the island's "best singles event." Should I be excited? Should I be worried? I've really never thought about going to an event in search of my perfect match. Call me old fashioned, but a flirtatious glance across a crowded room followed by a phone call and romantic date is more my thing.

But hey, they do say there's always a first time for everything and in the name of journalism I take up the challenge and gear myself up. My mission: to throw my inhibitions out of the window and report on a singles event at Bunkers in Nicosia without thinking too much about what I'm getting myself into. I finally decide to go full throttle and doll myself up, pretending that this is just any night on the town.

This is the first official Singles Night to be organised in Nicosia, all part of a brand new Best Singles Events brand name thought up by PFP Business Consulting. To be more specific, organisers Loiza and Panayiotis Panayiotou are a married couple who realised just how hard it is for their single friends to meet people. "There is someone out there for everyone but courting in Cyprus can be hard. It's a closed community and people don't mingle with strangers much, we just want to create a new lifestyle for singles here," says Loiza.

A self-confessed workaholic, she goes on to say how difficult it was for her to get out to meet someone until mutual friends introduced her to Panayiotis. She was in London at the time, he was in New York, but the matchmaking worked and they ended up marrying in Cyprus soon after.

I'm accompanied to the singles night for moral support by a loyal male friend, Stefanos, and we're greeted by ladies who have donned colourful wigs who ask for our details. Once you register, you'll be able to take advantage of the match-making service.

After we're both given name tags, it's straight to the bar for a stiff drink. I'm a bit embarrassed as I walk through the crowd for I've never been in a situation before that screams out "here I am, look at me, I'm SINGLE!" But it suddenly dawns on me that everyone is in the same boat, and it's a rather fun boat to be in for a night. After all, when else do you feel like you've walked right into an episode of *Sex and the City*?

It's the bathroom that's most entertaining with a group of 30-something women decked up to the nines powdering their noses and topping up their red lipstick as they gossip about what man is hot and who they think fancies them. "The guy I showed you

over by the far right side of the bar kept looking over at me," says one to another. "Oh but I think that the more grungy looking one with the funny looking t-shirt is more your style," replies her friend with a fierce giggle.

Suddenly I'm having a laugh myself and as I start to mingle, Michael Jackson's 'Billie Jean' gets a few of us onto the dance floor. Needless to say that I soon lose my male companion as he engrosses himself in conversation with various women who gravitate towards him.

"What do you think they're after?" he asks in all seriousness. "I mean, do you think it's about just having a one-night stand or are they looking for love?" He seems to be totally lost in translation. Maybe it's true that men are from Mars and women are from Venus after all. I can only suppose that although not all females are the same, many might be looking for something more meaningful than just one night

Two friendly voices then boom across the room as the hosts of the night shout out that its time for the lock and key game

of fun. After all, doesn't a singles night mean many of the women wouldn't mind meeting their other half?

"Yeah, it's true," says one rather attractive 31-year-old lady. "I mean, it's just so hard to meet men here, not like in other countries where you can walk down the street and you might end up randomly chatting to someone who could then become your boyfriend. Can you believe that a 24-year-old guy I know here met his girlfriend online? He doesn't even bother socialising with women when he's out. Whatever next!" Her vivacious 41-year-old buddy is keen to interject. "Cypriot men just need to get over their taboos and



start knocking on a few doors. There's nothing wrong with flirting and just having fun."

My male friend then dashes to the bathroom only to return with interesting news. "There's peppermint spray in the toilets to freshen your breath. Looks like they're really trying their best to get people together!" he whispers with a nudge and wink. But that's not even the half of it. Two friendly voices then boom across the room as the hosts of the night shout out that its time for the lock and key

game. "The what game?" says male companion Stefanos with a worried look. The game is simple: all women have been given a padlock to hang round their neck and all men have to try and find their match with their allocated key.

"What do I win if I open your lock?" asks one man with a cheeky smile as he fiddles with his key. Another hands me over his business card as he introduces himself. "Too bad that most of the men are at least 20 years my senior but I'm soon told by organisers that they'll be trying to fill the age gap with more specialised events in the future.



Happy couple: Panayiotis and Loiza Panayiotou who organise the events at the launch party last month

The funniest line comes from a man around the same age as me who approaches with caution: "I left you until one of the very last to try. I somehow know I'll end up with someone fat and ugly so I highly doubt you'll be my match." Taken with a pinch of salt, the comment is mildly flattering I suppose.

Half an hour of laughter and chatter ensues and although my match has yet to be found, Stefanos seems to have done well for himself. He confesses to having liked a lady from when he first caught a glimpse of her, and as luck would have it, he manages to open her lock. Soon enough, they're enjoying a slow dance along with a few other couples who seem to be rather happy to have met. One couple wins a night away for two in the raffle that follows and another lucky lady wins a Dell laptop. Not bad for a night out.

A smiling companion then admits that it's all turned out a lot better than he first imagined. "There was more trepidation before the event and I thought it was all going to be really uncomfortable. But when I got here I realised it's not bad at all, much more fun than I thought it would be." Another man in his thirties standing beside us nods in agreement. "I have to say though, it totally puts me off when a woman is too desperate," says the mystery male. "The main thing is to approach it all light-heartedly. Just have a laugh and if you do happen to meet someone you like then great." Couldn't have phrased it better myself.



Hostesses of the evening were easy to spot in bright wigs. Far left: speed dating may also be introduced