

Billy. One Name. One Man. One Helluva Party.

Sometimes fate reveals itself early in life. Take Billy Evers. Seven years old, living in Queens. His mom and aunt throw him this crazy-ass birthday party – zoo theme, giant stuffed animals all over the dining room table, kids' names stenciled on a runner made out of construction paper and hand-illustrated with jungle patterns. Right there, right then, if Billy had had a crystal ball he would have seen his own future.

But nobody gave Billy a crystal ball for his birthday. So he began a winding road starting with learning about music through his father (who hung with Louis Armstrong, Dinah Washington and Miles Davis at the local clubs, pre-fame), studying communications at Fordham University then switching to design at the Fashion Institute of Technology. He went on to work in women's couture for years and years, from creating runway looks to visual merchandising. He opened a high-end clothing boutique, Betsy's, on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. All was flowing deliciously.

Then, he visited his friend, Bingo, in Boston. Long story short, Billy kept coming to the city, and eventually met a guy named Bryan Rafanelli, a Kennedy look-alike with star power. He was kicking off a high-end events company and needed a hand with an Armani party at the former Wang Theatre. Billy stepped in. Flowers! Music! China! The design possibilities were endless: would ruby tulips or an ice sculpture work better as a centerpiece? A modern steel lighting fixture or a Rococo chandelier? Billy discovered a new world, and promptly left his old one.

Now the creative director at Rafanelli Events, Billy pulls from his past of communications, fashion, style, music and design to create one-time-only worlds. His visions include themes about time travel, Mary Poppins, Venetian Carnivale, old Hollywood and a punked-out 50th birthday complete with a performance by the B-52s. He's worked with Elton John, Jennifer Hudson and President Bill Clinton. And, as fate would have it, he's also created a zoo-themed children's birthday. This time, though, he scattered votive candles around the tabletop. Fate takes you only so far, you know.



A Wacky World of Party Themes

Billy Evers and Bryan Rafanelli of Rafanelli Events rule the world as idea kings. The Rafanelli Events team throws hundreds of parties a year – the goal being to create a fantasy world. Here are some of the hits: Wizard of Oz, African safari, time travel, 1930's Hollywood, Alice in Wonderland, Dr. Seuss, Charlie Brown and the Peanuts gang, Venetian Carnivale and Cinderella. Go on now, throw a party!

Billy's go-to fabric store

For prints that pop, Billy adores Marimekko. "I love it for fabrics by artists and cutting edge designers," he says. You could furnish a house and outfit closet at the expansive shop—everything from napkins to overcoats, cosmetic bags to curtains are sold in bright splashy floral and geometric designs.

Marimekko
350 Huron Avenue
Cambridge
(617) 354-2800
www.marimekkocambridge.com

Surprise places to find party accessories

Party budgets run from the high to the low, so Billy needs to have an arsenal of resources and price tag options. Here are some of the partymeister's best tips:

Sporting goods stores: "I'm creating a chandelier made of tennis balls."

Stationery stores: Use reams of colored paper as risers, he says. Link colored paperclips to create drapes or garlands. Wrap goody bag packages with colored rubber bands instead of ribbon.

Hardware stores: try different colored industrial sponges for a patchwork tabletop. Use light bulbs for a cool centerpiece.

Notions stores: buy thread spools and use them as vases. Another idea for a fun centerpiece? Creative mounding of multi-colored yarns.

Bead shops: Make walls or curtains by stringing gaggles of African beads together.