



LIZ WITH THE FIZZ

The party queen, organiser of sparkling occasions and adviser to glitterati is, above all, a Chelsea girl. **Hannah Fentiman** meets the *éminence grise* of top entertaining

IZ BREWER LIKES to have a good time, even when she has managed to turn having a good time into both a lifestyle and a glittering career. She is the party organizer par excellence and her parties are not for the faint-hearted, the stuffy or the timid. She first got the taste of helping everybody have a good time in the late 1980s, while in the Algarve. "Well, I sort of ran away from home, and helped a friend to open a hotel and set up the first disco in Portugal. It was such fun, everybody came. I've even got pictures of Cliff Richard coming into the club to teach me and all my waiters the latest dances such as the locomotion and the Madison."

"The Algarve was just opening up to tourism at the time and attracting a young, fun crowd—headed by a bubbly blonde, a former pupil of Queen's College, Harley Street, with a borderline pass in secretarial skills. "My father was adamant that I should get a job, which is why he insisted I went to secretarial college after what had happened at school." Brewer

"I adore parties. I enjoy the freedom they give to dress up, be with friends and live out dreams with style and panache"

explains. What in fact had happened at school was that Miss B had tied her headmistress and maths mistress together as a prank, and she subsequently asked to leave, although she was allowed back to take her O levels. First though, she attended another establishment in Sloane Street called the Workshop, where girls about to embark on the season were taught how to make their ball dresses.

However, with the season behind her, and obviously with a taste for parties, this particular girl had to find a job, but not for long. She headed for Portugal with a friend who was charged with opening the original luxury hotel on the coast (and who later became the first of her six fiancés). "I was so excited and I knew exactly what I would do. A couple of discos had opened in London—the Saville Room and the Garrison. I lived the Saville Room so I copied it detail by detail in the Algarve. Albufeira was a tiny village at the time so the hotel and club generated an awful lot of interest. On opening night we had over 600 guests—it was magic, and I know then that this is what I wanted to do."

The Algarve became the St Tropez of the 1970s and attracted a whole host of celebrities, from

Cliff and The Shadbats to Cilla Black, Lulu, Paul McCartney and every English group of the day. Brewer became the toast of the coast—she had a staff of 60, including a bodyguard. She brought DJs over from London in buses to act as disc jockeys—"they didn't get paid, but they had a great holiday and I looked after them". And looking after both places and people is what she has done ever since—but these days the people are Dame Shirley Bassey, David Lang, Julian Macdonald, Jimmy Choo and Jane Young, whose she looks after, not from a loved house in the Algarve, but from a grand five-storey affair between Lagos and S. Joana Square.

From the minute she returned to the UK in 1974, Brewer has never lived anywhere but Chelsea—"why would it? It's close to everywhere I ever want to be," and she treats the place like her own personal fiefdom. "Over the years I've bought and sold in a number of properties in the area, but this house is where I've been since my daughter Felicia was born. It was in a terrible state when we first moved in, and it took years to get it right, but I love it, it is so peaceful that you would never imagine that sitting in this garden you are just yards from Sloane Square."

Her first Chelsea pad was just that—an L-shaped room in Pelham Court, "which I bought with the money I had sent back from Portugal. It was tiny, very Bitch in brown, pinks and purples, and every Monday night I held open house." The girl just couldn't stop partying, but it is how she met and still knows everyone. Less than two years later she moved on to the King's Road and a flat in Berkhurst House.

And it was from this base that Liz Brewer cut a swathe through London's social scene. She launched clubs—including Wedgick on the King's Road—restaurants, organised charity balls and events of such audacity that she was rarely out of the gossip columns. It was at one of her parties that arch-dandy Nigel Dempster found himself locked in stocks while people pelted him with rotten eggs at £25 a throw. All great fun until somebody lost the key—the fact that they are still great friends speaks volumes for Brewer's charm. She persuaded Ruddy Unwinley, then a little-known landscape gardener, to design a garden and conservatory for a club and disco she was opening in Battersea—in return he brought Princess Margaret to the club and introduced Brewer to his then

business partner, the dandy John Rendall, who became her only husband and Felicia's father.

Listening to her talk is like listening to a chronicle of 70s, 80s and 90s London, with names and places so resident of their times: Zandra Rhodes, Petula Clark, Richard Young, Peter York, Lady Diana Cooper and Margaret, the Duchess of Argyll. But Brewer would never have lasted as long as she has on just charm alone. This is no ditzy blonde but a woman with sharply honed antennae, who knows the people who matter and the people who can make things happen. She can sweet-talk anybody into doing anything and has had more fun making a living than possibly anyone else around—and this good humour is infectious, which is why does such as Dame Shirley and La Trump will allow nobody else to organize her glamorous social events.



Lunch of the Party Bible: left to right, Friends Sheila Azee, Liz Brewer, Lynette de Paul and Dandy Jackson

To give the rest of us the benefit of her party wisdom, Brewer published *The Party Bible* earlier this year, with every sort of advice and tip on how to host the best bash—from superfoods to air-conditioning units and from canapés to how to address an earl. She is currently working on her next epic, which will be a book for rich Americans wanting to enter the London scene. "I imagine half of England will want to read it too," the canny Brewer says. In the meantime, she will sit and plot in her Chelsea home, making ferries to Sloane Square for breakfast at the Ciel and to the restaurants of Penico Green—"that's what makes Chelsea so special, it's not just an area, it's a collection of villages each with their own charm and each with its selection of specialist shops. And of course it is a frightfully smart address."

• *The Party Bible* by Liz Brewer, is published by Arndt, £15.99