



Turf replicated the quad's grass.



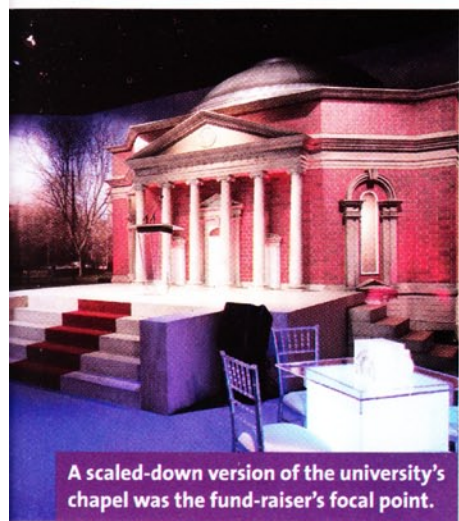
Falling snow was reminiscent of the university's cold climate.



Fabric scrim banners were printed with the remainder of the quad's buildings.



Wolfgang Puck catered the evening.



A scaled-down version of the university's chapel was the fund-raiser's focal point.

## Carbon Copy

*Syracuse University evoked nostalgia among alumni at its Los Angeles benefit by re-creating the school's quad.*

IN AN EFFORT TO TUG at the heartstrings of its West Coast alumni, Syracuse University re-created a version of its campus for a fund-raiser on February 17, the West Coast stop of the university's ongoing capital campaign to raise \$1 billion.

The Globe Theatre at Universal Studios Hollywood was the site of a smaller version of the university's quad, the focal point of which was a scaled model of the school's chapel that doubled as both a scenic piece and a stage. Working with Charles Merrihew, the university's associate vice president for institutional advancement, Jason Wanderer and his team at Precision Event Group constructed the chapel based on the building's original 1920 architectural blueprints, which the school supplied.

The remainder of the quad scene was printed on 22-foot-tall fabric scrim banners stretching 240 feet long, which were rigged throughout the venue by Kish Rigging. Turf and simulated-sidewalk carpet were in place to replicate the quad's grass and sidewalks, and guests entered the fund-raiser through archways of molded stone.

Following a program of speakers—including presentations by chancellor Nancy Cantor and alumni Aaron Sorkin and Vanessa Williams—the entire room was engulfed with falling snow brought in by Snow Business Hollywood, reminiscent of the many snowy months the university experiences every year.

Guests dined on buffets from Wolfgang Puck, including offerings such as tomato basil risotto with shrimp scampi and scaloppine of veal marsala, plus chocolate truffle cakes and cheesecake cones for dessert. —Laura Kasavan

### "The Campaign for Syracuse University" L.A. Fund-Raiser

**Carpet,** Turf Primo XL  
**Catering** Wolfgang Puck  
**Catering**  
**Design, Production, Management** Precision Event Group  
**Furniture** Chameleon Chair Collection, Signature Inc.  
**Event Rentals**  
**Lighting, Video** ShowPro  
**Rentals** Classic Party Rentals  
**Rigging** Kish Rigging  
**Signage** AAA Flag & Banner  
**Snow Effects** Snow Business Hollywood  
**Sound** 140 Db Sound  
**Venue** Universal Studios Hollywood Theme Park and CityWalk Special Events





## GLOBAL GREEN STAYS ON MESSAGE

Global Green U.S.A.'s pre-Oscar bash isn't an award-season party in the traditional sense—it doesn't celebrate Hollywood. Instead, Hollywood celebrates Global Green: Paparazzi shots of eco-minded actors including Tate Donovan arriving at the party on bicycles are pure gold for the group. The media swarming around L.A. during award season made the fifth annual bash at the Avalon Hollywood on February 20 the year's highest-profile event for the Santa Monica-based group, and the medium is definitely the message.

Event producer Beau Robb of Treehouse, along



**A display in Avalon's lobby showcased energy-efficient fluorescent bulbs in recycled-plastic shades.**

with Global Green U.S.A. C.E.O. Matt Petersen and director of PR Ruben Aronin, focused on one cohesive message this year (rather

than the multiple messages of green-product purveyors who had participated in previous years). "Time to Act—Reduce Your Carbon Footprint" was emblazoned on posters at the entrance as well as on flat-screen TVs and behind the stage, where Michelle Branch, Damien Rice, Michael Franti, and Oscar-winning songwriters Marketa Irglova and Glen Hansard (from the film *Once*) performed.

As the 800 guests entered the lobby lounge, they encountered vignettes such as the "enchanted forest," a thicket of bare branches dangling energy-efficient lighting fixtures (compact fluorescent bulbs encased in recycled-plastic shades) with recycled glass mulch at their base. Nearby was a living room assembled from Cisco Brothers Furniture's sustainable collection. Upstairs, the designers assembled a V.I.P. lounge using sustainable teak couches, and carpet made from recycled plastic bottles covered another lounge.

The event started five years ago as a rock show for Global Green's friends, which was intimate enough that organizers called it "a friend-raiser." This year the party raised \$420,000 for a green building project in New Orleans. "It's gotten bigger and better and [gained] more notoriety," said Monica Gilchrist, Global Green's national resource center coordinator. "Each year we get more press and higher-level folks involved. It's a very exciting evolution." —Irene Lacher

## THIS YEAR'S CHAMP: ELTON JOHN

With *Vanity Fair's* exclusive bash off the slate this year, a new entity claimed the title of biggest Oscar-night party (apart from the academy's own ball): the Elton John AIDS Foundation fund-raiser. Sir Elton and David Furnish hosted the foundation's 16th annual party at the Pacific Design Center, with Chopard and VH1 cosponsoring. The event raised \$5.1 million—up considerably over last year's \$4.2 million, and by far a record.

The gala event began with a cocktail reception, followed by a formal dinner and viewing for 680. After dinner offered by Mark's Restaurant owner and chef Wayne Elias and co-owner Chris Diamond with their Crumble Catering team, guests bid on live auction items including Sharon Stone's 1974 Corvette and a world travel package patterned after Oscar-winning film *Around the World in 80 Days*. To cap off the night, Elton John and his band performed for more than an hour, along with guests Mary J. Blige and Jake Shears of the Scissor Sisters. About 200 more guests joined the dinner group for the auction and performances.

Foundation executive director Scott Campbell tapped Virginia Fout of V Productions to produce the event again this year, her fourth go. Of all that's been made about the party's significance in 2008, Fout said, "The thing to remember is that first and foremost we're a fund-raiser, so on Oscar night we're unique [from *Vanity Fair's* party]." She added, "In years past we'd have celebrities that would try to do both [parties], but they'd just stay there and not come over to ours because the night gets long."

As for decor, the room featured what Fout called "an uplifting, feel-good, motivating look," designed by New York-based Antony Todd for the second time. Gone was last year's silvery palette, and in its place was a sea of fuschia, orange, yellow, and gold with purple and green accents—apropos of the cheerful feeling in the room in light of a ceremony



**A bright palette of orange and pink dominated the fund-raising dinner, where copious TVs made viewing available from all angles. Later, Elton John brought Mary J. Blige on stage to sing with him.**

that could have been derailed by the writers strike. "The colors overall are just very happy and festive. It's an exciting time because the strike has just finalized itself, and everyone is celebrating that. It's kind of a twofold celebration," Fout said. "Plus we get a nice diverse group of people in the room—not all celebrities, not all corporate America. It's a conscious decision to mix and marry different folks." This year table prices soared to about \$100,000.

Fout says the team behind the fund-raiser never considered scrapping the party, even as the writers strike continued into February. She says John had always planned to perform, which is consistently a draw for guests no matter what the status of the ceremony, and the fund-raising component was too important to consider pulling the plug. "Unfortunately, AIDS didn't go on strike, and there's still a need out there to raise awareness and raise money," Fout said. —Alesandra Dubin