

ruby dazzler

Perth has a new \$21.5 million nightclub that will be the talk of the town.

IT'S fortunate that Tim Bradsmith is a very relaxed man. When you're in charge of producing the biggest party Perth has ever seen you have to be able to keep your cool.

That's in the face of exploding fireworks, laser shows, lighting and sound tricks and a galaxy of stars, including Vanessa Amorosi, Madison Avenue, Renee Geyer, James Reyne, Wendy Matthews, Darryl Braithwaite and Ross Wilson — oh, and hundreds of silk butterflies. They all appeared at the touch of Bradsmith's poised fingers during last night's opening of Burswood's nightclub — The Ruby Room.

And that — part of a \$96 million transformation of the Burswood International Resort Casino — is the event which has had the whole of Perth talking and every socialite repeatedly checking their mailbox for an invitation.

Some unfortunates will just have to wait until the opening for the public on Tuesday, starting with the legendary Jimmy Barnes playing the last leg of his Australian tour.

Hype, schmype. It's not every day that an 800-capacity nightclub featuring four bars, live bands, a large dance floor and a three-storey glass cone opens in Perth.

State-of-the-art is how it's described by the public relations people, but punters will see it as affordable — \$10 to see Madison Avenue, \$29.70 for Jimmy Barnes — enough to change the face of getting down and out after dark in Perth. Look forward to Ian Moss, Mark Lizotte and Dr Bogus The Wizards of Wonder.

Fifteen months in the making for this venue and the opening night was almost as

long in the planning. And there was just cause for gnashing of capped teeth and acrylic nails for those who didn't make the AAA list. Part of the no-expense-spared extravagance saw 650 social high-achievers receive a framed, handmade "social butterfly" (the theme for the evening) inviting them to the gala event of the year.

When you've spent \$21.5 million extending the eastern end of the casino, a lavish budget for the opening night is a mere bagatelle.

This bash included limousines, laser shows, Kylie Minogue beamed onto an 18m by 12m water screen, the arrival of fashionista Deborah Hutton on a butterfly throne — delivered by four gold-painted men in tight shorts — 80m of red carpet, stilt walkers, an aerial gymnast, 250 red rosebushes, glitter bombs and surprise after surprise after surprise.

Brought in to make it all happen was Bradsmith, one of Australia's most respected events producers, known literally as The Man Who Makes Things Happen. He numbers Billy Joel, Joe Cocker (after completing a six-month world tour with him last year) and Carlos Santana as friends.

It's not the most glamorous job; he's the man duck-paddling like mad behind the scenes while the beautiful people are air-kissing, sipping bubbly and oohing and aahing at the special effects.

And often while they're blissfully swanning around, he's counting down the seconds, frantically trying to get a microphone to work or wondering if the power will blow.

"No two shows are ever alike," he said. "That's the beauty of this job. It's not a clock-on, clock-off situation."

It's all part of the day's work for Bradsmith, whose behind-the-scenes expertise with his company CCP has seen him work with a spectrum of acts ranging from rock stars to evangelists. One night it's Rod Stewart, the next crusader Franklin Graham. He's done the lighting for Gorbachev and he's done Cocker in Moscow.

He's been doing it for 15 years, having started in Queensland as a roadie for Andy Gibb and Mondo Rock and eventually specialising in lighting, which he has continued to do for the major acts which come to Perth.

So, for Burswood's Sonia McKenzie — the mastermind behind the nightclub's opening — he was the natural choice to produce the event.

"Burswood's managing director, John Schaap, had given me the brief to make the opening night Perth's most talked about event, from start to finish," said McKenzie.

She and Bradsmith have worked with a huge team of technical staff since August to incorporate Sonia's intricate attention to detail into the working plan — right down to an aerial gymnast presenting the door prize winner with a \$23,000 ruby necklace.

It included the evening's host, TV personality Richard Wilkins, arriving in a ruby red Porsche, and WA fashion designer Jennifer Gaye designing a collection around the theme for the staff to wear on the night. Specially made 18ct gold butterflies with a ruby centre were given to each female guest on the way out.

The two-level venue features a staircase encasing a three-storey high glass cone and leading to a mezzanine level that overlooks the dance floor.

Other features of the new-look Burswood include:

- A \$20.3 million refurbishment of the hotel's guest rooms, including an executive club lounge.
- A \$17 million 450-seat food emporium.
- A \$2.7 million renovation of the hotel's indoor and outdoor swimming pools.
- A sports bar with TAB facilities and fast-food cafe.
- A \$30 million 1800-capacity grand ballroom featuring a glassed pre-function area with park, river and city views (to be opened on New Year's Eve).

And, if you were one of the unlucky ones not to be invited, rest assured they'll all have hangovers this morning.

GAIL WILLIAMS

3+



Top: Main level of Burswood Casino's state-of-the-art nightclub. Above: Tim Bradsmith. Above right: bar staff Kingsley Chaplin and Zfuzsanna Harrison. Pictures: Richard Hatherly