



Birthday Bash

JULIE EARLE-LEVINE EXPLORES THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF A-LIST KIDS' PARTIES

KIDS' birthday parties are getting bigger and more extravagant. Whether it's renting FAO Schwartz for the night or having a slumber party at the Plaza Hotel, celebrity and well-to-do kids are celebrating, and celebrating big, with incredible invites, to-die-for cakes and festive decorations.

Veteran party planner Marla Mase (partypoopers.com) recently transformed a client's backyard into Alice in Wonderland, with a huge tent and a black-and-white floor and dozens of different-size teacups. Then the Queen Of Hearts invited all the children on an adventure. "There were very cool drag queen centerpieces. Everything was totally over the top," says Mase.

Many of the children receiving these over-the-top parties are still in diapers. One couple has big blow-out parties for their two kids, now ages 4 and 6, every year, says Mase. They held one recently with a 1960s theme, with tiny go-go dancers, peace signs and lit-up furniture. "There was a huge candy bar, a huge video screen and really wild entertainment." Among the performers was a "bubble boy" who came out, blew himself into a bubble and bounced around inside of it.

Among older children, Arabian nights themes are becoming more popular; at one such party recently, the ballroom at the Hilton was transformed. "There were ponies inside, and a tiger cub. Alicia Keys sang happy birthday. I would imagine that was half a million dollars, for about 60 kids," Mase says.

Magic is another hot theme. Fantasma Magic has its own theater, with amazing props and magic shows where kids become the official magicians' assistants. Live birds and rabbits are produced and petted by all. The birthday boy or girl can also be hypnotized—in a fun way! Guests get awesome goody bags, including magic tricks. The two-hour parties cost \$1,250 for up to 10 kids (fantasmamagic.com).

A Citibabes party can run the gamut. Homes, parks and restaurants are transformed into petting zoos, or parties for pirates or princesses. It even hosts puppy parties, with real puppies. Circus-themed parties have carnival games, popcorn machines, cotton candy makers, photo booths and bouncy castles (from \$875 for 15 kids; citibabes.com).

FAO Schwartz, the legendary toy store on Fifth Avenue, has an array of offerings on a variety of themes. FAO Schwartz rents out its store several nights a week for parties; the base cost is \$25,000. The store's special party room in the store, for up to 10 adults and 40 kids,

