

Fight Night/Knock Out Abuse: Joan Jett for Men, Shirtless Hippies for Women



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Fight for Children's annual Fight Night has boys' night out down to a science: Guests expect cigars, professional boxing, hostesses in slinky dresses, and 16-ounce New York strip steaks. Thursday's event at the [Hilton Washington](#) continued the tradition to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Fight Night, which raised \$2.2 million for nonprofits that provide education and healthcare services to low-income children in D.C.

While a mostly male crowd of 1,500 smoked cigars in the Hilton's International Ballroom, the girls had their own fun at the female-only Knock Out Abuse gala, held simultaneously at the [Ritz-Carlton](#). The benefit for victims of domestic violence drew 650 guests for a '60s-themed dinner produced by [André Wells](#). The two galas unite each

year for a late-night after-party, which earned them a [joint No. 1 ranking](#) on BizBash's 2009 list of Washington's top benefits.

To help raise awareness for the 20th anniversary of Fight Night, planners publicized the evening's musical guest, Joan Jett and the Blackhearts. "This year, we're promoting the entertainment beforehand. We've never done that before," said Kristen Fagley, marketing and event manager for Fight for Children. "We wanted to create more of a buzz."

In addition to Jett, the evening's entertainment included three professional boxing matches, a laser show, the national anthem sung by Patti Austin, and a dance performance by Redskins Cheerleaders. Famous faces offering congratulations to Fight for Children founder Joseph E. Robert Jr. included Jermain Dupri and Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds and—via video—Oprah Winfrey, Colin Powell, Don Graham, Marc Anthony, and members of Kiss.

Per usual, the decor was decidedly macho—this being the only event in town where guests use the votive candles to light their cigars. Swirling spotlights outside the hotel and models dressed in boxing shorts, tank tops, and gloves greeted guests on the red carpet. More models from [Howell Management](#) wore colorful formal dresses and chatted with guests inside during the silent auction.

In the smoky ballroom, a red, white, and blue boxing ring took center stage, while a red curtain in the corner served as a backdrop for giant white letters spelling out "Fight Night." Each table included a box of cigars donated by Graycliff Cigar Co, as well as a matchbook and cigar cutter in each gift bag. Cigar smoking is permitted in the ballroom only and is a signature of Fight Night.

Over at the Ritz-Carlton, Wells used color to create a psychedelic vibe for the 16th annual Knock Out Abuse Gala, which benefits victims of domestic violence. Props included peace signs, gerbera daisies, Andy Warhol-inspired artwork, and a cut-out of a yellow Volkswagen bus that served as a bar.

The evening had a serious focus, including a speech by actress and domestic abuse survivor Robin Givens, but a live auction and plenty of shirtless male models dressed as Birkenstock-clad hippies helped lighten the mood. The evening's entertainment included three DJs.

The same ballroom hosted the after-party, so Wells had a short amount of time to break down the room and set up new decor like beanbag chairs and shag rugs. While female guests waited outside in the crowded reception area, male guests from Fight Night began arriving at around 11:30 p.m. At midnight the doors opened and guests of both sexes joined together to dance till past 2 a.m. "Not bad for a Thursday," Wells said.

—Adele Chapin

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