



Photos by Matt Stone, The Courier-Journal

The Louisville Underground was the setting for the 24th annual Bourbon Ball. The Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft partnered with The Louisville Film Arts Institute to unveil next year's Louisville International Festival of Film.

PARTY STYLE PRIMER

It's the black-tie bash that jump-starts the holiday party season — Louisville's annual Bourbon Ball. And for its 24th year, the glamour quotient at this fabulous fete Oct. 3 was off the charts. From an ambitious and mysterious setting in the Louisville Underground (a 4 million-square-foot subterranean cavern-slash-bomb shelter-slash-commercial storage facility) to the Hollywood theme — complete with red carpet — the evening was an over-the-top spectacle.

The movie ambience was no accident: It was chosen once the Louisville Film Arts Institute and the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft decided to partner for the first time in throwing what is typically the museum's black-tie event.

A HOLIDAY FASHION FORECAST FROM THE BLACK-TIE BOURBON BALL



Andrea and Brian Duvall danced at the Bourbon Ball. The evening often serves as a barometer for what's catching on locally for the holiday season.

"It made sense," says Dodie Holderfield, co-chair of both the Bourbon Ball and Louisville's International Festival of Film. "When we realized that we were going to throw our parties on the same weekend, we decided that we could get together and give the event a whole different feel. ... It was about celebrating Kentucky. We're the leaders in bourbon, we are leaders in the art world, and we'd like to become leaders in filmmaking."

Hence, the whole over-the-top feeling of the soiree. It's not often that you see a red carpet in a cavern, or black-tie gowns next to military tanks (more local props brought in for the night); the bizarre-but-interesting juxtapositions gave the entire event a feeling of fantasy-come-to-life.

And, from my vantage point on the red carpet, the fashion didn't disappoint.

Because this evening often serves as my barometer for what's catching on locally for the holiday season, I can safely say that Louisville women are daring to wear some right-from-the-runway trends. The standouts in a sea of black dresses (because, yes, it's back) were the rich, saturated jewel tones like amethyst, citrine and turquoise; "liquid shimmer" (or all-over sequins); one-shoulder dresses; vintage jewelry; dark florals; and fluttery, ballet-inspired chiffon styles.

There were few — if any — fashion foibles. What impressed me — as always — is just how well we Louisvillians dress up.

"Louisville women love event dressing," says Freshta Marcum, vice president of sales and marketing for Rodeo Drive, which co-sponsored the red carpet and provided dresses for many of the models and committee members at the event.

"They love black and will wear it throughout the holiday season. But they also love color — which is very big in formal wear right now. They will wear the purples and greens; they're not afraid to stand out."

What didn't show up on a single female guest? The suddenly trendy tuxedo — which didn't completely surprise me. So if you want to turn a few heads at your next black-tie event and avoid dress duplication, you know what to do.



Bourbon Ball co-chair Dodie Holderfield, left, and Courier-Journal fashion editor Christine Fellingham showed off their gowns.

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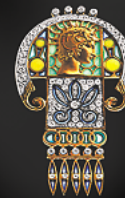
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