

Glitzy

Blizzards, rain,
Secret Service —
they deal with it

BY CLAUDIA GRIVATZ COPQUIN
Special to Newsday

Ostensibly, celebrity event and wedding planner Michael Russo has one of the glitziest jobs imaginable.

Based in Glen Cove, Russo has designed holiday parties for comedian Kathy Griffin, actress Emmanuelle Chriqui ("Entourage") and NBA star Shaquille O'Neal. He's also planned the weddings of former Major League Baseball player Paul Lo Duca, actress Beverley Mitchell ("Seventh Heaven") and most famously, pop star Kevin Jonas, who tied the knot at Oheka Castle in Huntington in December.

As such, Russo not only gets to create dazzling parties, but he also gets to hobnob with the rich and famous at the very events he conjures up.

It's hard to conceive of a more glamorous profession — until you peek behind the scenes — which, for Russo, have wound up filled with mud.

The setup for the Sept. 9, 2004 event at Oheka Castle — the wedding after-party for former 'N Sync boy band member Joey Fatone and his longtime girlfriend Kelly Baldwin — had been going swimmingly.

"We had set up a Ferris wheel, bumper cars, a huge swing, a zeppole truck," Russo recalls.

"All of a sudden, we noticed that the giant slide was sinking!"

Record-setting rainfall the day before the wedding had created a great lawn of mud — one that could not support the carnival rides. So, piece by piece, "we had to move the whole thing to the parking lot," Russo says.

