

'THIS HAS BEEN A MOST WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE'

# MELANIE BROWN AND STEPHEN BELAFONTE

IN PART TWO OF THEIR LAVISH WEDDING, THE COUPLE HOST A PARTY AT THEIR EGYPTIAN VILLA BEFORE HEADING TO THE DESERT

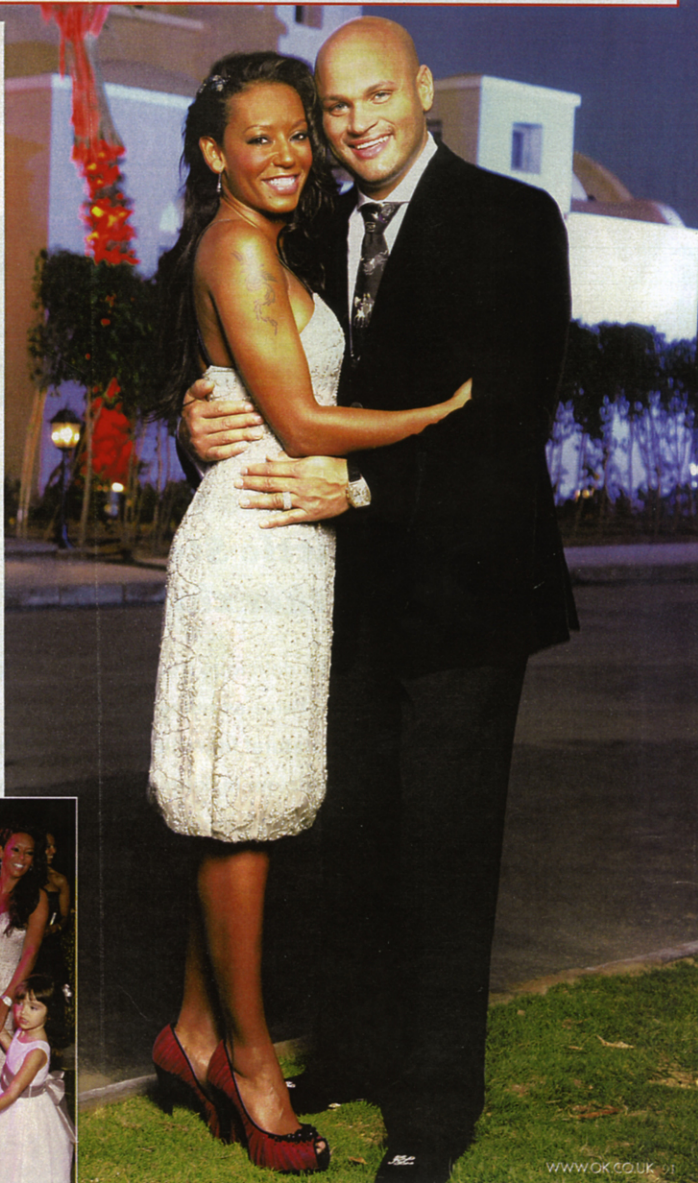
Last week, OK! invited you to join Melanie Brown and Stephen Belafonte as they renewed their wedding vows beneath the Egyptian skies. The couple, who married in secret in June 2007, reaffirmed their devotion and commitment to one another at the sumptuous Jaz Makadi Golf Hotel, in front of around 30 of their closest friends and family. But their stunning ceremony was just part of a weekend jam-packed with activities. The evening before, Mel and Stephen threw open the doors of their plush new villa and invited their guests to toast their new holiday home and enjoy a pre-wedding drink.

The villa – which was painstakingly designed by Dora El Chiaty, the wife of Haaned El Chiaty, who owns the Madinat Makadi holiday resort – is a short distance from the clear waters of the Red Sea and boasts three spacious bedrooms, a kitchen and a huge reception area complete with domed ceiling and a dining room.

**'I have all the most important people in our lives here. I can't even talk, I just want to cry'**

Their journey to Egypt for their wedding celebrations gave them their first chance to see the finished building. 'We just loved it straight away,' Mel told us. 'It is like a dream home away from home. Dora's design and style is impeccable and her attention to detail is flawless. The house is to die for!' Dora El Chiaty told us: 'Amazingly, from the moment that we laid the foundations to the day it was finished, it took just three months to build and decorate – a record for us here at Makadi. >

**Right: Mel and Stephen couldn't wait to welcome their guests to their new holiday home, where they held a huge party the night before the ceremony (below)**





Abave: Mel and Stephen loved every minute of their party, especially the traditional entertainment, which was a hit with the kids too (left and below)



And the couple appear to be very pleased with the finished house.

At 6.30pm, as the sun started to dip behind the mountains, the guests – who included Mel's parents Andrea and Martin Brown and Stephen's brothers and sisters Hannah, Ruth, Rubin and Daniel Stansbury – found out for themselves just how impressive the couple's new pad was. As they stepped through the large arched doors and into the high-ceilinged reception room, the guests were led into the back garden which was lit with an array of coloured lights overlooking the golf course.

A dancefloor had been set up beside the large swimming pool, which itself was sprinkled with pink rose petals. As guests mingled in the garden, enjoying champagne and a selection of seafood canapés, Melanie and Stephen emerged from the house with their children Phoenix, Angel and Giselle. Taking the mic, the happy couple greeted their guests warmly and thanked them all for joining them in Egypt for their special weekend. 'I know it took a long time for people to get here, but look around you – it was worth it, wasn't it?' said Mel, wearing a vintage Giorgio Armani dress. 'I feel so grateful that I have all the most important people in our lives here for this huge thing we are doing. I can't even talk, I just want to cry.'

Stephen, dressed immaculately in a dark blue Armani suit, added: 'This is a special moment for us. We hope you feel the love, because we do.'



Melanie then concluded with 'So let's drink, have fun and be merry, because we're going to go camel riding through the Egyptian desert tomorrow.'

As the couple joined their guests, a local Egyptian band sprang to life. As the music played, a trio of girls appeared wearing candelabras on their heads and performed a traditional dance. When the performance came to an end, the guests burst into applause and then welcomed a performer who was wearing what looked like Joseph's coat of many colours - as he started

spinning wildly on the spot, his multicoloured gowns started to whip out around him making him resemble a human spinning top. As the performance continued, layers of garments were removed, leaving the spinner with an umbrella-like layer that he spun above his head. As he whirled around and around he called for Melanie and her family to join him underneath his top before he covered them in the material.

After everyone had caught their breath, the guests were treated to another performance by >

**Below:** After spinning around in his colourful outfits, one of the performers invited Mel and Stephen and their daughters to join him. **Right:** Mel and Stephen enjoy the party with Angel and Giselle. **Below right:** Angel is awestruck by the colourful surroundings!





the trio of dancers. This time they were dressed in skintight silver outfits with tiny bells attached to them. This meant that with every movement, the sound of the bells rang out, which was distraction enough for tiny Angel, who seemed enthralled by the whole show.

Once the floor show was over, the guests mingled around the pool as DJ Samba began spinning tunes by Robin S and Prince while others were decorated with henna tattoos. Meanwhile, back outside by the pool, Melanie's cousin Alex Cooke impressed fellow revelers with his wild dance moves and was given a massive round of applause for his body-popping. Later, he told *OK!* that he was thrilled to be in Egypt to see Mel renew her vows. Meanwhile, his actor brother Christian Cooke, who starred in *Ecce Boac* and is set to be the big star of new ITV1 show *Demons*, was also excited to see his cousin get hitched again. 'Mel is a great girl and she is very happy with Stephen. I am thrilled to be able to be here on this special day.'

The party continued into the early hours of the morning, with pink champagne flowing freely >



Above: Mel and Angel are dazzled by one of the dancers, while Gisella enjoys a twirl (right). Above right: The pool of the couple's villa was covered





and the happy couple enjoying some tender moments under the star-flecked Egyptian sky.

The next morning, the day of the ceremony itself, Melanie and Stephen and their guests headed to one of the best spas in the Red Sea where they enjoyed a variety of treatments. The couple had a his-and-hers massage, and then retreated to the Jacuzzi together. On seeing the Jacuzzi, Mel told us "It's the biggest one I've ever seen! I think it could even be bigger than our pool back in LA!" After they were refreshed and revived, they all headed out into the desert to ride some quad bikes. All the guests were given scarves to protect their faces from the sand and some brief tuition on how to master the quad bikes before being allowed to roar around the sand dunes. "This is just wild," Melanie told us as her family and friends were tearing around her. "This is what we wanted our wedding to be about. We

wanted everyone to have fun and have some great memories of Egypt to take back with them."

Sadly her cousin Alex ended up taking home rather more than just memories. As he rode his quad bike over a hill, he lost control and crashed, sending him into some rocks. Luckily, he managed to escape with just a few cuts and scrapes. "It hurt," he said. "But luckily I'm alright," Mel added. "I was worried for a minute when I saw him crash, but luckily he came away with just a few cuts. I was all protective over him, but then I would be because I used to change Alex's nappies when he was small."

Mel and Stephen and their guests biked their way through the desert up to the Bedouin camel station, where they got a chance to ride the impressively tall desert beasts. Afterwards, the famished guests tucked into a mouthwatering lunch >

**Above, top and facing page:** The couple began the big day itself with an adrenaline rush – they headed to the desert for some quad biking, before enjoying the delights of camel riding!

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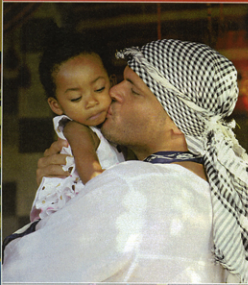
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Above and left: Mel and Stephen were thrilled to be joined by their family and friends (below). 'This day will not only be special to us, but to all those who joined us here,' says Mel



which included a barbecued whole lamb and a selection of mezze dishes. Meanwhile, Angel, Phoenix and the other young guests were being kept entertained with water balloons. If the day wasn't jam-packed enough, the gens headed to the Madinat Makadi golf course, to fit in a couple of rounds of golf. Melanie's dad came out on top!

As they headed back to the hotel, the guests admitted that their experiences in the Egyptian desert and the chance to ride camels were something they would not forget for a very long time!

'This has been a most wonderful experience,' Mel told us. 'Stephen

and I can't thank the El-Chiari family enough for embracing us and our family and making our wedding very ceremony so special. I am so glad that this day will not only be special to us, but to all those who joined us here in this wonderful country.'

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