

GRACE'S WORLD

Mayfair business woman Grace Kennedy tells us all about how her career as an entertainer paved the way to opening her own travel events business

Words FAY WATSON



While it may not seem a natural partnership, Grace Kennedy explains to me that, for her, show business and events planning go hand in hand. The singer, entertainer and managing director says that it was her performing career that inspired her to start her own events business 20 years ago.

‘The experiences that I’ve had, I want to bring them into my business,’ she tells me. ‘There’s nobody out there in my industry that’s ever gone into the events side, the wedding side, on a luxury level. What I’m trying to explain to



my clients is I’ve been there, I’ve had the luxury, so what I’m trying to do is give that back.’

Kennedy rose to stardom after winning talent show *Opportunity Knocks* before going on to perform at The Royal Variety Show and

host her own BBC television show, *The Grace Kennedy Show*, in the early 1980s.

Her early success put her in contact with people like Aretha Franklin and Sammy Davis, Jr. (who she describes once cooked

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her and his wife an amazing meal of scallops). ‘These wonderful celebrities took me under their wing and tried to guide me and say this is what you should do – and it was just so lovely,’ she says.

But one of the most important things that the business allowed her was to travel the world. And when she did, she did it in luxury. She tells me of one memorable journey being whisked away to Dubai by Toyota on a private jet. ‘By the time I went to perform I was feeling fantastic because I’d had that lovely feeling – I was thinking pinch me, you know?’ she laughs. ‘That’s what I want to give to my clients.’

All of this inspired her to launch a new branch to her Mayfair-based business at the end of last year – the Luxurious Destination Collection. This side of the business works with clients on a bespoke basis to create memorable holidays and honeymoons to places like Bali, the Maldives and the Bahamas. Since its launch, Kennedy has already forged partnerships with



venues including Blenheim Palace in Oxford, the Mandarin Oriental in Knightsbridge and the Royal Mansour in Marrakech.

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The small team work on North Audley Street, which she describes as the perfect

destination for her business. ‘It’s luxurious, you’ve got fabulous Mount Street that I love, Scott’s, [there are] amazing buildings in

Mayfair and the people are lovely,’ she enthuses. ‘I’m really happy being in Mayfair.’

While it’s going well so far, Kennedy is aware that you have to be constantly adapting to maintain the edge in the luxury business.

‘I find in the wedding business and in the event business, you’ve got to keep inventing things,’ she explains. ‘You can’t stay in one genre, you’ve got to keep moving things around.’

So part of her business plan has been to try and include as many unique experiences as possible. From cooking classes to specialist massages and spa treatments, she tries to plan things for couples to keep the romance alive.

‘I’m a great believer that if you’re married and you want to keep things going, you’ve got to keep it alive,’ she says. ‘You’ve got to care for each other, love each other, you’re good friends.’

As she tells me about her work and her career, it’s clear that Kennedy’s success has come from a lot of hard work since she began professional work at just 17 years of age. ‘Some of it is luck, some of it is your talent,’ she tells me. ‘But grafting is the main thing in any business. Grafting – I would rehearse and rehearse, every step, every line. And it’s the same as what I do now. I organise an event I have to go over it and over it.’

I wonder if the parallels stop there or whether she feels the same rush performing as organising an event? ‘All the time – it’s not nerves, you want to get it right. And you want the client at the end of the day to say “wow, thank you so much”’.

‘I’m in the right business now, I’m doing something that I love and I’m really passionate about it,’ she adds. ‘I get to work with some wonderful people and also some great venues.’

And, with planned partnerships with opera houses and venues across the world lined up this year, it certainly seems that there’s no stopping her. **T**

gracekennedyevents.com/destinations-collection

