

WE ARE NO.1 STILL YOUR FAVOURITE MAGAZINE

NIELSEN MEDIA INDEX 2011

her world

MARCH 2012 \$6 SINGAPORE

www.herworldplus.com

MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR AND
WOMEN'S MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR
MARKETING MAGAZINE 2011

**Why S'pore
women
say divorce need
not be bitter**

**LOOK
SWEET AT
ANY AGE**

- The New LPD (little pretty dress)
- Sugary lip glosses
- Elegant (and easy) hairdos

**Love your job
again?**

Yes, you can

(Hint: just clear
your desk)

**HOT
MEN
ALERT**

**Abs, buns,
biceps & more
on page 201**

**"Speed-dating
scares me!"**

By TV hunk George Young

**Facials,
massages,
makeovers...
all free at a
beauty
counter
near you**

(page 314)

**165 BEST
BEAUTY BUYS**

**PICKED BY EDITORS, EXPERTS AND YOU
+ HOW TO WIN THEM, PAGE 442**

A close-up photograph of two hands with bright red nail polish clinking two champagne flutes. The glasses are filled with a golden, bubbly liquid. The background is a plain, light color. The text is overlaid on the center of the image.

**YOU
ARE
INVITED
TO MY
*DIVORCE
PARTY***

When her husband agreed to a divorce recently, J, 38, a teacher, didn't live up to the stereotype of the stay-at-home moper, mourning her failed marriage by demolishing tubs of ice cream and crying over chick flicks.

Instead, she rounded up a group of her closest friends for a girls' night out at Clarke Quay. They headed for a bar for vodka shots, then went on to hip nightclub Zirca where they chatted and danced with several men – all in good, clean fun.

"No one hooked up that night, and I certainly

started organising these so-called "divorce parties" two years ago – beauty boutique Pink Parlour and events planner Buddyjane. Requests climbed in 2011, the same year actress Scarlett Johansson and musician Jack White held their own split shindigs (see sidebar).

Pink Parlour went from hosting three parties to 10 in a year, while Buddyjane got four requests in 2011 – the most it's ever had in its four-year history.

"It's a symbolic transition for the divorced woman," says Daniel Koh, a psychologist with Insights Mind Centre, of divorce parties. "She's showing that she's left that chapter of her life behind." Having friends and loved ones around is also a great help for women who are scared or unnerved by their newly single status. "Their presence assures her that they still accept and support her, giving her the confidence to move on with life."

J filed for divorce because she and her husband had grown far apart and he didn't understand her emotionally. "Being with my friends helped give me the strength and support I need to cope with my job and look after my kids. It reminded me that even alone, I can keep it together and put on a brave front in front of my boss and children."

The modest figures show that divorce parties are still a niche trend here. Few events firms consider them to be a money-spinner, unlike in Japan or the US where they're common. While the number of divorces rose from 6,904 to 7,405 between 2005 and 2010, Pink Parlour says hen night parties are still most popular, with one held every week – people would rather celebrate the start of a marriage than its end.

However, party planners predict "break-up bashes" will grow with time. "People are reading foreign magazines which report this sort of parties happening elsewhere," says Shirley Toh, Buddyjane's business manager. "The stigma of divorce is declining and they're finding that it's okay to mark their newfound singlehood." →

Some women in Singapore are holding end-of-marriage dos. Why? HUANG XUELING and JEANNE TAI investigate a startling – and potentially worrying – new trend.

had no desire to do so," J recalls. "It was simply a night for me to enjoy the company of my friends and dance freely, stuff I couldn't do when I was married. And it really helped me face up to the reality of being single again."

J is one of a small but growing number of Singapore women who are marking the end of their marriages with parties, get-togethers or ceremonies to bring closure to an often unhappy time in their lives, celebrate their rediscovered singlehood and herald a new life chapter. Some divorcees even hire professional party planners who arrange for swish venues, food, drink and music – no different from a bachelorette party.

Out of seven party planners we spoke to, two

Who these women are

Working women in their 30s who are less fearful of the "divorcee" label are the ones throwing divorce parties, says Wendi Chen, director of Pink Parlour. She believes they'll become increasingly popular as the stigma of divorce fades.

Wendi started planning such parties in 2010, after getting the idea from her customers. "We were already organising bachelorette and movie night parties at the Pink Parlour, and wondered what else we could do," says Wendi. "Some of our clients asked if we'd ever consider divorce parties. They'd heard about the phenomenon in the US and felt we could do it here. Some were inspired because their friends' marriages were breaking down."

Today, the boutique offers packages like the

Divorce parties are not meant to glamourise divorce but are a way to help women look and feel better, and take their minds off their troubles.

Freedom Party, starting from \$88 a person, where a minimum of four women can choose to have manis and pedis, Brazilian waxes or massages, plus food and drinks,

in a private room for one and a half to three hours.

She says that her parties are not meant to glamourise divorce but are a way to help women look and feel better, and take their minds off their troubles. She herself went through a difficult divorce eight years ago and understands how it can take its toll on a woman's self-esteem. She says: "Hopefully, women can feel more confident after their parties and know that there are still a lot more opportunities out there."

Wendi says that nine out of 10 of her friends are also divorcees in their 30s, like her. While she did not have a divorce party, some of her friends tried to cheer her up by taking her out for drinks and trying.

"It's just for fun and to make ourselves feel better, to do things that we haven't done since we were in our early 20s. It's to tell ourselves that things aren't so bad and life will get better. And it's a lot better than cooping yourself up at home and letting yourself go physically," she adds.

Can parties really help?

Shirley recalls two divorce parties that her company organised last year. While both were different, she says they brought closure for the women and helped them feel better prepared to move on. Both women declined to be interviewed to protect their privacy.

At one party, held at the White Studio at Fort Canning Park and costing \$2,000, women guests were told to bring single male partners. Guests were asked to play light-hearted games, like one called Top 10 Reasons Why You Should Be Separated From the Guy where they had to act out the scenarios.

Shirley says the divorcee, Ivy*, felt that her party had helped her close a chapter in her life and welcome the next. To Ivy, who has a successful career in the finance industry, her divorce had been inevitable, due to her husband's frequent business trips and her not wanting to play the role of the subservient, stay-home wife.

The other party, costing \$1,350, was less light-hearted. Rachel*, the divorcee, had been withdrawn and keeping to herself for some months, and her best friend organised the surprise party because she didn't want to see Rachel sad any longer.

CELEB PHOTOS: CORBIS, GETTY IMAGES & IPS

DIVORCE PARTIES: FOR OR AGAINST?

FIVE MARRIED WOMEN SHARE THEIR VIEWS.

"Divorce is not something to be celebrated but if it happened because the woman was really in a toxic marriage, then I think it's fine to throw a party if it makes her feel better."

— Joan Zhu, 27, administrative executive



"I think it's all right for divorced women to throw

parties, either to celebrate a new start after an unhappy marriage or to announce their single status to potential men. It shows a woman's readiness to accept changes and move forward."

— Carole Suen, 29, public relations consultant

"It is better to keep the party small and low profile as it may attract criticism and bring pain. A recently divorced woman may not have the strength to handle such problems."

— Clarine Yiu, 32, legal and business development manager



Only 20 of Rachel's family and closest friends, as well as two counsellors, were invited. They encouraged her to speak from her heart and let out all her pent-up sadness and anger. Shirley recalls that there was a lot of sadness and crying but by the end of the gathering, Rachel felt good about life again.

She realised that her friends cared about her and was touched by their concern. She had never thought of throwing a divorce party but felt it had helped her release pent-up feelings and provide closure.

But while they're an emotional moment, these parties can have a darker side. "If the party turns into a 'blame game' where the woman and her guests start gossiping about or condemning people (like her ex-husband), that's when it becomes unhealthy," says Daniel. "Stuff like this fuels the divorcee's anger and resentment, preventing her from letting go."

"In the end, she's not getting closure – she's carrying the baggage from her old relationship into her new life. The party becomes nice window dressing to show that she's fine and has moved on. But inside, she hasn't." *HW*

* Not their real names



Break-up bashes are held in venues like Pink Parlour.



"Just because your marriage failed

doesn't mean that you have to neglect yourself. By all means throw a party to cheer yourself up and look to a better life ahead."

– Karine Estelle Cheong, 24, business development manager

"They might feel liberated after ending their marriage but I don't think throwing a divorce party is a good idea. It just seems over the top."

– Chandini Gibson, 24, church administrator



1



2



3

HOW CELEBS DO IT

- 1 Scarlett Johansson was spotted last July enjoying a night out with friends at hip club XIX, reportedly celebrating the end of her two-year marriage to Ryan Reynolds.
- 2 Supermodel Karen Elson and rocker ex-hubby Jack White had a "swing bang humdinger" of a party, on their sixth wedding anniversary to announce their split.
- 3 Former Playmate Shanna Moakler celebrated her divorce from her husband of two years, rock band Blink 182's drummer Travis Barker, with a party in Las Vegas, complete with a three-layer cake that featured a knife-wielding bride on top and bloodied groom below.

BIG IN THE US AND ELSEWHERE

This growing trend of divorce parties was first noticed last year in the US, where statistics show about half of all marriages end in divorce. Noting that such parties are no longer confined to celebrities, media reports said such parties have become so popular in the country that they have given rise to a new industry – divorce party planning.

Divorce parties there can range from simple dos to ceremonies as elaborate as weddings, complete with novelty items and party favours. Many of them parody

wedding traditions, such as having divorce cakes and "just divorced" car banners. One party planning company reportedly lets couples choose a theme that reflects the circumstances of their break-up.

Some divorcing couples also hold a ceremony similar to a wedding except that instead of saying "I do" and exchanging rings, they say "I release you as my wife/husband" and return the rings.

In Japan, more couples are opting for divorce rituals in which they smash their wedding bands, either in front of their

friends and family, or in private with a divorce planner officiating. They are said to regard the ceremony as a way to mark a new life.

Similar ceremonies are also becoming a trend in China, where wealthy couples throw lavish ones. This was satirised in Feng Xiaogang's 2010 movie *If You're The One II* (sequel to the 2008 smash hit, *If You're The One*) – the main characters go through a divorce ceremony similar to a wedding, in which the couple vow never to love each other again, no matter how attractive they find each other or how close they remain. In Love, China's first divorce ceremony-planning company, was set up last May.