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Surprises multiply at Two x Two

Now, after 16 years, Two x Two for AIDS and Art has established itself as the most coveted ticket on the black-tie circuit. One reason: It rarely fails to surprise.

Saturday night, it did more than that — it stunned.

It was three years ago when mouths fell open as a painting by Mark Grotjahn sold at the gala for \$1 million, a Two x Two record. That money is split between the American Foundation for AIDS Research and the Dallas Museum of Art.

This year, painter Wade Guyton shattered the Grotjahn record. Veteran Sotheby's auctioneer Jamie Niven couldn't conceal his shock as he said, "I have \$2 million, do I have 2.1?" Within moments, he was saying, "I have \$2.5 million, do I have \$2.6?"

With a cellphone pressed to her ear, gala co-host Cindy Rachofsky waited for her anonymous phone bidder to give the OK, then she signaled Niven.

"\$2.6 million!" he said as the crowd gasped in delight. "Going once ... going twice ... SOLD! For \$2.6 million!"

Later, after the excitement had died down, Niven reflected on the moment. "I've never



ALAN PEPPARD

apeppard@dallasnews.com

seen that," he said of the enormous sale price. "Not in a charity auction. I've never seen that."

The total take for Two x Two was a new record: \$7 million.

Geodesic dining

The Two x Two crowd dined and bid inside a Bucky Fuller-style geodesic dome tent on the lawn of the home of Cindy and Howard Rachofsky. The auction followed a dancing-in-the-aisles three-song set by CeeLo Greene.

He closed with an amazing, unexpected cover of Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'," but, of course, it was his biggest hit that had the guests pushing toward the stage and dancing.

For terrestrial radio, the title was sanitized to "Forget You." But we all know, that's not the title.

In full voice, CeeLo sang to the crowd, "[well-known coarse expletive] you!"

Then, a few hundred of the

wealthiest, most prominent people in Texas sang back in reply, "[well-known coarse expletive] you!"

Like Jamie Niven said: I've never seen that.

CeeLo hearts the Joule

How does Two x Two manage a headliner like CeeLo Greene and still raise \$7 million? Two words: Tim Headington. The oilman, hotelier and art collector underwrote the performance. Greene checked into Headington's downtown hotel, the Joule. At Two x Two, he was quick to praise Headington and the Joule from the stage before his keyboardist launched into the opening of "Don't Stop Believin'."

"You guys recognize this song?" CeeLo asked. "This is gonna be the biggest karaoke bar tonight."

And so it was that CeeLo Greene and a few hundred formally dressed Dallasites sang in unison, "Just a small-town girl living in a lonely world."

The Last Word

"A man is a god in ruins."
Duke Ellington