

Why costume parties are a must-attend

Reality. From rooftops to ballrooms, costume parties are more than playful dress-up. They unlock confidence, spark connection and reveal surprising sides of who we are.

BY TONY MUSHOBOROZI

There are few social experiences as unexpectedly transformative, joy-filled, and liberating as a good costume party. From afar, it might seem like just another themed gathering—an excuse to dress up, take photos, and socialise. But beneath the wigs, masks, makeup and elaborate outfits lies something much more powerful: an opportunity to step outside yourself, connect more deeply with others, and on a personal level, explore personality traits you didn't even know you had.

This relates to a concept that psychologists call enclosed cognition. The idea that clothing does not just signal identity but it shapes it. When we change how we look, it subtly changes how we feel and behave. There are actual studies that show that people behave differently depending on what they wear. We might feel more confident in a pristine suit, more outgoing in Rastafarian wear complete with fake dreadlocks, or more mischievous in a Captain Jack Sparrow costume. As it turns out, the clothes we choose send cues to our brain to behave accordingly and makes other people to automatically treat us differently.

This phenomenon was recently on display when socialite Deborah Nantonogo, popularly known as Mami Deb, hosted a costume party at her humble Kololo pen house rooftop. Wink. The party was really a *Bridgerton* watch party. If you are asking, *Bridgerton* is a popular Netflix romance television series set in early 19th century England, based on the book series of the same name. The



KFM's Beewol (Left) with friends at the cosplay party. PHOTO/TONY MUSHOBOROZI.

party marks the show's fourth season debut. The dress code for the party was, of course, costumes from the show. And the attendees did not disappoint. The setting for the social gathering was a floral marvel and a fashion replica from the show. Attendees, all decked up in costumes, were welcomed by a footman and handed a statement hand-fan that screamed royal and deep-toned sophistication.

Cosplay luxe

The cosplay had begun in earnest. People instantly put off their personalities and put on characters from 19th century England. The footman also handed them the latest society papers from the town's top gossip herself, Abigail Whistledown before they found themselves places to sit. Of course they went about this whole act with straight faces.

Kampala's top influencers made up the vast majority of the attendees. Ann Kansime came dressed as the queen, shining in her London glory as the chief match-maker, all looking regal and dan-

gerous in purple. Her 18th century inspired avant-garde hair was another miss that would have elevated the look from the streets of Mparo right to Buckingham Palace. The Queen's lady in waiting, Landy Danbury, was cosplayed by fashion designer Joan Jade.

Adorned in a regal deep chocolate stain brown ball gown with floral detailing and long lace sleeves, Stella Nantumbwe was the talk of the night. Beautifully elevated by a clean cornrow updo, the talented multi-media personality's look echoed elegance that blended historical romance with modern couture.

Poker faces

The host, Mr Cleave (Mami Deb's husband) rolled with a few of Kampala's charming and supposedly single gents. These included Aine Dash, known for MCing at affluent events and KFM's Beewol, classic Tanqueray gin cocktails in hand. The conversations were gingerly respectful, the laughter was calculated, 'royals' wore poker faces even after several cocktails.



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Quick notes
A costume party might look like dress-up fun—but it's actually a powerful social and psychological experience.

From *Bridgerton* glamour in Kololo to the science of "enclosed cognition," here's why stepping into character might just change how you show up in the world.

True to the show, the rooftop was transformed into a spirited ballroom where the ladies of the ton and the gents broke into a ballroom dance right before the private viewing (of the season four debut) started. Every corner was uniquely elevated by the green hues of the classic Tanqueray gin, the tea served hot with calculated giggles.

Out of body experience

A nice costume party, in many ways, feels like an out of body experience. You get to watch yourself behaving like someone you wish to be or your favorite film character. People treat you with the kind of respect and love you have never encountered. You get to put your tattered, sad existence aside and embrace silliness with the seriousness it deserves.

In a world that often takes itself too seriously, costume parties remind us of the value of play, imagination, and connection. So the next time you get an invitation, even if you are tempted to skip it, do not. Find a costume, embrace the silliness, and show up. You might just have more fun than you ever expected.