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LIFESTYLE**How secret are the 'secret parties' popping up on your social media?**

Pool parties at undisclosed locations, secret cinema screenings and performances. 'Secret' events are popping up fast on Facebook timelines. But should you really sign up for them?

By [Manali Shah](#) | Hindustan Times, Mumbai

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One Night ONLY turned out to be at Golden Valley Resort in Thane

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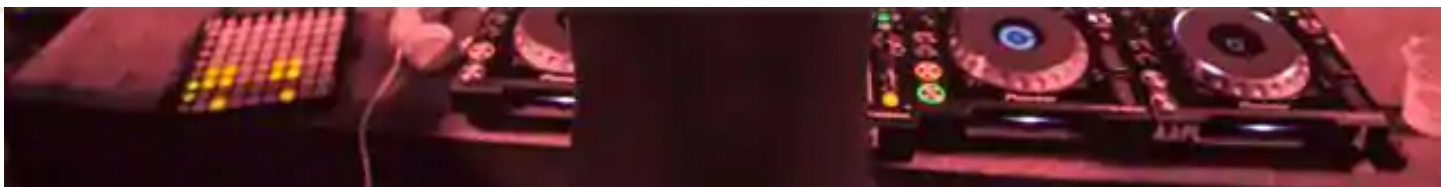
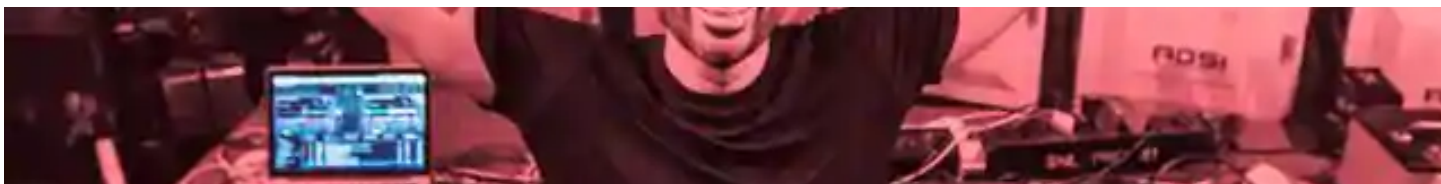
Would you say yes to a party without knowing where it will be held? Last November, nearly 2,000 people on Facebook hit 'interested' for an event titled One Night ONLY, hosted by a clothing brand. The entry was invite-only, and RSVP was open only to women (the brand's primary TG).

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The performers for the night included Dualist Inquiry, Nucleya, and the popular Canadian duo DVBBS, but the location was kept a secret. Pick-up buses from Bandra and Colaba were arranged. The only other information given out was that it was a pool party, so guests could dress and pack accordingly.

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Nucleya performed at One Night ONLY

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As it turned out, the covert-op bus drove you to a certain Golden Valley Resort in Thane (so, technically, you partied outside the city). It was a neon-themed event. Since the guest list was cut off at 500 (each woman who attended was allowed plus-two), the evening had an intimate feel about it.

Gunjan Arya, head of revenue and brand partnerships at OML, which organised it, says, “The trend works because there’s a sense of, ‘Hey, I went, you didn’t.’”

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The VIP feeling

It is this sense of exclusivity that brands and event organisers are cashing in on. Over the last few months, the city has seen a slew of events where an aspect of the event — either the location or the performers, or in some cases, both — is not revealed. Film Companion, a YouTube channel run by film critic Anupama Chopra, held a secret film screening at Lightbox preview theatre, Santacruz. We know now that Joel Edgerton’s *The Gift* (2015) was shown. If you had happened to see it already, well, too bad. But that’s the thing with surprises: they can’t always be to your liking.

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Kanchan Daniel & The Beards performed at The Secret Rooftop Party (Photo: Ahad Halari)

Last month, another event — this time, a secret rooftop party — popped up on our social media timelines. Sanchit Gupta, co-founder of the DrinksOnMe app, which co-hosted the event, says, “We got a crazy response (sic). I had to take my contact number off the event page on Facebook within two days.” For the ticket price of `800, you could let your hair down at a venue in “the heart of Mumbai”. Two bands and a DJ set were to be the entertainment of the evening. Two hundred and seventy people took a chance and showed up not knowing if the live acts would be worth it.

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The rooftop party was held at Baraesti, Tardeo (haven't heard of it? We hadn't either). Performers included Kanchan Daniel & The Beards and Vernon Noronha — both fairly new names in the indie music circuit. Is it a gig you'd have bought tickets for, had you known the line-up or the venue? That's a question we'd like to ask the 270-odd people who attended.

How secret is it really?

The trend is hardly on the lines of the old-school secret party where the city's elite and influencers would gather (invite-only, of course), and nobody else really got a wind of it. This sounds like the same thing. And is sold with the same promise of exclusivity. But it's hardly what it is. Shorn of the marketing gimmick, these are essentially events marketed via social media, and it gives the average Joe a feeling of standing apart. Bragging rights, it would seem, is a major draw.

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Close



Anuja Ghosalkar performs Lady Anandi at the Piramal Museum of Art (Photo: Adrien Roche)

It's not just parties, though. A secret performance, Tell No One, was held at the Piramal Museum of Art, Lower Parel, this April. Visitors were asked to bring a physical photo of a relative from the pre-Independence era, to serve as the entry ticket. It turned out to be a theatre performance, Lady Anandi, by Bengaluru-based theatre actor, writer and director, Anuja Ghosalkar. It's the story of an actor who is haunted by the ghost of her maternal great grandfather. "There's a part in the performance where Anuja compares her features to her grandfather. The photos itself trigger conversation," says Rashmi Dhanwani, founder of Art X Company, which put together the event.

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DrinksOnMe's Gupta now has a secret road trip planned for next month. The one-day trip will be at a destination "four hours away from Mumbai". But what if you've already been there? It's the execution, Gupta says, that will count. "We'll have singer-songwriters perform on the bus to the

Encouraged by the response, Dhanwani, too, plans to conduct more such events. Meanwhile, Gupta is set to hold a secret silent noise party in the city soon. If taking a leap of faith is your thing, go right ahead. Just don't say we didn't warn you about getting your expectations too high.

Coming up next

The secret road trip will be held on July 2, 6am onward.

Tickets: Rs 2,500 onward on the Drinks On Me app (on Android and iOS).

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