

PARTY TIME!

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The annual entertainment awards season is fully underway in Southern California with the presentation of the Golden Globe Awards at the Beverly Hilton Hotel on Monday.

These are not simply one-day affairs where you get dressed and go to dinner. Instead, ancillary events extend three-hour award shows into a week-long program of parties, press conferences and hospitality.

A good example was a two-day program by Best Life magazine on January 11 and 12 at a Hollywood Hills villa which was converted into the "Best Life House," a private party venue for the magazine, its advertisers and guests from the entertainment industry in advance of the Golden Globes show on January 15.

And the Best Life House had its own official cigar: Montecristo!

From an event-planning standpoint, a house makes much better sense for a Hollywood party than a hotel or a restaurant. Unlike those commercial establishments, homes are private spaces and you and the guests can smoke, drink, eat and dance to your heart's content, subject only to the feelings of your neighbors. Some estates are big enough that even that is not a worry.

So Altadis U.S.A. was more than happy to supply Montecristo and Montecristo White cigars for the house.

Taking the theme a little further, Altadis USA's Playboy by Don Diego line will be featured at the place where it was launched in 1996: the Playboy Mansion in Beverly Hills. It's all part of the first Playboy Poker Camp (stop snickering) running from January 17-21, primarily at the giant Morongo Casino Resort & Spa in Cabazon, California, just outside of Palm Springs, California.

The four-day program incorporates poker, poker stars such as World Series of Poker champion Layne Flack, nightly tournaments with prize purses of \$100,000, Playboy Playmates and plenty of Playboy cigars. The highlight is a party at the Mansion on Saturday.

It's all fun, but it's serious marketing for Altadis, continuing to compete for the attention of smokers in a battle for brand share. Although these events are at the high end of the spectrum — Hollywood stars and Playboy Playmates — they are all part of an enormous promotional push by cigar makers and distributors for sales and notoriety.