

SLEEPING WITH THE STARS: It's still Sinatra's world, we just rent it ...

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SLEEPING WITH THE STARS



Frank Sinatra had Twin Palms built in 1947 after earning his first million. He came in with a white sailor hat and an ice cream cone and said, 'I want a house,' recalls architect E. Stewart Williams . SINATRAHOUSE.COM

# It's still Sinatra's world, we just rent it

The Chairman's home in Palm Springs is available for \$2,600 (U.S.) a night. So, kick back, relax and turn up the Puccini



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It's quarter to three / There's no one in the place, 'cept you and me  
Actually there are three of us, but Larry Rener of property management company Homes Run is about to make like a tree, so my wife and I can get to livin' large under those legendary twin palms. You know the ones: Fifty years ago, whenever Ol' Blue Eyes was in residence, he'd hoist the cocktail hour banner up the pole between them, and, even though this was the outskirts of Palm Springs, celebrity friends came running.  
So set 'em up Joe / I got a little story I think you should know  
The story is that, in the summer of '47, a young Frank Sinatra, flush with his first million, walked into Williams, Williams & Williams while chompin' on an ice cream cone and asked architect E. Stewart Williams to design and build him a house in time for Christmas. Specifically, a huge honkin' Georgian, but Mr. Williams, wisely, convinced The Voice that a long, low, modern affair would be better suited to the desert. After working furiously 'round the clock, the 4,500-square-foot, three-bedroom house – Mr. Williams's first residential commission – was ready by New Year's Eve.  
After his first marriage fizzled in 1950, it became, wrote

second wife Ava Gardner in her biography Ava: My Story, "the only house we really could ever call our own" and "was the site of probably the most spectacular fight of our young married life, and honey, don't think I don't know that's really saying something." In the master bath today – one of the few unrenovated spaces – there remains a telltale crack in the sink; an enraged Sinatra, apparently, threw a champagne bottle at Ava and missed.  
The story today, in '07, is that anyone can rent Twin Palms for \$2,600 (U.S.) a night (three-night minimum, plus an 11.5 per cent occupancy tax). It ain't cheap, but then again, living the ring-a-ding life shouldn't be: remember, Frank handed C-notes to valet parkers, blackjack dealers and waiters nightly, and Sammy Davis Jr. was known to give engraved gold lighters to just about everyone. Split among four couples (there is a fourth maid's bedroom), the price is on a par with a five-star hotel. It's also available for shorter periods of time with varying rates for photo shoots and weddings. It would also make, as I see it, the perfect reward for top salespeople or a great place to hold corporate retreats.  
We're drinkin' my friend / To the end of a brief episode  
It's brief, alright. I've got one afternoon, one night and one morning to play Chairman of the Broads ...err, I mean Board. To celebrate our brief reign as King and Queen of Palm Springs, I leave Shauntelle lounging by the grand piano-shaped pool – the same one Ava routinely skinny-dipped in and, as Sinatra's personal assistant George



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Jacobs claims in Mr. S: My Life with Frank Sinatra, was also the steamy site of a Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich make-out session – to go mix martinis. Since the vermouth is nowheresville, I improvise with some gin, triple sec and the orange juice we've brought along for tomorrow's breakfast and create a drink I call "The Francis." It's appropriate, since orange was Frank's favourite colour.  
At least the kitchen has all the bells and whistles I'll need for tonight; other journalists who've stayed here have written about going to the bars and restaurants Sinatra frequented – "Hey, lookit me, I'm sittin' on his barstool" kind of thing – but I've decided to do what Frank did when he had extra-special guests over: make spaghetti.  
I'm feeling so bad / Can't you make the music easy and sad  
There's music all around: speakers wired into the walls send the crooner's voice, ghost-like, anywhere we desire, even by the pool. The grand piano in the living room plays I've Got the World on a String by itself. It's loud,

so I'll need good pipes if I choose to sing along. His clunky, custom made audio equipment still hulks under the plasma television, although only the lights work now – regardless, it's a gas to think those are the same knobs he twisted while listening to his favourite composer, Puccini.  
The home's decor – a recent remodel by Jonathan Adler's interior design partner Darren Brown – looks like something Frank might have done had he still been living here in the early '70s. But don't think tacky basement rec room, think glossy Studio 54 meets mod, swingin' London Carnaby Street. Interestingly, the Adler/Brown makeover of the former Merv Griffin hotel into the ultra-hot Parker is similar in approach and worth a detour while in Palm Springs.  
So make it one for my baby  
We've been cheering the Chairman all night, so our last tippie is to George Jacobs, who I'm told will be here for a German documentary shoot after we check out. It's too bad our paths won't cross, since he spent a lot of time here during his 16 years with Sinatra, including three weeks nursing Sammy Davis back to health after he lost his eye in that infamous car accident.  
And one more for the road  
When Sinatra sold the place in '57 and moved down the road to the much bigger "compound" in Rancho Mirage, he never looked back to this little place on Alejo Rd. However, try as I might, I can't help sneak a peek over my shoulder as the automatic gate swings to a close.  
» For more information on renting Twin Palms, visit www.sinatra-house.com