

[PDF] Tropicana Nights: The Life And Times Of The Legendary Cuban Nightclub

Rosa Lowinger, Ofelia Fox - pdf download free book

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Author: Rosa Lowinger, Ofelia Fox

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Tropicana opened in 1939 at Villa Mina, a six-acre suburban Havana estate with lush tropical gardens. It's still going strong, after a number of setbacks, not the least of which was Fidel Castro's squelching of nightlife and other social outlets. After Martin Fox took over in 1950, choreographer Roderico "Rodney" Neyra staged spectacular shows in the club's newly constructed Arcos de Cristal, parabolic concrete arches and glass walls soaring over an indoor stage. Headliners included Josephine Baker, Nat King Cole, Celia Cruz, Xavier Cugat and Carmen Miranda; and celebrity visitors ranged from Brando and Durante to Hemingway and Piaf. Tracing the evolution of this "paradise under the stars" against the backdrop of Cuban culture, politics in pre-

Castro Cuba and mob connections, journalist Lowinger (*Latina*) interweaves the personal stories of Fox and his widow, playwright-teacher Ofelia Fox, who recalls, "It was a life set to music. What could be better?" The superb talents of Cuban music's Golden Age were resurrected in the Oscar-nominated film *Buena Vista Social Club* (1998), but Lowinger's scintillating chronicle offers an overview—not found in that film—of the florid, splashy era when "Cuba was an endless party, and Tropicana was its epicenter." Photos.

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From Lowinger and Fox tell the story of Havana's notorious Tropicana nightclub, the template from which Las Vegas was made after the corrupt Batista regime collapsed, and the Tropicana was closed. In its day the Tropicana was a prime site for gambling, elegance, seeing and being seen--a resort of choice for international gangsters and jet-setters. Readers who enjoyed Anthony Haden-Guest's "biography" of Studio 54, *The Last Party* (1997), will enjoy comparing the differing modes of showmanship, decadence, and ostentation current in the Tropicana's 1950s heyday to those of 1970s New York's debauched disco scene. Fox married Tropicana owner Martin Fox in 1952 and helped him run it until 1962, when they decamped to Miami. She and Lowinger take pains to establish that the Tropicana was hardly a sleazy Mob hangout but rather a world-class entertainment venue that discriminating gangsters happened to enjoy frequenting. An excellent resource on Cuban popular culture, lavish entertainment, and everyday life just before and just after Castro, this is also an exciting and rewarding read. *Mike Tribby*

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