

LIGHTS.  ACTION.



WITH HUGH HEFNER

Interviewed by Aleza Freeman

The Palms Las Vegas is a second home for ultimate bachelor Hugh Hefner. A partnership between the Palms and Playboy Enterprises led to the 2006 opening of the first Playboy Club in 20 years, as well as the 9,000 square foot Hugh Hefner Sky Villa, atop The Palms Fantasy Tower. While Hef admits that Playboy Enterprises was a victim of the politically correct American climate during the '80s and early '90s, now, he declares, "The bunny is back."

When you started out in Chicago in the '50s, did you ever envision that the Playboy logo would be emblazoned on a Las Vegas hotel and that the bunnies would be dealing cards and serving drinks to Las Vegas visitors?

Well nothing that came to pass is something that I could have imagined. When I started the magazine, I didn't put a date on the first issue, because I wasn't sure there would be a second — I didn't have any money. So what came to pass thereafter, that it so influenced society, that it became a brand known globally, that it turned into all of these different kinds of things from playboy clubs to television shows, to casinos — I could not have imagined. I was kid who dreamt impossible dreams, but I could not have imagined what lay ahead for me.

How has Las Vegas changed since your first trip here?

Vegas was a very different town back then. A lot of the members of the Rat Pack were personal friends of mine. I saw them on more than one occasion. I remember I took a trip to San Francisco to see Lenny Bruce who I had just heard about, and that would actually be the late 1950s. I saw Lenny Bruce and then went up to Los Angeles and from Los Angeles to Las Vegas. So that would have been the first trip and that would be probably around '57, '58. Now its become the entertainment capital of the world. We all know phenomenal and unique history of the city, and its metamorphosis. It's a miracle.

Would you ever consider re-locating the Playboy Mansion to Las Vegas?

No, but I think it [Hugh Hefner Sky Villa at the Palms] will be, to some extent, a second home.

If you could invite anyone, living or dead, to a party at the Playboy Club in Las Vegas, who would you invite?

Marilyn Monroe probably first and foremost, probably Frank (Sinatra), and Elvis, and Sammy Davis who was a very good friend, and probably some of the people I grew up admiring when I was a kid: Cary Grant, (Humphrey) Bogart, the people who had an impact on me when I was growing up.

Beyond the Palms resort, what do you love about Las Vegas?

Well, the fact that it never sleeps. It's party central. I was raised in a very typical, Midwestern, Methodist home with a lot of repression, and I think that for me that was part of reason, consciously and unconsciously, for launching Playboy. Playboy was devoted to a celebration of life — and I think that the party theme, the very notion of a good party, has always been my response to Puritan repression. It was not a coincidence that when I did my very first television show, "Playboy's Penthouse," in the 1960s in Chicago, the theme for it was a party. After those shows, we would go to the original Playboy Mansion and have a late night party. I think that what makes Vegas unique is the fact that the party never ends.

Well, except when you have to work.

(Laughing) Yes, but in my case my work and play are kind of connected.

You have the ideal life.

That's true.

If Vegas was a woman, would she be a blonde, redhead, brunette or raven-haired beauty?

At various times she would probably be any one of the above. I think there are moments when she is any of the three or four: A blonde in the afternoon by the pool and a raven-haired exotic beauty later in the evening.

What's the secret to treating a lady right when you are in Las Vegas?

In any relationship it has to do with paying attention to what's going on. Don't be self involved. I don't think that it's a good line that wins the heart of a woman. I think it is listening, paying attention to what's going on — and a good sense of humor helps.

And finally, tuxedo or smoking jacket?

Smoking jacket.

Smoking jacket, you didn't even have to think about that ...

No (laughing).