

RIVIERA

ORANGE COUNTY | MODERN LUXURY™

ARTS & POWER SPECIAL

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O.C.'s Oh-So-Cool Culturati Club:

The Movers, The Shakers

The Art Makers!

Culture Class

ANEL



KEDRIC FRANCIS
Editor-in-Chief

Editor's Note

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When the Montage Resort Laguna Beach opened I remember thinking (and later writing) about how well it opened up the Laguna I know and love to the visitor, giving them views of and access to the rocky points, hidden coves and crashing surf. When anyone asks "Why is your magazine named *Riviera*?" I point them to the view from Studio restaurant, and the bluffs and beaches below.

I feel similarly about the next great Orange County destination, The Resort at Pelican Hill. I grew up exploring the hills and canyons between and behind Laguna Beach and CdM. My dad knew every road and trail behind the barbed wire fences of the then Irvine Ranch. There were still cows and cowboys up there then in the '80s (yes, the 1980s, wiseguys!), and we avoided both as best we could.

For my 25th birthday my Dad and I ran a 25-mile route he devised through what is now Crystal Cove State Park, Newport Coast, Shady Canyon and the Laguna Wilderness and down into Laguna Canyon. We covered trails from the coast to the hill where the microwave towers still stand, down to Bubble's Pond (remember?) in Laguna Canyon, and back. It was all open space then. Now, much of it is developed, and a Toll Road runs through it, but more than we ever hoped for at the time is preserved as open space, forever.

For the past decade or so, I've marveled at the coastal vistas from the backyards of many magnificent Pelican Crest and Pelican Hill mansions. The world-class sunsets, the view of the harbor as the lights come on below, with Catalina beyond. We've sort of had those views to ourselves these past years, but now with the opening of The Resort at Pelican Hill, we get to share them. That's what I was thinking as I lounged poolside at the Villa clubhouse.

The folks at The Irvine Co. invited us for a sneak preview of The Resort—or at least the super exclusive Villa side of the stunning new luxury getaway on Newport Coast. The bungalows, spa, restaurants and breathtaking coliseum pool weren't yet open. But our four-bedroom villa was.

Our Pelican Hill weekend coincided with the opening night party of the 2008 Biennial exhibit at Orange County Museum of Art. After that party closed down at the embarrassingly early hour of 10PM (thanks to our nightlife- and culture-averse friends at the NBPd), and we hit the after-party at Muldoon's, four of us trekked up the hill to our own personal (for the night, at least) bit of paradise.

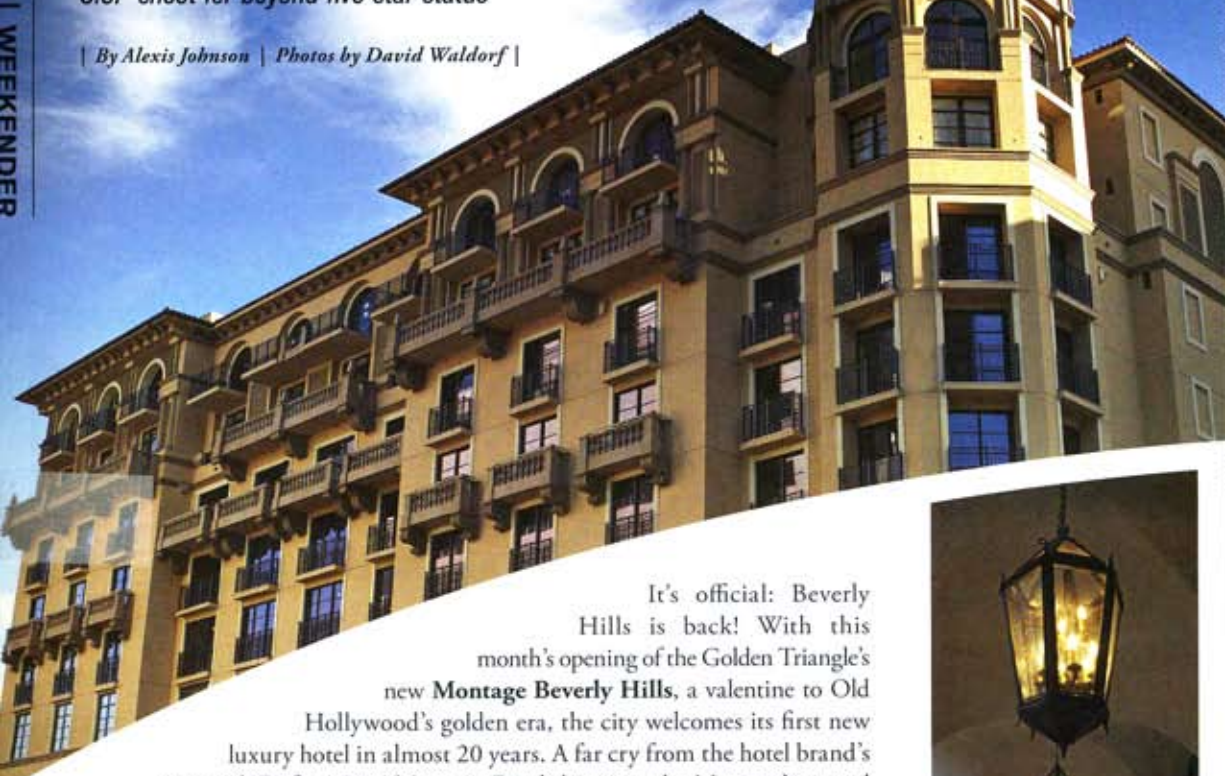
"We're hungry," they said, wanting to stop. But, seeing it as my duty to test out the resort's amenities, I suggested (OK, insisted!) that we order from the 24-hour room service menu. Oops, my bad! See, we were staying during a pre-opening dry run at the resort, and I forgot (or hadn't read my welcoming letter telling me) that room service ended at 10PM during the preview.

So that's how we ended up eating pizza from Domino's at midnight. Now that's not *that* unusual of an activity, though it probably wouldn't make any *Riviera* "best of" dining stories. What is a bit different is asking your butler to put in the order! The über-professional staff handled it with aplomb, personally delivering two boxes of pizza to a \$2,700-per-night villa for what I'm certain was the first—and quite likely the last—time (though one can never say, with the Hollywood celeb-types that will soon be swarming the place!) It's one thing to provide superlative service when and where expected, but this was truly world-class... Just like those stunning views from the coast of our Riviera. Happy Holidays!
kfrancis@modernluxury.com

Med Alert!

Two Euro-inspired luxury hotels—one in L.A., the other in O.C.—shoot for beyond five-star status

| By Alexis Johnson | Photos by David Waldorf |



It's official: Beverly Hills is back! With this month's opening of the Golden Triangle's new **Montage Beverly Hills**, a valentine to Old Hollywood's golden era, the city welcomes its first new luxury hotel in almost 20 years. A far cry from the hotel brand's Arts-and-Crafts-inspired Laguna Beach location, the Montage's second property—a 1920s-style, sand-colored, 201-room Spanish Revival villa—covers nearly an entire city block. Intended all along as the brand's first location (except the Laguna Beach site became available first), the 350,000-square-foot hotel has been five years in the making, and now opens after two-and-a-half years of artisans working around the clock on such features as 40 kinds of imported stone, hand-laid mosaics and trompe l'oeil murals. "We have modern construction. We have a great location. We're incorporating the latest in everything," says managing director Ali Kasikci. "But we want to be different, as well."

Difference comes in the form of open space, which, as landscape architect Nancy Goslee Power points out, is a precious commodity. Her garden courtyard is the first park to be constructed within the Triangle in nearly 25 years. Surprise: It's not for guests only. Connecting Beverly and Cañon, the park will be maintained by the hotel but open to all pedestrians. "One of my goals is to have the park be a sanctuary in the middle of Beverly Hills," says Goslee Power.

Guests and locals alike will also have access to the Conservatory (a glass-walled rooftop dining room); a 20,000-square-foot spa modeled after a Turkish hamam; and an opulent chef's table for 12–16, replete with fireplace and hand-painted ceilings, nestled in the granite-topped display kitchen. Don't worry about parking, either: The Montage boasts 1,100 underground spots. Expect more foot traffic, as well; in addition to the hotel's street-level retail, French Laundry chef Thomas Keller's Bouchon will pop up across the street in early 2009. Both are within an easy walk of Spago, the cocktail scenes at the Thompson Hotel and the Beverly Wilshire's Blvd, and the due-to-open-in-2009 Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in the old post office. "The per-square-foot rent is going up in the area," says Kasikci.

Some, of course, might wonder why the hotel brand didn't simply replicate the distinctive and highly praised Craftsman look it had already established in Laguna. But that was never the plan. Says Kasikci: "The philosophy behind Montage Hotels and Resorts is to build hotels appropriate to each location rather than carbon-copy one after the other and just implant it. We do what is appropriate for that location." 225 N. Cañon Dr., Beverly Hills, 310.860.7800, montagebeverlyhills.com. ■



PELICAN HILL

Renaissance Venice comes to Newport Coast this month with the arrival of the sumptuously sprawling **Resort at Pelican Hill**. Inspired by the harmoniously balanced work of 16th-century architecture god Andrea Palladio—famous for translating the social desires of the aristocracy into self-magnifying Roman-style villas—the ultra-luxurious 504-acre Irvine Co. resort makes each guest the doge of his or her own getaway pad. There are no hotel rooms per se—just 128 sequestered, 2,193- to 3,581-square-foot villas (all served by private butler) and 204 bungalows. Forget canals: Rooms look out over the Pacific, Crystal Cove State Park and two 18-hole, Tom Fazio-designed golf courses. Roman baths (located inside the 23,000-square-foot spa) and the 136-foot-in-diameter Coliseum pool (inspired by the antiquated amphitheater) continue the Italian theme. Live large and prosper! 2270 Pelican Hill Rd. S., Newport Coast, 949.467.6800, pelicanhill.com.

INN THE NOW Clockwise from top left: The façade of the new Montage Beverly Hills; the ocean-view private villas at the Resort at Pelican Hill in Newport Coast; design details at the Montage.