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Rum, Rumba and Roulette

Havana Before Castro richly illustrates Cuba's astonishing pre-Castro history

Los Angeles, California — July 2008 — Through vintage and contemporary photographs, brochures, and artifacts evocative of time and place, *Havana Before Castro: When Cuba Was a Tropical Playground* (Gibbs Smith, \$30.00, Paperback, August 2008) by Peter Moruzzi, tells the story of the city that was the most popular exotic destination for Americans during the forty years between World War I and Castro's revolution.

With the resignation of Fidel Castro as Cuba's leader in February, the world is turning its attention to the former "Paris of the Caribbean" with increasing curiosity towards its amazing pre-revolutionary past. *Havana Before Castro* satisfies this curiosity through 256 pages and more than 500 color and black & white images. In addition to illustrating Havana's mid-century history, the book gloriously depicts – through "then and now" photographs – what still remains for rediscovery in the 21st century.

Witness how Havana evolved from America's Prohibition haven to a heady blend of nightclubs, outrageous cabarets, all-night bars, and backstreet brothels. Visit the seamy Shanghai Theatre as well as the glamorous Tropicana, Montmartre, and Sans Souci nightclubs. Celebrate Cuban music's influence on American popular culture and explore the city's little known mid-century Modern architectural heritage.

An architectural historian by profession, **Peter Moruzzi** is a writer and lecturer who is an acknowledged expert on mid-century Modern architecture and design. Born in Concord, Massachusetts in 1961 and raised in Hawaii, Moruzzi graduated from the University of California at Berkeley and later attended the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. Moruzzi resides in the Silver Lake district of Los Angeles and in Palm Springs, California. He has been obsessed with the history of Cuba since 1987.

Founded in 1969, Gibbs Smith specializes in beautifully illustrated lifestyle books covering topics such as interior design, architecture, cooking, children's, home, green/sustainable and many more. Additional books from Gibbs Smith include *the Leisure Architecture of Wayne McAllister* and *Picturing Los Angeles*.

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Havana Before Castro: When Cuba Was a Tropical Playground

By Peter Moruzzi (Gibbs Smith, \$30.00, Paperback, August 2008)

- ❖ Shows how Havana evolved from America's Prohibition haven and rich man's playground to a heady blend of glittering nightclubs, outrageous cabarets, all-night bars, and backstreet brothels.
- ❖ Visits Havana's seamy Shanghai Theatre as well as its glamorous Tropicana, Montmartre, and Sans Souci nightclubs. Tours the stately hotels Sevilla-Biltmore and Nacional, and ultramodern 1958 Havana Riviera Hotel and Habana Hilton.
- ❖ Lingers at La Floridita – the cradle of the daiquiri cocktail (one of Ernest Hemingway's favorite watering holes) – rubs elbows with Frank Sinatra at Sloppy Joe's Bar, and explains why Cuban cigars remain the world's most highly prized.
- ❖ Celebrates the influence of Cuban music on American popular culture – the rumba, mambo, cha-cha-cha, and salsa – from its earliest stars such as Xavier Cugat and Desi Arnaz to the Buena Vista Social Club.
- ❖ Explores the city's stunning architectural heritage, particularly its Havana Modernism that is unique to Cuba's topography and climate.
- ❖ Follows the parade of corrupt presidents who, along with American mobsters such as Meyer Lansky, welcomed the mass tourism that led to Havana becoming a tropical Vegas swirling in a haze of rum and cigars, backed by a conga beat.