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SUMMER 2009



GILMORE

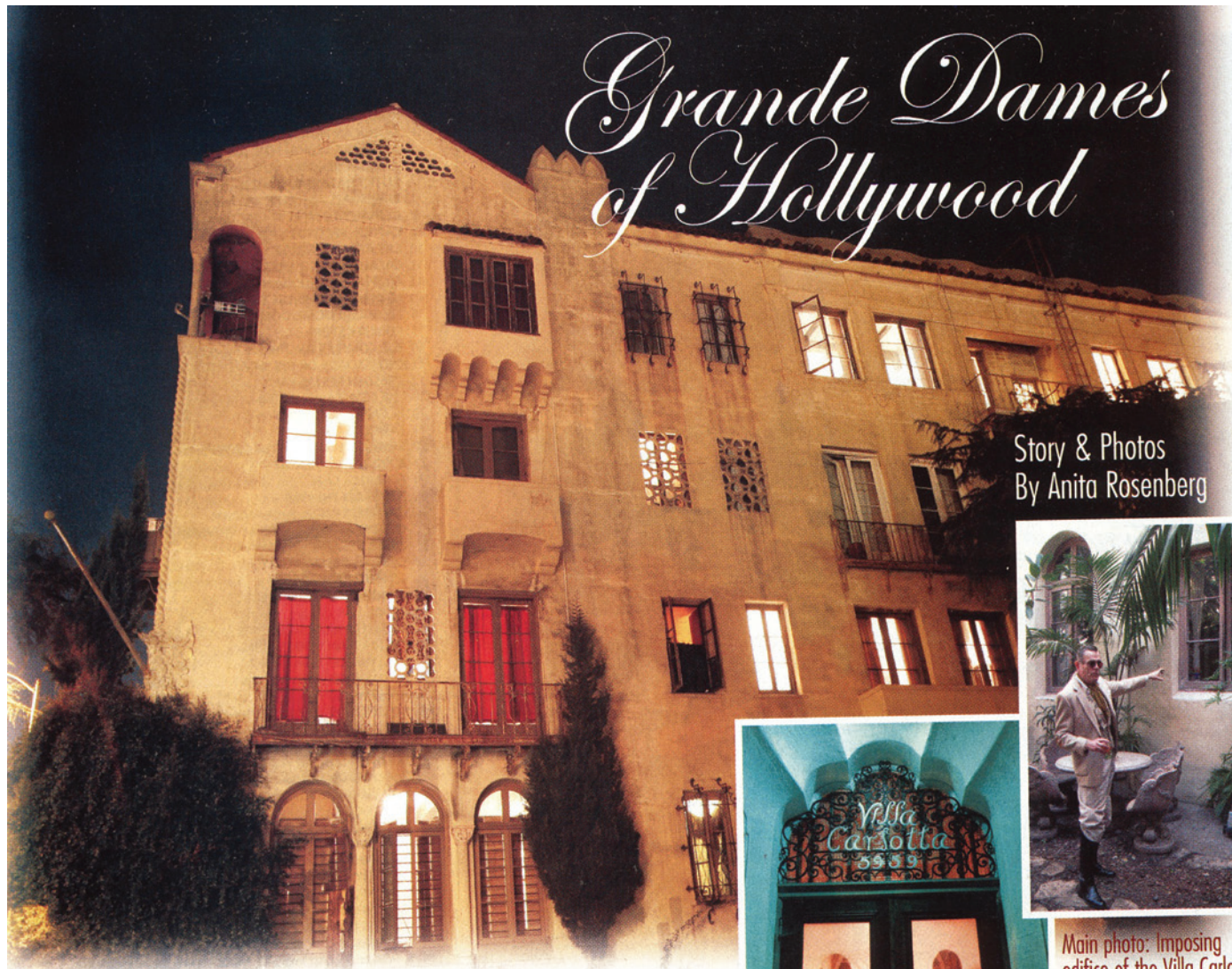
Celebrating Summer!

**Visiting Hollywood's
Grande Dames**

VISUAL ARTS THEATRE MUSIC FILM PLACES OF INTEREST CALENDAR ... AND MORE

Grande Dames of Hollywood

Story & Photos
By Anita Rosenberg



Starlets and divas have called Hollywood home since the movies first called *Action!* Some of those early legends of the silver screen are long gone, but Grande Dames with names like Villa Carlotta, The Fontenoy, and El Royale still stand tall, proud and glamorous. On your tour of Hollywood, a visit to these remarkable villas and chateaus will bring Hollywood's past into the present.

Villa Carlotta

The Villa Carlotta Apartments at 5959 Franklin Avenue were built in 1927 by Luther T. Mayo Inc. and architect Arthur E. Harvey for Eleanor Ince, the widow of Hollywood silent-film pioneer Thomas Ince. The couple's original house was across the street where they built the Chateau Elysee (now the Church of Scientology Celebrity Centre.) As the story goes, the Villa Carlotta was built to house the staff of the Chateau Elysee and rumors spread that William Randolph Hearst felt badly about Thomas Ince's death aboard his yacht and gave Eleanor the Villa Carlotta as a gift.

This four-story, forty-eight unit villa was a long-term residential hotel where notables such as Edward G. Robinson, George Cukor, Louella Parsons and



Main photo: Imposing edifice of the Villa Carlotta.

Above: Resident Don Paul shows us Louella Parsons' window through which '40s Hollywood gossip emerged.

Left: Entrance glows with grandeur

Marian Davies to name a few, lived. Longtime resident, Louella Parsons, called it "Nellie Ince's Villa Carlotta" in her autobiography, *The Gay Illiterate*.

Surrounding a fantasy-like garden patio and a dramatic lobby, the Villa Carlotta has always been a hub of creative activity with countless soirees filled with actors, musicians, and artists echoing through the hallways.

Recently, music videos for Seal and Smashing Pumpkins were shot in the lobby, and the TV series *Monk* used the Villa to re-create old Hollywood.

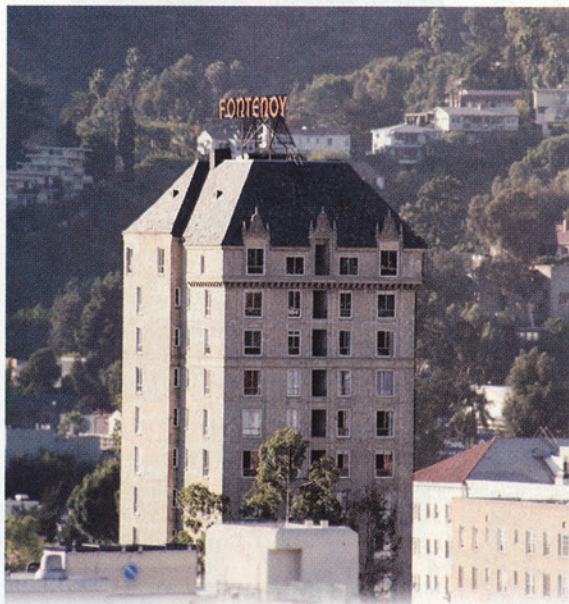
The Villa's most famous resident, Louella Parsons, lived in a two-bedroom duplex where she created one of the most powerful voices in the movie business with her daily allotment of Hollywood gossip. In the 1940s, Louella would type up her stories for the *Los Angeles Examiner* from her dining table. She would phone the paper once her piece was ready and they would send a messenger who would run

into the courtyard where she would hand her story out the window into his waiting hands. It was rumored that she would overhear gossip from her neighbors that would then shamelessly find its way into her column.

Located in the heart of Hollywood in the trendy area now known as "Franklin Village", tenants mingle with other Beachwood Canyon locals at nearby Bourgeois Pig for espresso, Birds for roasted chicken, and dine on Penne Vodka at La Poubelle.

The waiting list for the building is over a year. The general style is Italian and Spanish with wrought iron balconies and grilles. The hominess is part of the Carlotta's appeal and the building's lobby still reflects an article written in 1929, "It must appear like a home to the senses, to the eye, to the ear, even to the nose. It must feel like a home so that visitor or occupant may feel at home."

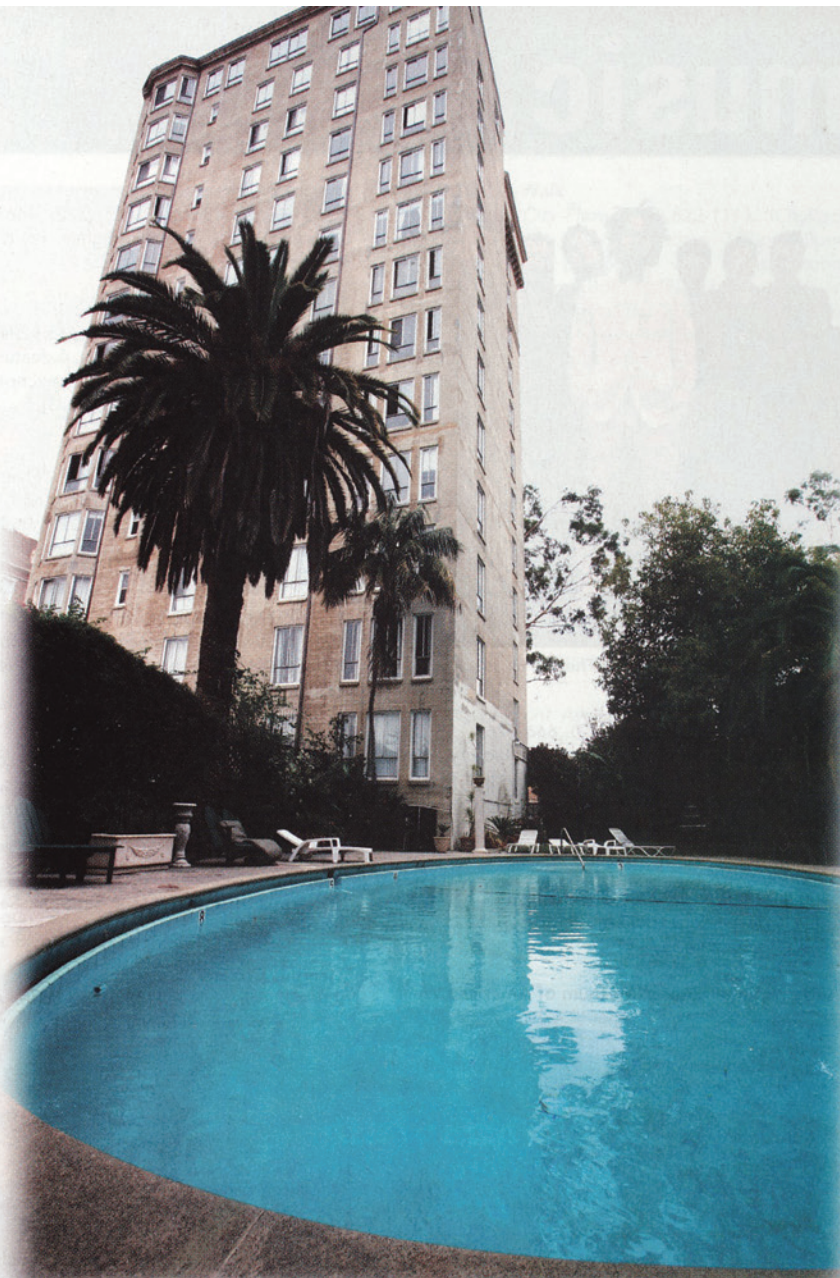
Resident and bon vivant, Don Paul, is an actor/singer who has been living here since 1985, "If you lived in the Villa Carlotta today you would love the fact that you live in a place steeped in history and rich in architecture. The detailed original fixtures are priceless. The quality of the work is outstanding and it is a registered historic landmark.



Fontenoy

The Chateau-style Fontenoy at 1811 N. Whitley Ave. was built in 1928 by designer Leland A. Bryant. Built at the beginning of the Depression during the Hollywood building boom, all apartments were originally decorated identically. Early tenants had the flexibility of renting by the week or the month.

Coined the Chelsea Hotel-West, Johnny Depp and Nicholas Cage have both lived at the Fontenoy. Other notable residents include Crispin Glover who lived in the penthouse with collections of lizards and bats.



Far Left: The stylish Fontenoy stands proud overlooking the Hollywood Hills.

Above: The distinctive oval pool was the site of countless lavish - and lascivious - parties.

Left: 1920s style and elegance describes the Fontenoy's lobby.

Within walking distance of Hollywood Boulevard, the Fontenoy is close to the grille at Musso & Franks (Hollywood's oldest restaurant), sushi at Geisha House, and club hopping at the newly renovated Kress.

This thirteen-story Class A construction contains fifty units. Each floor has a one-bedroom and three

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singles. Since there are only four units per floor, every unit is on a corner. The building has a subterranean garage and a large yard with a distinctive oval swimming pool, an arched centered entrance with lattice windows, decorative molding and Dutch-style gables. The views are extraordinary and a major selling point is the view from above the fifth floor of the Hollywood sign, downtown, and the ocean.

El Royale

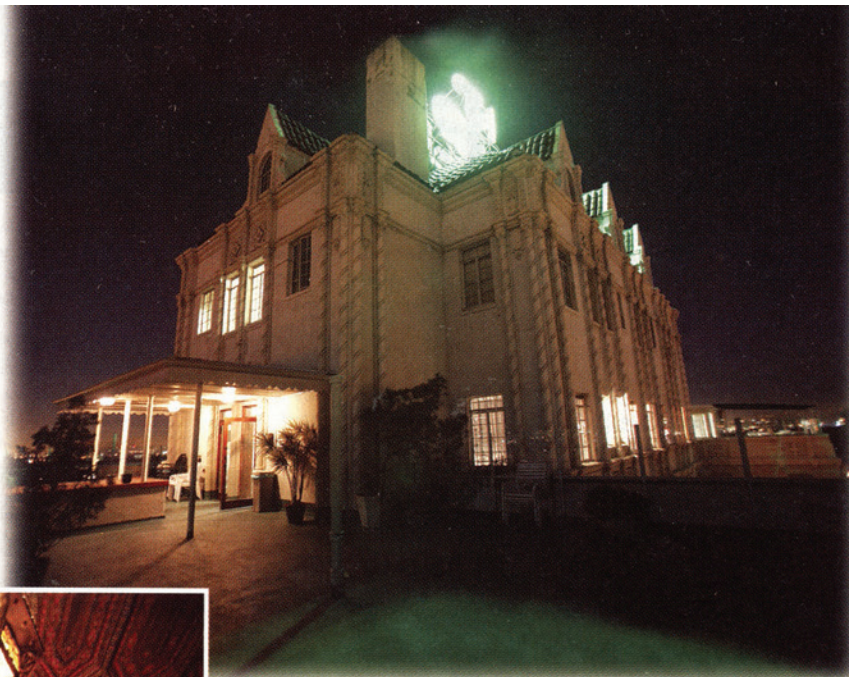
The El Royale at 450 N. Rossmore is compared with the Dakota apartments in New York City. It has a mystique and pedigree, built in 1927-29 and designed in the Spanish and French Renaissance-style by William Douglas Lee. When manager, Sandy Griffin, started working at the El Royale in 1974, the residents were mostly older women whose husbands had passed away and didn't want to keep their large houses in Hancock Park. "It almost turned into a senior citizen building." Today it's a curious mixture of these ladies of means and the new generation of hip, trendy showbiz residents.

In the 1930s and 40s, the apartments were furnished for nearby Paramount Studios contract players. There is a real pride in the original architecture with its remarkable painted ceilings in the lobby. The 97-year-old owner, Martha Scott, still lives in one of the penthouses.

The historic hallways of the El Royale have been used in numerous movies as New York City. George Raft, Loretta Young, Judy Holliday, and Pierre Salinger used to live here. Mae West was a resident until she got thrown out for loud parties, so she bought the Ravenswood apartment building down the street where she lived out her days. Other notables include William Frawley (Fred Mertz from *I Love Lucy*), Nicholas Cage, Uma Thurman, Cameron Diaz, Ben Stiller and Billy Zane.

Down the road from Hollywood on Rossmore (which turns into Vine St.) the El Royale is officially in Hancock Park, but close enough to Hollywood and walking distance from Paramount Studios. Huddled in the middle of other fabulous Grande Dames, the El Royale is the grandest of them all.

The 58-unit building has been a celebrity magnet



Above: The 1920s El Royale says "Old Hollywood" like no other.

Left: Ornate, hand-painted lobby ceiling is worth the visit alone.

Below: Grand entrance welcomes residents, a mix of old money and hip young showbiz people.



Huddled in the middle of other fabulous Grande Dames, the El Royale is the grandest of them all.

since its doors first opened.

It's classy, elegant, and a throwback to the golden age of Hollywood. The rooftop deck offers astonishing views all the way from Mount Baldy to Marina del Rey. It is so popular that there are several hundred names on the waiting list. "We have seen a whole change of clientele over the last 10 years," says Griffin. "About 50 percent of our tenants are New Yorkers. We have 24-hour desk and valet service. These things are rare in Los Angeles, but they are common on the East Coast." The El Royale is listed as an historic landmark and as the residents become younger, they bring respect for this classic Grande Dame and an appreciation for the bohemian atmosphere that remains. **DH**