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Hotel Flashback: A Desert Oasis Reborn in Scottsdale

Posted by [Alissa Ponchione](#) on March 14, 2018 in [Projects](#) | [1 comment](#)

By Mary Beth Klatt

The original [Mountain Shadows](#) resort, built in 1959 in Scottsdale, had a distinctive Rat Pack appeal. The sprawling building, designed by real estate developer Del Webb, had the largest known swimming pool in Arizona. It attracted Hollywood actors such as Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Bob Hope, Lucille Ball, Elizabeth Taylor, and Robert Stack, among others. They came to enjoy golfing, swimming, and drinking cocktails while listening and dancing to a live orchestra at night in the shadows of the Camelback and Mummy Mountains.



Hearth '61 in the upgraded Mountain Shadows from Mark Zeff



The sunken living room at Mountain Shadows

The resort eventually closed in 2004 and remained vacant for more than a decade. Expectations were high when [Westroc Hospitality](#) and [Woodbine Development](#) eventually acquired and demolished the iconic facility, and for \$100 million rebuilt a more intimate, 183-room hotel with 41 new resort condominiums, which opened last year.



A look at the resort in its heyday in the 1950s

New York designer [Mark Zeff](#) and Scottsdale-based [Allen + Philp Architects](#) were hired to recreate the reimagined hotel, paying homage to its 1950s roots. This begins with the original concrete sunscreen blocks by renown midcentury modern architect Ralph Haver, salvaged from the original hotel, in the front entrance. Inside, an open concept with floor-to-ceiling windows and a neutral palette bring the outside in. Here, a sunken living room with a fireplace (common in early 1960s homes) mixes with eclectic furnishings, bronze, and warm woods, which soften the minimalist interior. Along with F&B outpost Hearth '61 and a refreshed golf course, an onsite gallery celebrates Arizona. Outside, a waterfall connects two 75-foot swimming pools that overlook the mountains.



The minimalist Camelback Presidential suite at Mountain Shadows

That view inspired Zeff: “Growing up in South Africa, I spent a lot of time in nature,” he recalls. “I used to stand and appreciate the stretches of wilderness from the hilltops near my home. The mountains gave form to my creative process and sparked my idea to keep the interiors simple and modern. That way, one can appreciate the views in a relaxed environment.”

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