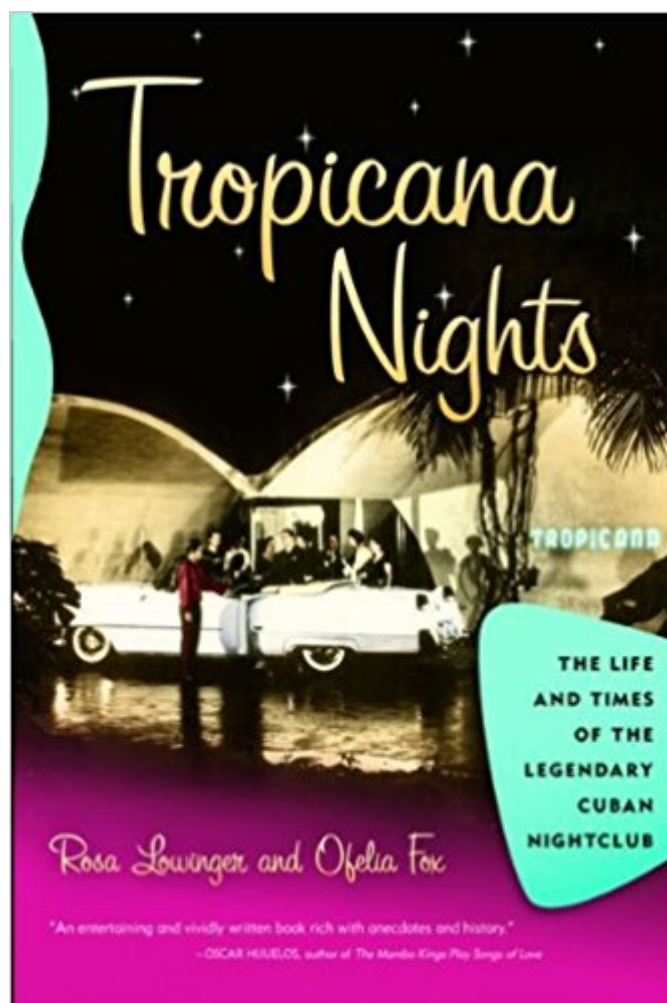


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Tropicana Nights: The Life And Times Of The Legendary Cuban Nightclub



Synopsis

It was to Havana what the Moulin Rouge was to Paris or the Blue Note to New York. The brightest jewel in 1950s Cuban nightlife, Tropicana was a "paradise under the stars" where you could gamble, hear the finest mambo and jazz musicians, and ogle the extravagantly risqué floorshows. Nat "King" Cole played Tropicana; so did Josephine Baker. Americans-celebrities and suburbanites both-were drawn to its kinetic sensuality and tropical setting. And Tropicana remained a uniquely Cuban institution; unlike most Havana nightclubs, it operated free from the American mob's control. Journalist Rosa Lowinger and Ofelia Fox, widow of Tropicana's last owner, vividly portray the cultural richness and roiling social problems of pre-Revolutionary Cuba and take the reader on an intimate insider's tour of one of the world's most glamorous venues at its most brilliant moment.

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Customer Reviews

Tropicana opened in 1939 at Villa Mina, a six-acre suburban Havana estate with lush tropical gardens. It's still going strong, after a number of setbacks, not the least of which was Fidel Castro's squelching of nightlife and other social outlets. After Martin Fox took over in 1950, choreographer Roderico "Rodney" Neyra staged spectacular shows in the club's newly constructed Arcos de Cristal, parabolic concrete arches and glass walls soaring over an indoor stage. Headliners included Josephine Baker, Nat King Cole, Celia Cruz, Xavier Cugat and Carmen Miranda; and celebrity visitors ranged from Brando and Durante to Hemingway and Piaf. Tracing the evolution of this "paradise under the stars" against the backdrop of Cuban culture, politics in pre-Castro Cuba and

mob connections, journalist Lowinger (Latina) interweaves the personal stories of Fox and his widow, playwright-teacher Ofelia Fox, who recalls, "It was a life set to music. What could be better?" The superb talents of Cuban music's Golden Age were resurrected in the Oscar-nominated film Buena Vista Social Club (1998), but Lowinger's scintillating chronicle offers an overview—•not found in that film—•of the florid, splashy era when "Cuba was an endless party, and Tropicana was its epicenter." Photos. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Lowinger and Fox tell the story of Havana's notorious Tropicana nightclub, the template from which Las Vegas was made after the corrupt Batista regime collapsed, and the Tropicana was closed. In its day the Tropicana was a prime site for gambling, elegance, seeing and being seen--a resort of choice for international gangsters and jet-setters. Readers who enjoyed Anthony Haden-Guest's "biography" of Studio 54, *The Last Party* (1997), will enjoy comparing the differing modes of showmanship, decadence, and ostentation current in the Tropicana's 1950s heyday to those of 1970s New York's debauched disco scene. Fox married Tropicana owner Martin Fox in 1952 and helped him run it until 1962, when they decamped to Miami. She and Lowinger take pains to establish that the Tropicana was hardly a sleazy Mob hangout but rather a world-class entertainment venue that discriminating gangsters happened to enjoy frequenting. An excellent resource on Cuban popular culture, lavish entertainment, and everyday life just before and just after Castro, this is also an exciting and rewarding read. Mike TribbyCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Tropicana Nights was a great read about the famed Cuban nightclub The Tropicana. There were a lot of historical facts in the book which were quite interesting about the politics of the era. It was also nice to read about the movie stars who frequented the club and the black and white pictures that were included within the book. I have recommended this book to many of my friends. Interesting read.

Written in conjunction with the Tropicana owner's wife Ofelia Fox and based as well on extensive, detailed research and a plethora of personal interviews by co-author Rosa Lowinger, this work brought you into their lives as they lived them in pre-Castro Cuba. From the personal idiosyncracies of selected players to the talent and discipline required to keep a major entertainment venue afloat, the book struck a good balance without overwhelming the reader with academic details. Well done,

quite interesting and recommended.

I haven't read such a great book in a long time. The author has captured not only the early history, culture, and politics of Cuba but also the real stories (1940's-1950's) directly with the Tropicana's widow (Ofelia Fox). Numerous interviews with Tropicana's past employees (artists) from the early days were fascinating and the shows and costumes became more and more complex over time. You can imagine yourself there gambling or watching the famous cabaret shows with the socialites of the glory days! Her descriptions of the physical regions of Cuba and Havana's art and architecture were also outstanding.

Wish I had read *Tropicana Nights Before* a recent trip to Havana. Rosa Lowinger gives an excellent road trip through Cuban architecture, history, and culture. Her descriptions of Tropicana's origins, owners and impact, the case study of the Mafia and its ties in Cuba and the US, and the tragic revolution and associated diaspora make this a valuable read.

I visited the Tropicana in Havana in October, 1959... only a couple of months before the departure of Batista and Castro's entrance into Havana. While I knew virtually nothing of the 'politics' of Cuba at the time, I was aware of the tensions throughout the city. However, there are no memories of my visit to that beautiful country any more vivid than my evening at Tropicana; even though it has been fifty years (this month). *TROPICANA NIGHTS* helped me relive that evening and 'filled in the blanks' of history, culture, politics, and personality that were previously unknown to me. I found the book completely fascinating. If you have an interest in the Cuba of old, this is a 'must read!'

A page turner for sure! Fascinating interweaving of the history of the Tropicana night club with the events surrounding the Cuban revolution. After visiting the venues described in this book, I couldn't put the book down. Extremely readable, and well written and researched.

A good historical perspective of Havana using the Tropicana to bring out much of Cuba's recent history. I lost interest about half way through and put the book down, but this could be because I am not that interested in the kinds of people or events that would be associated with the Tropicana.

This book was just okay - I enjoyed it when she was discussing the politics of the time, but most of the book is about different musical acts in Cuba. I wasn't familiar with most of them. Honestly I

wouldn't recommend.

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