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PRESENTING

MOTEL CALIFORNIA

A Pictorial History of the Motel in The Golden State

Post-World War II economic prosperity drew people to the roads in record numbers—for business as well as for pleasure. In response to the sharp increase in American mobility, independently owned roadside motels rapidly materialized along the nation’s thoroughfares. In an effort to attract business in a highly competitive market, many motel owners embraced exotic themes. For some travelers, the motel experience was the closest they might come to visiting the Hawaiian Islands ... or even the moon.

Over time, consolidation and corporatization drove mom-and-pop locations out of the motel business. Theme-based marketing was pushed aside for standardization. Gorgeous neon signs were removed and replaced with cheaper backlit plastic or monument signs. Interior décor became bland and conservative. The potential for lawsuits killed the motel pool slide.

MOTEL CALIFORNIA is a celebration of sparkling blue pools, flashing neon signs, automatic ice machines and bleached white towels. It is the story of the rapid rise and subsequent decline of the individually owned mom-and-pop motel in The Golden State. It is an exploration of theme-based marketing and a documentation of American culture at perhaps what will be the most prosperous time in United States history.

About the Author:

Heather M. David is a cultural historian and freelance writer. She is the author of the book *Mid-Century by the Bay* and numerous articles on American popular culture and historic preservation. She is an advocate for the preservation of mid-century architecture, art, and signage – with a focus on California Modernism.

Product Details:

- Hardcover Book with Jacket
- Publisher: CalMod Books, 1st edition (2017)
- ISBN 978-1-5323-3307-1
- Product Dimensions: 8" (H) X 10"(W) Landscape
- 184 pages
- Price: \$45.00 US Retail
- Design by Benjamin Shaykin
- Edited by Rita Arens

MOTEL CALIFORNIA features over 150 California motels – across the state. A brief history of the motel is provided as well as chapters covering motel architecture, themed motels, restaurants, rooms, pools, and signs.

Publisher Web Site:

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