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SECOND CHANCES

Three of the newest chic boutique hotels in SoCal hide racy posts behind their fresh facades—and that history only adds to their hip factor.

By Tara Egan



Clockwise from above: Palihotel Culver City retains the building's old signage atop its new front exterior; Gold Diggers' one-dingy digs get new life from an overhaul that includes original artwork and posh velvet accents; Hotel Joaquin—formerly a rundown roadside hotel—waves with upscale furniture and luxurious in-suite bathrooms.



Shiny, new hotels decked out with all the bells and whistles are often amazing, but there's something to be said for staying in a spot that boasts a backstory. After all, antiquity is something that can't be built in like a shelf-worthy bookcase. A story from the good ol' days is easily a begging point for your overnighter—all the better if it's a bit juicy.

The Boarding House Revival

Palihotel Culver City (palihotel.com), opened in January, is a former 1920s boarding house once called the West End Hotel. Among its boarders was a young Joan Crawford, who lived in the modest hotel for months when she was barely 21 and just starting out. Back then, the Hollywood starlet "commuted" from her room to the MGM lot (now Sony Pictures Studios) about three blocks away on West Washington Boulevard. Now Crawford's former digs are reimagined with modern, urban interiors that nod to their 1920s

bohemian art deco roots. Guest rooms feature bold blues mixed with plaid, striped and floral-patterned fabrics, and—in a far cry from Crawford's time—upscale marble bathrooms. The hotel's restaurant, *Simone*, also winks to the past, drawing inspiration from Paris bistros. *Rooms from \$225 to \$400 per night*

The Revamped Rock n' Roll Retreat

There's no place with a seedier history than West Hollywood's **Gold Diggers** (gold-diggers.com), which metamorphosed from a famously rowdy bikini bar topped with a dingy long-empty hotel into a hip 11-room haven, trendy bar and recording studio as of September. A portion of the building was home to infamous director Ed Wood's production studios in the 1950s, plus bands like Slayer and the pre-Guns N' Roses group Hollywood Rose allegedly practiced there. Today, the property's history and eccentricity have been re-embraced. The two floors of hotel rooms were overhauled by Wick Architecture and Design (wickarch.com) and interior designer Tiffany Howell

of Silver Lake's Night Palm home decor boutique (nightpalm.com). Jewel-toned velvet furniture and original art—including pieces by musician Andrew Savage of the band Pasquet Courts—shore up the decor. Naturally, there's a curated selection of vinyl in each room, too. *Rooms from \$160 to \$360 per night*

The Revitalized Roadside Motel

Orange County's shabby The Motor Inn Laguna Beach, a rundown 1940s roadside motel, has re-emerged as **Hotel Joaquin** (hoteljoaquin.com), a 22-room luxury destination that feels more like a well-curated home than a hotel. And while no lurid tales have emerged from its background, its transformation—from dilapidated pit stop to must-see hot spot—is plenty dramatic. Interior designer Robert McKinley (robertmckinley.com) reimagined the space, drawing inspiration from 1950s California beach culture and St. Barts to recast the atmosphere. Turntables, instead of televisions, complete the laid-back refuge that's quite difficult to leave. *Rooms from \$579 to \$819 per night*