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HOME

Hot Property: Who lived there? Bing, Bing, Bing

Three properties once owned by Bing Crosby are up for sale.



By Lauren Beale, Los Angeles Times

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Bing Crosby slept here. And here. And here too. We're talking three former Crosby properties, all for sale.

Der Bingle sang of a "White Christmas," but the crooner's heart was in sunny Southern California, where he invested in real estate and built houses. One that recently came on the market in Rancho Mirage is priced at \$3,495,000.

The sprawling 6,700-square-foot home sits on more than an acre with a hillside backdrop in the Thunderbird Heights neighborhood. The décor incorporates midcentury film posters — the Moroccan studio screening room is an ode to Crosby's "Road to" movies — and other Hollywood memorabilia and photographs.

The current owner is entrepreneur Jeff Teller. About seven years ago, a real estate agent asked Teller and his father if they had any interest in touring the former Crosby spread.

"My dad, who is 72, remembered living near them in L.A. and thought it would be fun to see," said Teller, who was considering building a family home in La Quinta but was concerned about how long it might take to get a contractor.

He and his father were awestruck from the minute they walked through the 10-foot front doors. The back of the house consisted of sliding glass doors that opened to views of the Coachella Valley, he said.

"He looked at me, and I looked at him," Teller recalled, and they arrived at the same decision: "Let's buy this."

The single-story house, built in 1957, has an outdoor swimming pool and spa with adjacent fireplaces and a putting green. Crosby often entertained celebrities around the pool.

Five bedrooms and 5 1/2 bathrooms include a wing named the Kennedy Suite in honor of President Kennedy's 1962 visit to Palm Springs. The suite has a kitchen, living area and separate entrance.

On the other side of the house is the master bedroom wing, which Teller favors. "It has an outdoor shower with these quartz walls that Bing had brought in," he said.

The estate has been used from time to time as a resort rental at rates of \$2,000 to \$3,000 a night, depending on the season.

"We loved spending the holidays out there," said Teller, who has listed the property with Valery Neuman of Windermere Real Estate. "We could sit in the pool and see the snow on the mountains."

A Toluca Lake home owned by Crosby that was listed at \$10 million last year has been reduced to \$5,995,000.

Although the Southern Colonial has had a succession of Hollywood owners, including actors Andy Griffith and Jerry Van Dyke, it is still identified as Crosby's house.

He lived there until 1943, when the 20-room residence was gutted in a Christmas tree fire, according to Los Angeles Times archives. Crosby was golfing at the time, and his wife, Dixie Lee, and their four sons were unharmed.

The rebuilt 7,132-square-foot house has six bedrooms, 5 1/2 bathrooms, a billiards room, a den with a wet bar and five fireplaces.

Two acres of gated grounds include a tennis court with grandstands, an Olympic-size swimming pool and a two-bedroom, two-bathroom guesthouse with a kitchen. Ginger Glass of Coldwell Banker, Beverly Hills North, has the listing.

New to the market is a third Crosby house, one that he built in Brentwood in the '30s, according to title history.

Listed at \$2,399,000, the home has almost 2,500 square feet of living space, including three bedrooms. The master suite has a vaulted, open-beamed ceiling, a walk-in closet and a master bath with steamer shower, separate tub and tumbled marble. Michael Barasch of Rodeo Realty's Encino office is the listing agent.

Also of note: Crosby once owned the site of Candy Spelling's 4.7-acre Holmby Hills residence. His 15,000-square-foot home was torn down in the early '80s to build the current 56,500-square-foot manse, which is listed at \$150 million.

By the time Crosby died in 1977 at age 74, he had won a lead actor Oscar for "Going My Way" (1944). He had paired with Bob Hope in the "Road to" movies from 1940 to 1962 and had been the top box-office draw five different years. He had recorded more than three dozen No. 1 hits, and he had seen his rendition of "White Christmas" spend 11 weeks at the top of the charts. It remains the bestselling single of all time.

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