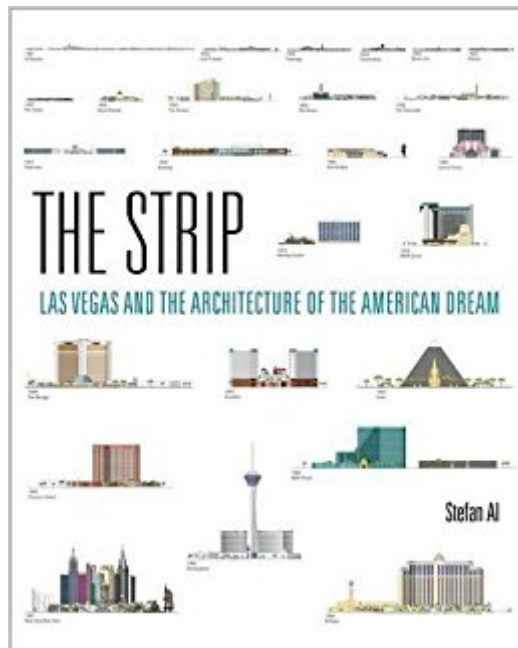


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# The Strip: Las Vegas And The Architecture Of The American Dream (MIT Press)



## Synopsis

The Las Vegas Strip has impersonated the Wild West, with saloon doors and wagon wheels; it has decked itself out in midcentury modern sleekness. It has illuminated itself with twenty-story-high neon signs, then junked them. After that came Disney-like theme parks featuring castles and pirates, followed by replicas of Venetian canals, New York skyscrapers, and the Eiffel Tower. (It might be noted that forty-two million people visited Las Vegas in 2015 -- ten million more than visited the real Paris.) More recently, the Strip decided to get classy, with casinos designed by famous architects and zillion-dollar collections of art. Las Vegas became the "implosion capital of the world" as developers, driven by competition, got rid of the old to make way for the new -- offering a non-metaphorical definition of "creative destruction." In *The Strip*, Stefan Al examines the many transformations of the Las Vegas Strip, arguing that they mirror transformations in America itself. The Strip is not, as popularly supposed, a display of architectural freaks but representative of architectural trends and a record of social, cultural, and economic change. Al tells two parallel stories. He describes the feverish competition of Las Vegas developers to build the snazziest, most tourist-grabbing casinos and resorts -- with a cast of characters including the mobster Bugsy Siegel, the eccentric billionaire Howard Hughes, and the would-be political kingmaker Sheldon Adelson. And he views the Strip in a larger social context, showing that it has not only reflected trends but also magnified them and sometimes even initiated them. Generously illustrated with stunning color images throughout, *The Strip* traces the many metamorphoses of a city that offers a vivid projection of the American dream.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A bracing portrait of Las Vegas's architectural arms race... A muscular, often funny book accessible to any lay reader. - [The Wall Street Journal \(Best Books to Read\)](#) A new visitor to Las Vegas, or even one who hasn't been there in a decade or two, can't help but be overwhelmed by the mélange of architectural styles thrust cheektojowl against one another. Fortunately, Dutch architect Stefan Al is here with a new book, *The Strip: Las Vegas and the Architecture of the American Dream*, to unclutter the seeming chaos. - [The Santa Barbara Independent](#) Lavishly illustrated with both current and vintage photographs, *The Strip* is a well-told piece of narrative research that should grip both design and those who relish tales of capitalism and culture - [Civil Engineering](#) An insightful analysis of Las Vegas's resort architecture - [Las Vegas Weekly \(Spring Picks\)](#) The Strip takes a high-speed transect down one of the world's most important streets as it evolved from a cowpath to the Las Vegas Strip, a tour which yields essential insights into larger American social dynamics. (William L. Fox, Director, Center for Art + Environment, Nevada Museum of Art) Finally, the book that explains Las Vegas without reducing it to a caricature. Nearly 45 years after *Learning from Las Vegas*, Stefan Al brings the history of this iconic American landscape up to date. (Margaret Crawford, Professor of Architecture, University of California, Berkeley) To understand America, the cultural critic Neil Postman said in 1985, we have only to look to Las Vegas. This rich, lively historical account of the city's experiments with architectural form show how Las Vegas -- sometimes marvelous, sometimes dystopic, always shape shifting -- has long served as a model for urban design and remains one today as casino capitalism continues its global march. (Natasha Dow Schifano, Associate Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication, New York University; author of *Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas*) Stefan Al's *The Strip* is a fascinating examination of the social, cultural, political, and ethical currents shaping the evolution of Las Vegas, from its origins as a lonesome desert railroad outpost into the gambling and entertainment mecca that it is today. Al presents the city in all its complexity -- brimming with extravagance, immorality, ambition, corruption, luck, and loss -- providing the reader with an enlightening look into the history of Las Vegas as a cultural icon, and its phenomenal manifestation as a symbolic reflection of American culture. (Thom Mayne, FAIA, Distinguished Professor, Architecture and Urban Design, University of California, Los Angeles; Design Director, Morphosis) Stefan Al joins such astutely fascinated European Robinson Crusoes as

Jean Baudrillard and Reyner Banham, washed ashore on the sands (and in this case The Sands) of American hyperreality. Al sees Vegas not simply as metaphor for what animates and ails us, nor as occasion for learned analytic theatrics (as if the parking lot of Caesars Palace really were aswim with chariots). His is a wonderfully observed account of the architectural development of the Strip at the singular, mesmerizing convergence of postwar car culture, mafia power, A-bomb blasts, suburbanism, libertinism, mass consumption, TV, LSD, and unself-conscious, hyperbolic kitsch -- and its discontents. The Strip is a definitive account of their surreal spawn along an axis at once emblematic and truly weird. (Michael Sorkin, Distinguished Professor of Architecture, City College of New York; Principal, Michael Sorkin Studio; President, Terreform) Al's Las Vegas is a story of the American national identity, and once you've bought in, this compulsive read won't lose you a dime.~ (Publishers Weekly (starred review))

Stefan Al, a Dutch architect and urban designer, is Associate Professor of Urban Design at the University of Pennsylvania. His books include Villages in the City and Mall City.

I've visited Las Vegas every year for the last quarter century and have witnessed first hand the changes detailed in the book. Although I was aware of the various stages since 1990, this book explains why they happened and certainly provides a better understanding of the periods. I stayed at the Luxor when the Nile River was flowing and the MGM Grand when it was the Emerald City. But I have one complaint and that is there could have been a lot more photos. There were many, but just not enough. For example, a map of MGM's Grand Adventure would have been appreciated.

A wonderful book about the Las Vegas Strip, where truth is stranger than fiction. The book brings the bizarre buildings of the Strip to life with incredible stories, colorful characters, and thoughtful analysis. This is architectural writing at its best. It's also a beautiful coffee table book with amazing photos!

I'm savoring the text, the overall approach to describing the one-of-a-kind evolution of this city--the stories behind how so many of us can be lured to the desert. This is NOT your typical hype book about Sin City; If you expect a coffee table book loaded with photos, this is not for you. But, BUT, if you are fascinated by the crafting of wordsmanship with anecdotes and observations along with a framework of architectural history... I double down guarantee you will be captivated. This book is also a keeper, you will want it on a convenient shelf, will probably dog ear pages -- things you will

want to read aloud to friends who thought they knew all there was to know about trends, about people, about the WHY things are what they seem to be, about why sometimes they are not. I say again though, if you are not one who enjoys text that stimulates your thoughts and connecting random dots, there are many options to purchase for glitz and glitter. For me, when released, the price was already a bargain. It is just plain fun!!

As a frequent visitor to Las Vegas for many years, I have seen the city's architecture change through the years. This book captures the full history and uniqueness of Las Vegas architecture in an insightful and accessible way. It also underlines the impact that Vegas architecture has on global design. From the hey days of the Flamingo, Stardust, the Sands and Las Vegas Hilton straight up to modern glitz of the Cosmopolitan and City Centre: it's all in this book to review and enjoy in detail.

So far, I am enjoying this book. I live in Vegas and I love the history, which is quite unique as perfectly good buildings are imploded to make way for new mega-resorts. The book is academically written with some cool photos and a great book jacket (cover).. My only gripe about the book is that when you remove the book jacket, the actual cover of the book is plain black. I'm sure this was done to save money, but I think it sucks especially because the jacket is really cool. Oftentimes when the jacket of a book is removed, the same image is printed on the cover. Not this one. I think it makes a good coffee table book and an interesting conversation starter especially for folks who either love or hate Vegas..

An insightful historical recount on the unique financial levers that has allowed the Las Vegas strip to continually reinvent itself, and take chances with architecture and landscape design, Dr. Stefan Al's book is an easy read for a layman, yet, proffers analysis that is deep with ties into culture, expectations, sex, sin and building design. A MUST READ!

Very insightful account of the legendary Las Vegas strip history and transformation. As someone who lived there for many years, I found it fascinating to see and learn about the architectural impact that put the city on the world stage. Treat yourself and your friends to this visual guide.

Insightful, entertaining, and smart, The Strip tells the real story of America. Full of history and anecdotes, it pulls the reader along one of the most iconic locations in the world. Glossy pictures and detailed renderings add to the reading experience. I highly recommend this book!

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