

AN APPLE A DAY

Without the leadership of Steve Jobs, does Apple have what it takes to stay on top?

By JOSEPH CAMERON

So it may not be a bad thing that the Ritz is closing sometime in early summer for a 27-month renovation. Hamed al Fayed, its owner, has been talking about it for five years. But if he ever had any doubt, clarity came in the form of a brutal rebuff last May when the French tourism ministry left the Ritz off its inaugural list of French “palaces,” the classification for five-star hotels of special character. The rebuff stung the Ritz, and the downgrade stuck. No matter that the hotel set the gold standard for hotel live when it first opened in an 18th-century residence on the Place Vendôme in 1898.

Or that when Ernest Hemingway dreamed of afterlife in heaven, he said “the action always takes place at the Paris Ritz.” Or that for more than 30 years, Coco Chanel slept in a suite at the Ritz. She brought in her own furniture instead of at her apartment on the nearby rue Cambon. Or that Maria Callas, Dré Malraux, Charlie Chap, Nixon, Greta Garbo, Truman Capote, Orson Welles, Marlene Dietrich, Gianni Versace, Oscar Wilde, Madonna, Elton John and George Clooney slept here and the rest is history and a day.

Many a well-heeled traveler and even many a Parisian have some memory of the Ritz. Mine was the Sweet 16 party of a friend of my daughters’. Some mothers were dripping in jewels, real ones, and the kids drank good champ



from elegant crystal flutes. I seem to recall that live birds flew out of a cake. My husband and I sneaked off to the Hemingway Bar. He sipped cognac and I sipped port. Slowly. The drinks were 24 euros apiece. It’s not much as go, but it was romantic to us. It was our one and only date at the Ritz. These days it’s hard to imagine many such stolen moments at that legbar.

The Ritz has lost much of its luster, especially in a city where people seem more interested in trying a Spinner (ginger beer, lime, rum extract) at David Lynch’s new club, Silencio, than a bloody mary at the Hemingway Bar (which invented the drink). It’s hard to imagine, too, that many people would choose the predictability of the Ritz’s spa — which once had the best pedicure in Paris — to the private spa suites, complete with their own steam showers and vitality pools, at the new Madarin

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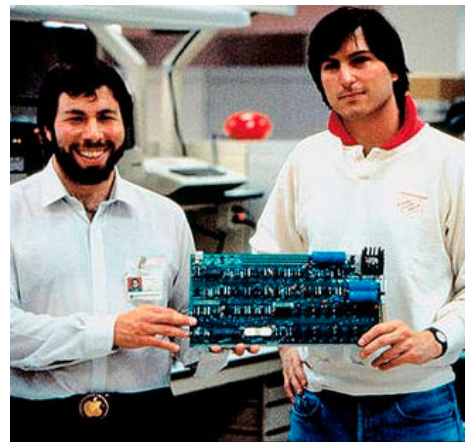
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