



Hard Rock Hotel and Casino

A Legacy on Curaçao

The legacy of Hard Rock started in 1971 in London when two Americans, Isaac Tigrett and Peter Morton, were looking for a good burger and were unable to find one. The pair opened up shop in an old Rolls Royce dealership and decided on the name Hard Rock Café. They had their logo designed by Alan Aldridge, English artist and illustrator, known for his work on album covers for great artists such as the Beatles.

TEXT PRISCILLA JOY LOTMAN

The brand recognition of the Hard Rock Cafés, now including the hotels and casinos, is astonishing. The expansive collection of Rock n' Roll memorabilia is an integral part of this brand. When Eric Clapton, a regular of the Hard Rock Café in London, asked Tigrett if he could hang his guitar above his favorite bar stool to “mark his spot” a movement was started. Pete Townshend, and many others, followed him,

creating a growing collection that now includes over 74,000 pieces.

In 1995 the group opened the first Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, in Las Vegas, Nevada. There are now 18 hotels and 8 casinos, including 4 all-inclusive resorts, world-wide. These luxurious resorts bring the rock star fantasy to life.

In 2007, the Seminole Tribe of Florida already owned two Seminole Hard Rock Hotels and Casinos in Florida when they purchased Hard Rock International. It was, as they say, “a union of kindred spirits.” Shortly after that, in 2011, the Hard Rock brand celebrated its 40th anniversary. From their humble beginnings to a worldwide brand, the company has always kept their love of music, entertainment and hospitality alive.

A Perfect Fit

Twenty years ago, while working as a partner at IMD Consultancy, Jeroen Kibbelaar was commissioned by ORCO Group to do a feasibility study to develop a

piece of land on Penstraat in the Pietermaai area. ORCO Group is an investment company with a range of projects in the Caribbean and Europe. The plan has always been to develop the land on Penstraat, utilizing its full potential. As a result of various studies and the continuous development of the tourism industry on the island, ORCO Group concluded that an all-inclusive resort with an established brand name would be the most viable and commercially successful option. "The next step was finding the appropriate brand to bring to the island," said Kibbelaar. The group decided that a franchise with the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino would be a perfect fit. Pen Resort BV was then erected under ORCO Group, with Kibbelaar as director, to develop this project.

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Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Curaçao

From Las Vegas to Ibiza, Macau to Punta Cana, the Hard Rock Hotels & Casinos span the world. Now Curaçao is looking to join the club. A plan for a 310 room hotel & casino, destined for the Pietermaai District area, between, and including, the monuments of "Kas di Pueblo" and "Cerro Bonito" is being proposed. "This location will connect Pietermaai and Penstraat, making it a perfect area for tourists to enjoy both the historical delights of Punda and the entertainment of Pietermaai," explained Kibbelaar.

Kibbelaar expects that the Hard Rock name will undoubtedly increase the brand recognition of Curaçao, especially in the United States. The hotel hopes to target tourists from the USA, Latin America and Europe. The goal is to provide the hotel guests with excellent amenities and surroundings in an all-inclusive resort, yet also encourage them to explore all the island has to offer. Kibbelaar expects that guests will not restrict themselves to the resort grounds, "The typical Hard Rock Hotel guest is adventurous and outgoing." The waterfront location will feature a breakwater construction that will also function as a boardwalk. The breakwater project, to be constructed by a Dutch engineering company, will use an innovative technique that

Jeroen Kibbelaar, Director, Pen Resort





will have significantly less impact on the underwater environment than what has been previously used on the island. Though this part of the project is cost intensive, the added value and the reduced impact on the waterfront makes the cost worthwhile.

Kibbelaar, already a member of the Curacao Hotel and Tourism Association (CHATA), believes that planning and preparation are key aspects for impeccable hotel operations. As such, the group has already appointed Mark Nooren as the General Manager for the hotel, ensuring he is able to collaborate with the development team on the best practices for the hotel.

Hotel Amenities

From the music of the Hard Rock Casino to the tranquility of the Rock Spa®, the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Curaçao will provide its guests with top of the line amenities. One of the signature items, The Sound of Your Stay®, invites you to choose from three custom curated playlists which you can stream to your iPod anywhere on the property, and then you can take the playlist home with you.

Younger guests will be entertained in the Hard Rock Roxity Kids Club™ and the Teen Lounge. The kids will be able to go about their day following their own rhythm. Whether they are playing in a band or just playing in the sand, it is all about having a fun day. Restaurants play a central role in any all-inclusive resort. At the Hard Rock hotels, this is taken to another level, ensuring that each restaurant experience is filled with

inviting and exhilarating moments. The Curaçao hotel will have five gourmet restaurants with buffet feasts and a la carte choices.

The Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Curaçao will also have a party pool and a relaxation pool, butler suites, a dive center, and, naturally, a Rock Shop®.

The Vision

Though Curaçao has come a long way in the tourism industry there is still an enormous gap of untapped potential. According to Kibbelaar, increased collaboration between industry stakeholders is a vital component to improving the state of the tourism industry and the Curaçao brand.

Based on the results and impact of the Hard Rock Hotel in Punta Cana, Kibbelaar said that his vision of the Hard Rock Curaçao as a leader in pricing on the island is feasible. In addition, when running at full capacity, the hotel will have about 300 employees, including the all-important Vibe Manager (the employee in charge of selecting the music heard around the resort), providing a significant economic contribution to the island.

If the financial expectations are met, Kibbelaar foresees a period of about 2.5 years for construction before the hotel is ready for its grand opening. Kibbelaar believes the island has the potential to be enjoying the luxurious and lively Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Curaçao as early as 2017.