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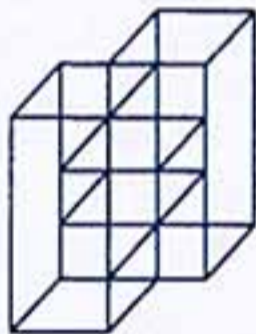
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# Montecasino – Tuscany Under African Skies

Compiled by Judith Soskin

The new 37 800m<sup>2</sup> R350 million extension to Johannesburg's famed Montecasino complex has recently been completed in the same authentic Tuscan style that the casino has made so iconic. Now, visitors can enjoy the authentic ambience under African skies.

In true Tuscan style, Montecasino's new restaurants, banqueting facility, hotel and theatre enclose the Piazza, after which the new extension is named. "The beauty of the Montecasino Piazza is that it brings Montecasino into the outdoors, allowing visitors to take full advantage of our perfect climate," says Steve Howell, General Manager of Montecasino.

The new extension is reached through the existing Montecasino complex, with its myriad of entertainment facilities. As you leave the enclosed Tuscan village behind you and walk out into the Montecasino Piazza, you enter the epitome of Tuscany – under African skies.

Once outside, visitors can enjoy:

- The pride of the Montecasino Piazza – the 1 900-seat Teatro at Montecasino, designed for one of the world's most ambitious stage productions – The Lion King – which will launch the theatre in June.
- Six al fresco-style restaurants, all designed to take maximum advantage of their position on the Piazza – Mugg Et Bean, John Dory's, The Met, @Monte Wine Bar, Mondovino and Ciao Baby Cucina;
- The 179-room SunSquare Hotel, targeted at the modern business tourist;
- The 740m<sup>2</sup> Montecasino Ballroom, which enhances the existing banqueting facilities at Montecasino, providing a venue large enough to seat 400 people banquet-style;
- The Piazza itself, which will play host to festivals, exhibitions, concerts, sporting events, and much more;
- An open-air venue for large-scale productions such as Moscow Circus;
- 1 000 new parking bays.



The new development brings Tsogo Sun Gaming's total investment in Gauteng to over R5 billion in today's terms and expands on the property's ability to attract both business tourists through the creation of a business class hotel and 400-seater conference facility, and leisure tourists, by creating a true theatre destination for South Africa, with the potential to increase visitor stay in the province by at least one night.

During the 18-month construction, more than 19 000 cubic metres of concrete has been poured into the structure and the foundation; more than three million bricks have been placed; and 2 000 tons of structural and reinforcing steel have been used. To maintain the authentic Tuscan theme, 9 000 square metres of external Tuscan façades have been constructed. Under the guidance of development managers Mirage Leisure & Developments, the main contractors Grinaker Sivukile, project managers Bovell Freeman Holley, project architects MDS Architecture, and quantity surveyors Brian Heineberg & Associates, along with over 1 700 workers, have brought the Montecasino Piazza to life. A prerequisite of a minimum 30% professional empowerment quota amongst suppliers and outsourced consultants

on the professional teams, as well as the 50% joint venture partnership between Grinaker LTA and Sivukile, has ensured that the development has contributed towards the upliftment of previously disadvantaged communities.

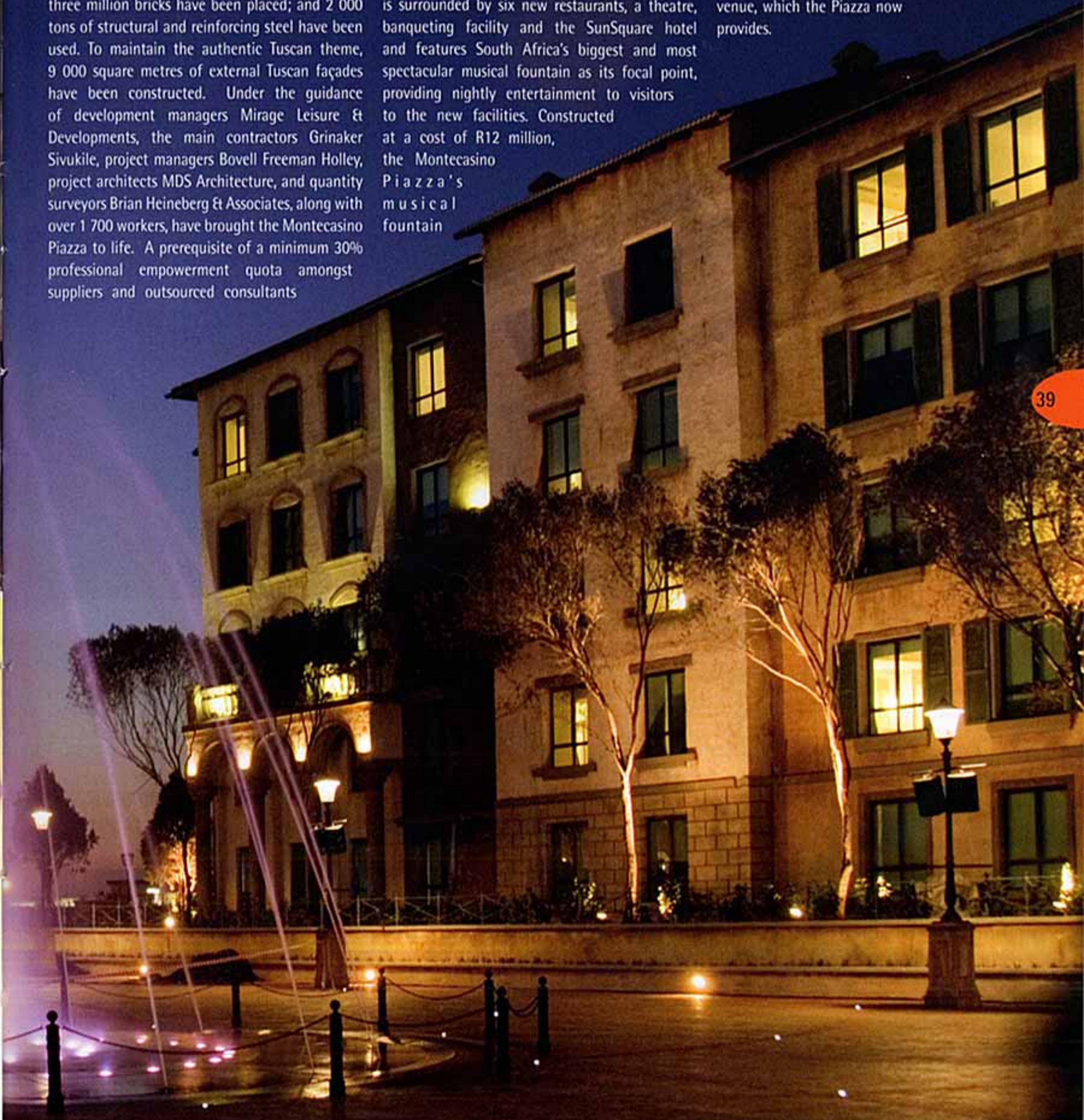
The attractions that will enhance Montecasino's status as a world-class leisure destination include:

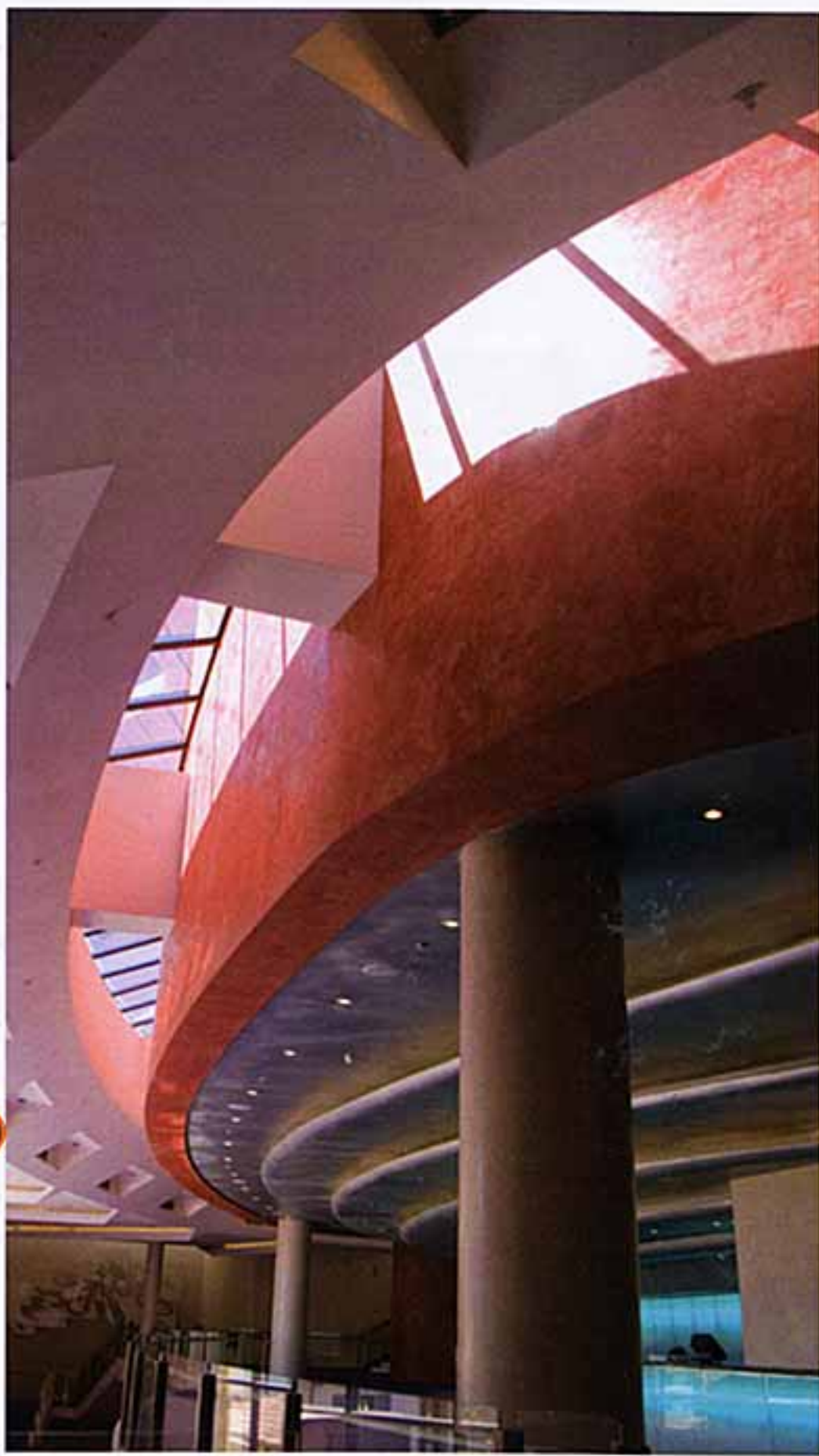
#### **The Montecasino Piazza**

Just smaller than a rugby field, the Montecasino Piazza forms the heart of the new development and is modelled on an Italian Piazza. The Piazza is surrounded by six new restaurants, a theatre, banqueting facility and the SunSquare hotel and features South Africa's biggest and most spectacular musical fountain as its focal point, providing nightly entertainment to visitors to the new facilities. Constructed at a cost of R12 million, the Montecasino Piazza's musical fountain

will be an attraction in itself and visitors, diners, theatre-goers, conference delegates and hotel guests will undoubtedly be mesmerised by its perfectly synchronised displays.

Designed to be the ideal venue for a wide variety of outdoor activities and events, the Montecasino Piazza will be capable of hosting boxing, tennis, fashion shows, festivals, exhibitions, open air banquets, and product launches. The Piazza will have the capacity to host 3 000 people at a time. In Gauteng, our ability to host true festivals has been limited by the lack of a large-scale outdoor venue, which the Piazza now provides.





### The Teatro at Montecasino

Set to provide a major boost to the theatre industry, the Teatro at Montecasino is the largest of its kind in Southern Africa. The Teatro is geared to meet the highest standards for world-class live shows in the tradition of *Les Miserables*, *Grease*, *Phantom of the Opera* and *Cats*, and will feature as its opening production in June 2007, the spectacular *Lion King*, one of the most successful theatre productions in the world.

The enormous theatrical dimensions of *The Lion King* demand a theatre auditorium and stage of specific proportions, which, until the development of the Teatro at Montecasino, had not been available in South Africa.

The Teatro was designed under the direction of Martin McCallum, president of the Society of London Theatre and international theatre consultant who has designed many of the world's leading theatres. The concept was designed by London-based Arts Team, with MDS Architecture facilitating the translation of the concept into detailed design development, as well as service

co-ordination, working drawings and general oversight of the building and process.

Sean Pearce is the partner at MDS Architecture who headed up the project. He notes that the Teatro is acoustically designed for large scale musical productions and that it will accommodate 1 962 people at full capacity, making it the largest theatre in South Africa, and one of the 10 largest lyric theatres in the world.

The copper-clad entrance portal floating inside a glass curtain wall entices patrons into the dramatic contemporary foyer, which is bathed in natural light. From within the foyer, the glass wall serves as a picture frame for the beautiful village it overlooks, whilst people on the Piazza can view patrons mingling in the foyer of the Teatro.

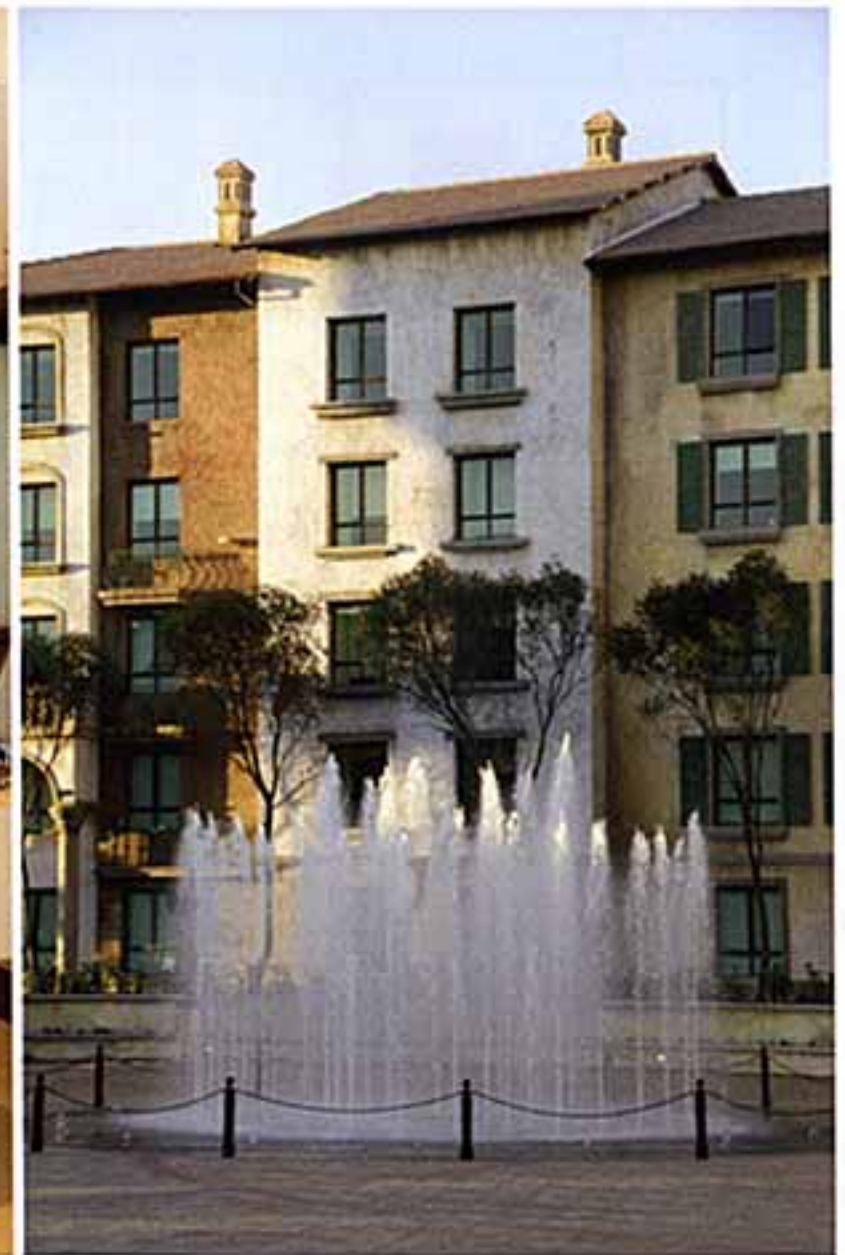
The curved rear wall of the auditorium, in red stucco, creates a strong backdrop that dominates the foyer, extending from the ground level all the way through to the skylight element in the roof. Externally, it extends beyond the skylight feature. As such, it holds all the spaces together, not only linking the high vertical spaces but also serving as

a threshold into the auditorium.

A curved skylight runs around the dominant red wall, which seems to fly through the roof to link into the Tuscan environment. Covering a large area, it bathes the foyer in natural light during the day, with artificial lights illuminating the skylight from the outside at night. Additional lighting up the walls completes the contemporary look.

In contrast to the light filled and contemporary foyer, the interior of the auditorium is decorated in rich, warm and traditional tones. It is a stately, elaborate space, with the sheer volume creating an almost cavernous effect.

The exterior of the theatre is masterfully hand painted to depict old buildings in Tuscany, matching the existing facilities in the development. Just as a building of stature forms a focal point in Tuscan villages, the Teatro is an integral focal point in the village. It is a stately and dominant building within the 'village', creating interest in the Piazza and drawing people towards the glass curtain wall, carefully inserted into the Tuscan vernacular.



#### SunSquare Hotel

The addition of the theatre is expected to boost tourism as visitors extend their stay in Johannesburg by one night rather than just stopping over en route to other destinations. To fulfill the need for accommodation, both for the leisure tourist and the business tourist attending any of the events that will be hosted in the Piazza or the new function facility, Southern Sun will provide 179 rooms under its new hotel brand – SunSquare – targeted at the modern leisure and business tourist. The concept for the SunSquare rooms were designed by Wilson & Associates for use throughout the group.

Ryan Illgner of Blacksmith Design, the company responsible for facilitating the look of the new hotel,

comments that: "The idea has been to introduce the concept of the hip hotel, which is relatively ground breaking for South Africa. Everything in this hotel's design is atypical – even the reception desk is a floating, cantilevered construction angled on three different planes."

While the exterior of the hotel is decidedly Tuscan, inside, a modern contemporary look dominates. The double volume of reception and the restaurant provided an opportunity to allow natural light to flood into the space while a neutral backdrop of colour allows for splashes of reds, oranges and lime greens to add dramatic effect.

Within the restaurant, an open kitchen is exposed to both achieve flow and to be an aesthetic feature

within itself, while timber flooring is coloured subtly from dark to light so that as one goes deeper into the space, the look becomes brighter.

This cosmopolitan lifestyle hotel is a trendy destination for both business and leisure travelers. The Italian inspired Mondovino restaurant at SunSquare Montecasino flows outdoors onto the Piazza, and overlooks the spectacular orchestrated fountain. Accommodation includes 98 standard rooms (Fourways Facing), and 81 superior rooms (Piazza Facing). Included is one room for the physically challenged guest. All rooms are funky and fresh in design, each complete with an en suite shower and all the modern conveniences of a superior business class hotel.

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### Restaurants

Six new restaurants, including a stylish and contemporary restaurant in the SunSquare Hotel, line the Piazza to offer al fresco dining facilities – in keeping with the outdoor experience. Each restaurant has a dedicated 'al fresco' dining area and a mezzanine level overlooking the Piazza, as well as an inside section. The added height offers patrons a perfect vantage point from which to take in all the activities and events taking place on the Piazza.

The new restaurants include Mugg & Bean (a coffee shop or light meal restaurant), John Dory's (a family fish offering), Metropolis Lounge & Grill (an upmarket grill house), Ciao Baby Cucina (a vibey middle to upmarket restaurant), a contemporary wine and champagne bar with signature dishes, to be known as @Monte Wine Bar, and the all-day dining restaurant in the SunSquare Hotel, Mondovino.



The **Edison** team has been involved with numerous prestigious and landmark projects in the Gauteng region.

These include:

- Sandton Convention Centre
- Vodacom Head Office
- DTI Campus – Pretoria
- Maponya Mall
- Freedom Park
- Montecasino & Hotel



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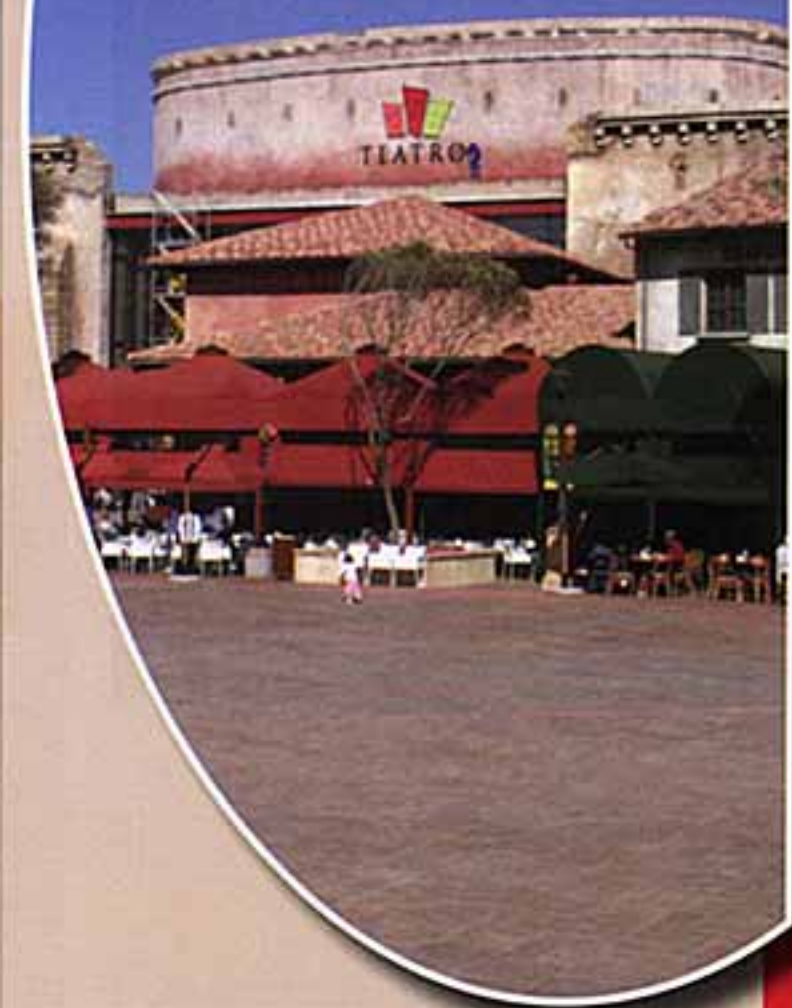
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Montecasino – Musical Fountain



## Montecasino Extension



### Montecasino Ballroom

The new banqueting and function facility, valued at R20 million, is designed to complement Montecasino's highly popular conference and corporate events facilities. With the addition of the Montecasino Ballroom, Montecasino Conference & Corporate Events can now host a wide range of small and large-scale corporate events such as banquet dinners, awards functions, company conference, business meetings, product launches, and corporate celebrations. The 700m<sup>2</sup> room will seat 400 guests in banquet-style seating, 500 guests in schoolroom-style seating, 600 guests in cinema-style seating, and up to 700 guests for standing cocktail parties.

As a function venue, Montecasino offers a 'one-stop' entertainment experience, and has the benefit of easy access through main arterial routes. South Africa has many corporate event facilities, but few one-stop venues that can offer all that Montecasino has to offer as a premier destination, together with comprehensive conferencing facilities. *ic*

*Development managers: Mirage Leisur*

*Project managers: Bovell Freeman Holley, in association with Diagonal Projects Africa (DPA)*

*Town planners: Rob Taylor & Associates, Karen Burger & Associates*

*Architects: The Arts Team (theatre concept), MDS Architecture in association with NSIKA and ADA*

*Interior Designers: Wilson & Associates (Singapore) - hotel bedrooms, Blacksmith - conference centre, hotel public areas and theatre, The Arts Team - theatre*

*Quantity Surveyors: Brian Heineberg & Associates in association with Letchmiah Daya Mandini (LDM)*

*Civil Engineers: BKS*

*Structural Engineers: LC Consulting, Nodana & Associates*

*Electrical Engineers: CKR*

*CCTV/Security/Information Technology: Tsogo Sun*

*Mechanical Engineers: RPP Consulting Engineers*

*Landscape Architects: Landmark Studios*

*Artwork Director: Kobus de Beer Productions*

*Main Contractor: Grinaker-LTA - Sivukile JV*



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