

- TRAVEL** • [AUSTRALIA](#)
• [WORLD](#)
• [ACTIVITIES & INTERESTS](#)
- [SHORT BREAKS](#)
 - [DEALS & BOOKINGS](#)

Iconic Las Vegas hotel demolished



Stardust Hotel-Casino is imploded in Las Vegas.

Photo: Reuters

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Stardust memories are all that's left of one of Las Vegas's most famous landmarks after the iconic hotel was demolished in a controlled explosion.

The twin towers of the Stardust Hotel-Casino, one of the last remaining relics of Vegas' 1950s and '60s glory years, was razed to the ground in a simultaneous explosion about 2.30am local time on Tuesday.

The 32-storey main tower was the tallest building ever to be destroyed on the Las Vegas Strip and was the final act of a three-month demolition job that began in December 2006.

The Stardust closed on November 1 last year, ending a remarkable 48 years of continuous, 24-hour service, with a marching band leading customers out of the hotel and away from the gaming tables for the last time.

A new \$US4.4 billion (\$5.6 billion) resort, Echelon Place, is to be built on the site of the landmark and is scheduled to be open for business in 2010.

A firework display and crowds of onlookers saluted the Stardust as it came crashing down, marking the end of an era for the 1032-room hotel which opened in 1958 and acquired legendary status for its bargain prices and mob past.

The hotel was the brainchild of bootlegger Tony Cornero, who made his fortune smuggling whiskey into the United States during prohibition. However, Cornero died mysteriously before the Stardust opened.

During its early years, the hotel was always closely associated with organised crime, with several known criminals involved in the management of the complex. The Martin Scorsese gangster flick *Casino* was shot at the Stardust.

Doubts about the Stardust's ownership were squashed in 1985 however, when the respected Boyd Gaming Corp acquired the hotel, overseeing a \$US300 million renovation.

Boyd Gaming will run the Echelon, which will boast a staggering 5000 rooms, a theatre, concert venue and shopping mall.

AFP

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