

Island Legacy

WHEN THE FAMILY BUSINESS IS A PRIVATE ISLAND RESORT IN THE BAHAMAS, THE SECOND GENERATION LOOKS TO THE FUTURE FROM A SUN-SPLASHED POINT OF VIEW. VIIA BEAUMANIS PULLS UP A LOUNGER



The breezy living room at The Cove, a four-bedroom villa flanked by two private beaches that's favoured by celebrities from Nicole Kidman to Penélope Cruz

“It’s like being at some fabulously wealthy friend’s private island where you have the run of the place ...” says my companion, helping himself to an icy Grey Goose and pineapple from the fully stocked bamboo bar. We’ve been here all day. In the Tiki Bar, lazing on daybeds, propped up on oversized pillows, the ceiling fans whirling overhead. Our shady respite is tucked into a grove of palms along a three-mile slice of sun-bleached sand and turquoise water. We haven’t seen another soul in hours: bliss. If we wanted to, we could play tennis on the clay court or wander up to the overwater spa. Go kayaking out to the reef. Catch ourselves a yellow fin tuna and have the chef sashimi it for us.

Maybe tomorrow.

It’s my companion’s first foray to this bit of island paradise just off the Tropic of Cancer. This private 96-acre slip of sand edged in deserted beach and coral gardens called Kamalame Cay snakes its way along the east coast of Andros. There’s personal history here: on a diving holiday in 1968, my parents conceived me on Andros, a scarcely populated island that’s actually three – North Andros, South Andros and Mangrove Cay – floating in a protected 6,000-square kilometre archipelago connected by hundreds of untouched islets, cays and man-

grove estuaries, bordered by the world’s sixth largest barrier reef. Decades later, out of curiosity as well as ease – it’s little more than a three-hour flight from Toronto to Nassau, followed by a 15-minute jumper – I’d arrived on Andros myself.

The Hews came by this place in similar ease: they sailed by Long Bay Cay in the early ’90s, bought it, renamed it Kamalame for its red-barked indigenous trees, planted 3,000 palms and scattered it with pastel cottages and villas linked by sugar sand pathways lined in conch shells. The couple, who’d grown up in Jamaica and had been sweethearts since the fifth grade, brought an ingrained feel for tropical living to the laid-back colony they would create together on their newly rechristened cay.

“I liked its remoteness and size,” says the cigar-smoking patriarch, Brian Hew, who oversaw construction that included generating power and piping water over from the mainland before he’d laid a single foundation and now powers the resort via eco-friendly solar power and generators fuelled by recycled vegetable oil, not diesel. Handling design and interiors, his wife, Jennifer – descendant of a colonial family that arrived in Jamaica with the 16th-century Portuguese – knew her way around gracious island style.

“In Jamaica, they’ve been building out of limestone since the English, even the Spanish, came. It has this warmth in its tone and imperfections, so Brian built with that here as well, then we added traditional casement windows that open out and French doors. Lots and lots of them! All our houses open up completely for airflow,” says Jennifer, sipping a cold olive-spiked martini at her family’s residence, The Cove. “And the view ... how can you waste such a gorgeous view?” she asks, looking out over the deep blue ocean lapping the



The second generation Michael King and David Hew at their chic new beach house, Roseapple

palm-fringed, white sand beach.

Set in a jungle garden of bougainvillea, bamboo, oleander and hibiscus overlooking two private beaches, the Hews’ four-bedroom home is the ultimate indoor-outdoor living plan. It has more doors than walls, with separate wings for sleeping and living space, ideal for a family that loves to entertain. In the mix, Balinese armchairs, hurricane lamps, seashells, white slipcovers, Caribbean art and colourful throw pillows arranged under 18-foot peak ceilings and ever-spinning fans, a signature look Jennifer ran through all of Kamalame’s bungalows and villas.

With The Cove completed in 1994, the Hews rented it out over Easter the following year. They moved into one of the 21 seaside cottages they were finishing for the resort with their children, David and Kimberly, then 13 and 10. “We stayed in Pigeon Plum,” recalls Jennifer, of Kamalame’s pioneer days. “The kids read by kerosene lamps, and we boiled water and poured it into a galvanized tub for baths. When we officially opened in 1998, the in-laws flew in to help us get ready – Grandma Nellie sewing cushion covers while David and his uncle Robert hung artwork and towel rods.”

Fifteen years later, the lush, flowering hideaway is known for its natural beauty, *laissez-faire* charm, privacy, space and utter seclusion. “No need to lock your doors here,” says Brian. Or even close them. Beach houses are so well spaced and lushly landscaped that wandering around in the nude →



David Hew greeting guests arriving on Kamalame via the 15-minute seaplane trip from Nassau

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANAIS GANOUNA PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC (THE COVE)



A view from one of the open-air massage rooms at the overwater spa pavilion



A delectable lobster club

could only disturb the birds.

Snorkelling the reef, downing rosé in a hammock, diving with manta rays: all the island pleasures are here, encouraging guests to make what they will of it. One night, the Tiki Bar turns into a tiny palapa-topped disco, a group of guests traipsing in with armloads of candles, taking turns on the stereo; on another, I find a couple slow-dancing to a Latin love song on a sandy lane in the light of their golf cart headlights, an iPad balanced on the hood.

“The task,” says Brian, “was to bring first-world amenities to a developing environment.” Now, it’s refining them. Happily, as Kamalame is a family affair, there’s a Next Generation to lend fresh perspective. David Hew – now a handsome well-travelled charmer of 31, who studied architecture and art history, then spent years in London galleries – has taken over the resort’s operations, alongside his partner, New Zealander Michael King, the former luxury magazine publisher and entre-

preneur with numerous Toronto hot spots to his credit and who oversees Fashion Cares among his philanthropic endeavours. The duo’s modish international influence is felt across rotating menus of healthy, seasonal dishes, expanded wine and spirit lists, an enlarged kitchen and newly installed bakery, Wi-Fi lounge, Molton Brown toiletries, stylish island collections in the boutique, cool playlists, a fleet of jaunty flamingo-pink golf carts, organic Naturopathica products for the spa and refreshed decor.

Bumping up the beachy chic in a wash of designer accessories, from tabletop wares to lampshades while adding bright splashes of paint, King and Hew are now completing their own seaside retreat, one that will showcase their fresh take on classic island style and act as a blueprint for the resort’s interior refurbishments and new builds as the remaining ocean-front lots are sold off.

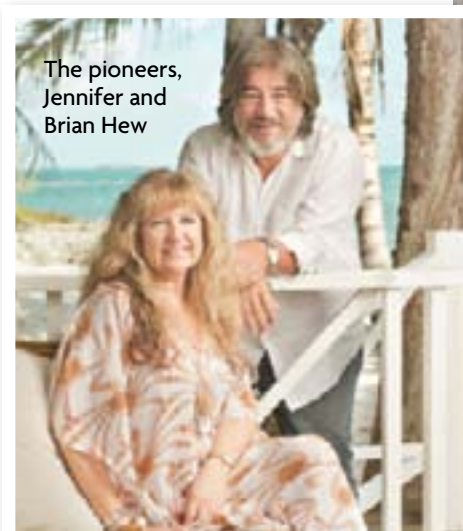
“David and I wanted to take what we’d enjoyed abroad and integrate it here,” says Michael as we tour their multi-tiered beach house. “We’ve been to many of the world’s hideaways and hotels but also found that ‘luxury’ is often synonymous with flashy interiors and pompous service.” Winding down the 100-foot path that leads to his front yard – the ocean – he details plans for more bespoke villas, a new clubhouse and marina. “Our aim is relaxed West Indies chic and very gracious hospitality, a place where people can *really* slow down.”

“The right people for Kamalame are those who appreciate an environment with a small carbon footprint and understand they’re leading by example,” says Brian. “This is not a hotel where someone is attending to you all of the time. If you want that ...” he lets the sentence trail off, indicating “Who would?” before adding with a wave of his ever present BlackBerry “... you

can find it elsewhere.”

The “right people” may have grown to include such stellar castaways as Nicole Kidman, Penélope Cruz and Javier Bardem, the model Caroline Murphy and a smattering of European royals mixed in with the lovebirds, families, homeowners, newlyweds, sun lovers, beach hounds and fishermen. Yet Kamalame remains the sort of place where guests show up barefoot for dinner at the Great House; where Samson, the waiter who’s been here for years, hands them a bracing Bahama Mama and calls them by name; where freshly baked chocolate chip cookies are delivered to your room every day.

“Taking the reins of something my parents spent a good part of their lives creating, we’re not looking to reinvent it, just to enhance the experience while staying true to its ethos,” says David, wearing his “work” uniform of a white Polo shirt and a Kenyan *kikoy*, the well-dressed island man’s preferred *pareo*. “I’m glad they’re finally getting a chance to enjoy their home, not from an operations side but from a more relaxing perspective. For me, having spent years living abroad, returning to Kamalame was really a homecoming. Michael and I love to entertain so, as it was for my parents, the island is a wonderful extension of our lives. Where, as we’re lucky enough to call this gorgeous place home, we meet so many interesting people who come to us from all over the world.” www.kamalame.com **Z**



The pioneers, Jennifer and Brian Hew



PHOTOGRAPHY: ANAIS GANOUNA PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC (LOBSTER CLUB, SILVERTOP)

The beachfront living room of the five-bedroom thatched-roof villa, Silvertop