

## New man at the Trop

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Last Sunday's *Las Vegas Review-Journal* carried an interview with new **Tropicana Las Vegas** President **Ron Thacker**. It **delicately sidesteps** potentially uncomfortable questions about the plug-pulling on *Folies Bergere* or the brevity of Thacker's tenure at **Fontainebleau**. His fondness for *Who Moved My Cheese?* earned him some reader derision. I found it a refreshing change from those execs who routinely cite **Thomas Friedman's** *The World is Flat* (presumably in search of clues on how to outsource the casino industry to **Bangalore**).

Thacker is a third-generation casino manager and a well-traveled operator. This should stand both him and the Trop in good stead after the clownish bumbling of hapless **Columbia Sussex**. He also evinces a longstanding affection for the property, which is a quality any executive there ought to possess. So that's another point in Thacker's favor and he's right that nostalgia is the main selling point down there. With the exception of parts of the **Sahara**, there's no property that says "old Vegas" (in a **Rat Pack** sense) quite like the Trop.

But when he says, "*We're going to put some money back into the property with the infrastructure itself. Bring it up to the standards our customers expect and our employees expect,*" you have to wonder if he's read **Tropicana Entertainment** CEO **Scott Butera's** **business plan**. It earmarks \$8.4 million for renovations and maintenance this year (that'll get you 1/30th of thrifty **Eastside Cannery** and about an 80th of **Aliante Station**) and an average of \$5.2 million for each year afterward.

That's not much more than is set aside for **MontBleu**, up in **Lake Tahoe** and a small fraction of what Butera proposes to spend on the **Tropicana Atlantic City**. Then again, in order to do the latter, he'd have to persuade the **New Jersey Casino Control Commission** to let him have it back and ... well ... you know.