

WHAT REALLY GOES ON IN CELEBRITY REHAB

THIS morning I wake up in Britney Spears' bed. As I lie between 300-count Egyptian cotton sheets in the most sumptuous suite I've ever slept in, a gentle breeze drifts through the open windows and I can see the waves lapping at the Pacific coastline below me.

But this isn't a plush hotel – it's the Promises clinic in Malibu, where Brit came for a month-long stay in 2007 following *that* head-shaving incident.

Welcome to the most private and opulent rehab facility in the world, one that counts Lindsay Lohan, Robert Downey Jr, Charlie Sheen, Diana Ross and Ben Affleck among its "clients" – they're never, ever called patients.

While other clinics like The Betty Ford Center and The Priory in London like to boast about their spartan accommodation and insistence that their in-patients help with the cooking and chores, Promises offers five-star spa facilities, gourmet food, housekeeping services and panoramic ocean views.

"Our clients don't sweep floors at home, so we don't expect them to start here," explains Promises CEO Dr David Sack.

No wonder former client Kelly Osbourne recently described this place as "a vacation without the bar".

A minimum 30-day stay starts at \$50,000 – three times the cost of checking into the Paris Ritz for the same length of time – and some guests have been known to move in for up to five months.

It is also credited with creating the "Malibu model" of rehab, which is aimed at the rich and famous.

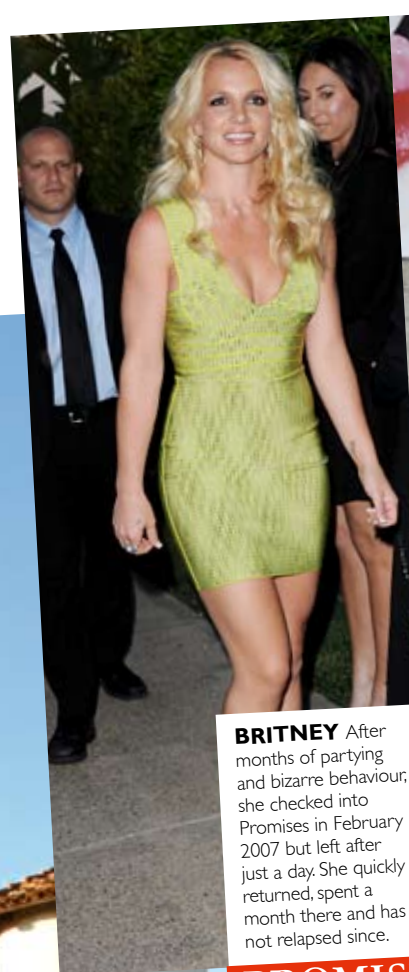
Dr Sacks says: "There are specialist rehab centres in Los Angeles that deal with the homeless because they are likely to have additional problems such as schizophrenia.

Grazia's Jeff Maysh was given exclusive access behind the scenes at Promises Malibu, one of the world's most luxurious private rehab facilities



GRAZIA
EXCLUSIVE

Grazia reporter Jeff was impressed with the pool, the tennis, the online shopping opportunities...



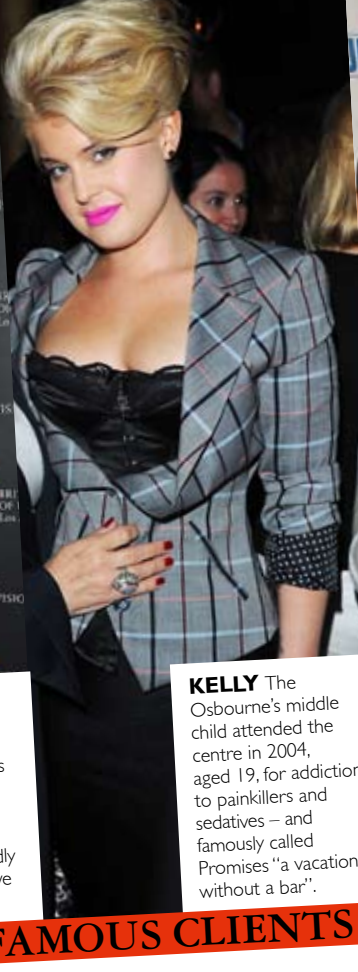
BRITNEY After months of partying and bizarre behaviour, she checked into Promises in February 2007 but left after just a day. She quickly returned, spent a month there and has not relapsed since.



LINDSAY She entered the Malibu program after getting busted for DUI in 2007. LiLo spent six weeks there but has since also stayed at The Betty Ford Center in California and Utah's Cirque Lodge.



BEN In 2001, after the release of *Pearl Harbor*, he checked himself into Promises for treatment for alcohol addiction. Ironically, Charlie Sheen was reportedly the friend who drove him to Malibu.



KELLY The Osbourne's middle child attended the centre in 2004, aged 19, for addiction to painkillers and sedatives – and famously called Promises "a vacation without a bar".



CHARLIE He checked into Promises earlier this year – his fifth attempt at rehab – but has since claimed the 12-step program has a tiny success rate. He was recently filmed burning a copy of the manual.

PROMISES MALIBU: FIVE OF ITS MOST FAMOUS CLIENTS

"The wealthy and celebrities come from different backgrounds. They often have privilege, or perhaps staff, and busy, successful lives – they have different needs."

Its famous alumni also love Promises because it's paparazzi-proof – the sprawling grounds, situated up a nose-bleed rollercoaster of a drive in Malibu – protect them from any intrusion. There are no road signs and its staff are super-discreet.

But I have been given special access to see what goes on behind the security-patrolled gates and what it would be like to be a "client" here.

As I enter the grand foyer it seems like any other top hotel as my bag is taken to my room for me. It's only later I realise it's not just a concierge service – everyone checking in has their bags searched for drugs and alcohol before being taken to one of the 36 rooms and suites.

Surprisingly, of all the substances, alcohol withdrawal is the most serious.

"There is a risk of seizures, circulatory collapse, delirium and hallucinations," says Dr Sack.

Promises is big business. Founded

by an ex-addict turned real-estate magnate, it recorded profits of \$13 million in 2009 – and it clearly knows how to keep its clientele happy.

"You can keep your cellphone," explains a counsellor, who asks to remain anonymous.

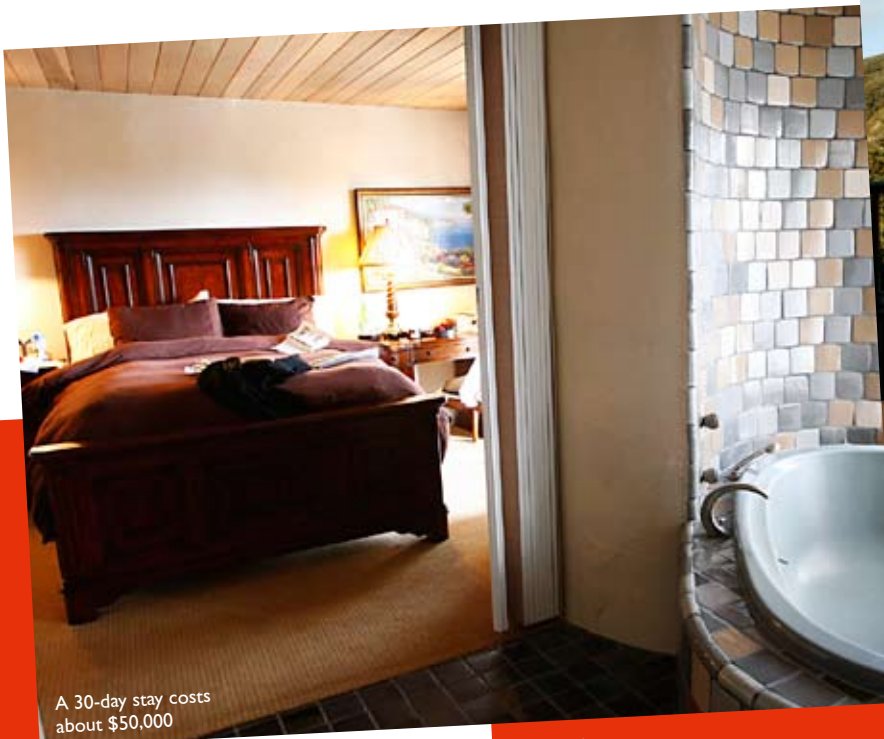
"You don't get that at Betty Ford. Clients [here] are even allowed laptops and can enjoy online shopping. The UPS delivery truck struggles up the mountain every morning. One client recently bought a kayak on the internet."

I'm given a tour of the premises. As the sun begins to set, the heating is turned on for the three swimming pools, making steam rise up into the purple sky as people sit around drinking smoothies and chatting.

This almost feels like a holiday, but then I'm handed an A4 sheet titled "The Schedule", outlining how clients get to spend their days while they're treated for every kind of addiction.

Tomorrow will be a busy day of therapy, acupuncture, eating and rest.

"For those who aren't ready to talk yet, there's massage," says the counsellor soothingly. ▶



A 30-day stay costs about \$50,000



Promises is nestled between mountains and the Pacific Ocean



The clinic runs programs for drug, alcohol and sex addiction

But first, the rules for *Grazia*: most importantly, enjoy the facilities but do not reveal the names or professions of any of the Promises clients.

I can tell you that my neighbour, a woman in her early 30s, has splashed out on a private suite with its own terrace. A mink coat sits on the bed, while the floor is littered with various Amazon.com boxes. Every room in her suite is full of “get well soon” flowers from famous names.

Her closet contains five pairs of recently bought Christian Lacroix heels, not yet worn, and she complains that the housekeepers have taken away the shoe boxes when she wants to keep them.

Such are the problems of being an A-list addict...

It may sound frivolous but many ex-Promises clients credit the clinic with saving their lives.

Hannah*, 29, the daughter of a wealthy Californian businessman, spent 31 days at Promises after overdosing on alcohol and prescription drugs. She has since been clean and sober for three years but still comes back for outpatient counselling.

“It was paradise,” she says.

“I’d been trying to get clean for years. The most I could pull together was one, two, maybe three days sober, then I’d relapse.

“It’s not about money. If you’re battling addiction, it’s the same pain [an addict] feels if they’re living on the street.”

In fairness, it’s unlikely anyone who’s ever checked into Promises knows

“I was hooked on cosmopolitans. I couldn’t relate to a war veteran injecting heroin!”

what it’s like to live on the streets.

After a 12-step meeting at which a client shares his story, a lunch of prawn and asparagus salad is served.

As I smoke outside with some fellow campers, a man with expensive Prada lounge shoes puffs on a huge cigar and complains how his Bentley has been double-parked.

“That’s the thing about Promises,” Hannah tells me. “I thought if I went to a state-funded rehab, some charity affair, I just wouldn’t get the right treatment.

“I was hooked on cosmopolitans, prescription drugs and cocaine. I thought I couldn’t possibly relate to a war veteran who was injecting heroin.”

But as part of the Promises package, along with the swimming, massages and equine therapy (stroking horses), clients are encouraged to attend local Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, where they mix with the public.

“They encourage clients to connect with other addicts, regardless of their celebrity status,” explains Dr Sack.

The clinic is also at the cutting edge of new therapies for treating

addiction, like EEG biofeedback, which teaches patients to regulate their nervous system by monitoring changes in brain waves, then visual software is used to help the brain learn new coping mechanisms for stress and addictive urges.

Clients are also encouraged to use the swimming pools, tennis courts and gym, and the afternoon and evening are filled with meetings, family therapy, relapse-prevention workshops and progress assessments.

Dinner is a communal affair in the grand dining room – although each client is assessed by a nutritionist and given a tailor-made food plan.

With all this on tap, it’s no wonder that Promises is considered to have among the best treatment success rates.

While there are plenty of success stories, there are still those who fail, regardless of their ability to pay.

Charlie Sheen and Lindsay Lohan are both still struggling with their demons, and American TV personality Danny Bonaduce said Promises did nothing for him, revealing: “They charged me more than \$40,000 and I drank on the way home. But Malibu was beautiful. I remember thinking that if this place had a bar, it would be fantastic.”

But for every person like Danny, there are thousands of others like Hannah, who say the clinic changes their lives. ■