

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC # 159-2012

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO:

Mayor Matti Herrera Bower and Members of the City Commission

FROM:

Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager

DATE:

June 12, 2012

SUBJECT: Filming in Miami Beach

As you may know, last weekend the premiere of New Line Cinema's "Rock of Ages" was held on Miami Beach. This full length feature film was partially shot in our City, and features such stars as Tom Cruise, Alec Baldwin, Catherine Zeta-Jones and Russell Brand.

In addition to this production, our community recently hosted a great number of significant productions, including the feature "Step Up Revolution" premiering in July; major television series "Burn Notice" for USA, "Charlie's Angels" for ABC, and "The Finder" for Fox, as well as numerous telenovelas for Telemundo and other Spanish language television and reality shows for Bravo and many other networks. Paramount Pictures has recently completed work on the feature film "Pain and Gain," starring Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Mark Wahlberg and Ed Harris, and directed by Miami Beach resident Michael Bay ("Transformers"). In September, Disney/Marvel will film several weeks for the third sequel to the action franchise "Iron Man."

As you may know, this past April, cable Television network Starz debuted their new eightepisode fictional series, titled "Magic City," which is a period drama set in 1959 Miami Beach. The series is written and created by Miami beach native Mitch Glazer ("Scrooged," "The Recruit"), stars Jeffrey Dean Morgan ("Grey's Anatomy") and is produced by Emmy-winner Dwayne Schattuck ("Mad Men").

This production chose to film in South Florida, not only because the setting takes place here and we have the greatest preserved collection of MiMo and Art Deco architecture required to create the illusion of the period, but also because of the state film incentive and heavy recruitment by a select few, including Miami Beach's Tourism and Cultural Development Department.

Attached is a recent segment on NBC Nightly News highlighting film productions in South Florida, as well as copies of a recent article about the film production industry in Florida.



Comments

'Magic City,' Tom Cruise, James Franco Join Hollywood's Flight to Florida

8:40 AM PDT 4/6/2012 by Tim Appelo

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How film and television are saving millions by shooting in the Sunshine State.

This story originally appeared in the April 13 issue of The Hollywood Reporter.

OUR EDITOR RECOMMENDS



'Magic City': How Starz Drama Uniquely Hairy

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Tom Cruise to Receive the Friar Entertainment Icon Award in June



Magic City' Creator Mitch Glazer on Probing His Past and an Uncomfortable Political Storyline (Q&A)



Florida TV Stations Set to Rake in \$20 Million-Plus From GOP

Last summer, actress Olga Kurylenko got ready to wade naked into the ocean at 5 a.m. in Miami Beach in front of the equally gorgeous Deauville Hotel for a scene in Starz's buzzy new series Magic City, a Mad Men-meets-Casino saga set in mobbed-up, glamorous 1959 Miami. Kurylenko plays the exshowgirl wife of hotel owner Ike Evans (Jeffrey Dean Morgan).

PHOTOS: 'Mad Men' Season 5 Premiere Red Carpet **Arrivals**

"They go out there, and lo and behold, it was a real-life crime scene with lots of police cars and crime tape," says Miami Beach film and events production manager Graham Winick, a troubleshooter and coordinator for shows like Magic City. "There had been a gunshot homicide on a boat offshore, and the body washed ashore right there. Olga was a little hesitant to skinny-dip in that area." But after cops removed the corpse and sand-sifters cleaned the beach, the scene was filmed the next day. "It's a case of life imitating art imitating life."

It is amazing that Starz CEO Chris Albrecht is spending \$108

million to shoot the first two seasons of *Magic City* in Miami because until recently, Florida film and TV production looked as washed up as the unfortunate homicide victim who spoiled Kurylenko's morning.

In 2009, production tax incentives in the state sank from a high of \$25 million to \$5 million, and producers and Florida crews fled for more tax-friendly neighboring states. "We had to get to this crisis mode to convince our legislators to do something unprecedented," says Winick, who also is past president of the lobbying group Film Florida.

But production creates jobs, so in 2011, Florida raised tax incentives to \$242 million, and on March 29, Gov. Rick Scott signed a bill for an additional \$42 million.

TV REVIEW: Magic City

The Hollywood production trade magazine P3 recently ranked the state the third-best place to shoot in the U.S., behind Louisiana and Illinois, saying, "The heat is definitely on in Florida."

"We didn't even make the P3 top 20 for the last couple of years," says Winick.

But producers are rushing to cash in on Florida's new 20 percent tax credit (raised to 25 percent during hurricane season). Michael Bay recently began directing Pain and Gain, a \$25 million dark-comic action drama with Mark Wahlberg, based on a true tale of gym-rat extortionists. Steven Soderbergh shot Channing Tatum's Tampa stripper comedy Magic Mike in October.

Most notably, Miami and environs recently played host to the \$80 million, Los Angeles-set musical Rock of Ages, starring Tom Cruise as an Axl Rose-ish rock singer circa 1987. "It's the biggest movie we've ever had since Miami Vice," says Florida film commissioner Shari Kerrigan.

Florida production revenue increased from \$761 million in 2010 to \$981 million in 2011. In Miami-Dade County alone, production is up 70 percent since 2010, to about \$275 million.

Notes Rock of Ages producer Garrett Grant: "They said, 'If you guys are crazy enough to come down here during hurricane season, we'll give you 5 percent extra in tax incentives.' We said, 'OK.'"

PHOTOS: 10 Movie Milestones of Portland

Although it has been a half-decade since a big hurricane hit, Hurricane Irene narrowly missed clobbering Florida in August, requiring Magic City to put up iron hurricane shutters for the giant panes of vulnerable glass on its hotel set and prepare to evacuate crew to 65 inland hotel rooms.

"The hurricane stayed offshore, so we got lucky," says Ages' Grant, who is glad he and director Adam Shankman spurned the other locations they considered, from North Carolina to Sydney. "We had a very difficult time getting to our approved greenlight number. Thanks to the incentives, we hit it."

This kind of cooperation is why Starz's Albrecht, revered for developing game-changing dramas like The Sopranos at HBO, is willing to risk \$6 million an episode on Magic City. The show's creatorwriter, Mitch Glazer, says it was smart to shoot in Miami, where mideentury modern (MiMo) buildings still stand thanks to the historic-preservation movement propelled by Miami Vice's success.

"South Beach has probably the largest collection of pre-1959 architecture in the world," says Glazer, who thinks his show could do for MiMo what Miami Vice did for Art Deco. His goal is a vivid sense of place. "Chris' great successes were all based in the place where they happened: Sopranos, The Wire, Entourage. Sex and the City had to be shot in New York. For Magic City, when you see Stevie Evans [Steven Strait] driving his T-Bird along Lincoln Creek, there wouldn't have been all those 1920s mansions behind him if we'd shot in L.A. All we had to do on Collins Avenue was CG-remove a few light poles." To shoot a period Miami drama in Los Angeles would be more CG-intensive.

STORY: 'The Carrie Diaries': First Photos of AnnaSophia Robb as a Young Carrie Bradshaw Surface

And expensive. "It would either look cheap, or you're going to spend an enormous amount of money," says Matt Nix, creator of the USA Network hit *Burn Notice*, whose dramedy series kicked off a new wave of production in Florida when it filmed its pilot in 2007. "And now Miami has more bench strength in crews. It's important because you can eat up the incentive savings quickly by having to fly in your own guys." Nix, now filming his sixth season, says he'll have no problem meeting Florida's new law upping its requirement for hiring local crew from 50 percent to 60 percent.

There is a growing spirit of film-friendliness in Florida, even among some who once notoriously blocked production. In 1982, Cuban-Americans protesting Al Pacino's gangster character in *Scarface* forced the film from Miami to L.A. On April 13, *Scarface* will be the focus of a Miami Latino pride event, Hispanicize 2012, and giant Miami-based Spanish-language network Telemundo employs 400 people making telenovelas.

"In Florida, people are actually excited to let you shoot there," says Nix. "A small airport in Miami let us blow up a plane on their tarmac. Who does that? God bless Opa-Locka Airport!"

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STARZ! **BURN NOTICE**

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TV News

Posted: Tue., Mar. 20, 2012, 4:00am PT

Starz renews 'Magic City' before preem

Cabler orders 10 more episodes of period drama set in Miami

By CYNTHIA LITTLETON, STUART LEVINE

Starz has given a second season renewal to "Magic City," three weeks before the period drama's premiere.

Drama set in Miami in 1959 stars Jeffrey Dean Morgan as a hotel magnate and family man who leads a double life and is tangled up with the mob. Starz has ordered another 10 segs of the series created and exec produced by Mitch Glazer. The series, produced in-house by Starz, will have a sneak preview on March 30 following the season finale of "Spartacus: Vengeance" prior to its official April 6 debut.



" 'Magic City' is a beautifully written, superbly acted, and visually stunning series, and we feel the quality of the work accomplished deserves a second season," said Starz CEO Chris Albrecht, "It has already been sold in more than 70 territories worldwide, and represents the kind of premium entertainment the Starz brand is seeking to create."

Albrecht has a history of giving a pre-premiere vote of confidence to new series. Last September, he gave the soph season order to Kelsey Grammer starrer "Boss" nearly a month before it bowed on

the pay cabler. The early renewal can also help the production process, giving writers the jump on plotting arcs and allowing for efficiencies in production timetables.

Gever Kosinski, Ed Bianchi and Dwayne Shattuck exec produce along with Glazer, who grew up in Miami Beach in the era depicted in the series. The feature scribe enthused that working on the show has been "the most fulfilling and complete creative experience of my life."

Production on season two will begin later this year for 2013.

In an effort to generate as much sampling as possible for the show, Starz will make the first three segs available online via a handful of satcasters and cable operators, as well as the net's own website, starting the day after the March 30 preview airing.

"Magic City" also stars Olga Kurylenko and Danny Huston.

Contact Cynthia Littleton at cynthia.littleton@variety.com

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Old Miami Beach: Sun, Schmaltz, Murder



Steven Strait, left, and Jeffrey Dean Morgan on the show "Magic City." More Photos »
By AMY CHOZICK
Published: March 30, 2012

BEN DIAMOND, known as the Butcher, a suntanned sociopath, grew up in an Orthodox Jewish orphanage. He orders sable by the pool and in passing conversation mentions the story of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Multimedia



Jewish Rogues Gallery

Diamond, a gangster played by Danny Huston, inhabits the colorful, debauched and very Jewish world of late-1950s Miami Beach in which Starz's newest series, "Magic City," takes place.

The period drama, beginning Friday, follows the early days of the Miramar

Playa hotel, a fictional composite of the giant Jewishowned hotels that sprung up in South Florida in the 1950s. Rather than glance over its main characters' Log in to see what your friends are sharing on nytimes.com. Privacy Policy | What's This?

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Craig Blankenhorn/Sta

Danny Huston plays a Jewish gangster on the new Starz series "Magic City." More Photos »

religion, the drama intersperses Jewish culture heavily throughout the series, departing from the nebbish neurotics popularized in sitcoms like "Seinfeld" and "Friends." The series follows hunky power players in dark suits (and sometimes yarmulkes), more Tony Soprano than Larry David.

While covering up a murder, the sleek hotelier Isaac Evans, called Ike, the protagonist played by Jeffrey Dean Morgan, plans his daughter's bat mitzvah, an affair that includes the 13-year-old drifting down a winding staircase engulfed in pink dry-ice fumes. A gold Star of David stands out against the tanned chest of Stevie Evans, Ike's oversexed son. And late at night Ike asks Stevie to help him protect a friend from Ben Diamond's wrath. "Now?" Stevie asks. "No, next Shavuot," Ike says, sarcastically referring to the Jewish holiday.

In television and in reality the corrupt, swaggering Jewish mobster type has countered the notion of the weakling Jew, said Vincent Brook, author of "Something Ain't Kosher Here: The Rise of the 'Jewish' Sitcom." He pointed to gangsters like Arnold Rothstein and Bugsy Siegel. "There's a whole parallel history of these mobsters who in their own way were reacting to stereotypes," Mr. Brook said. That led to another, tougher stereotype in movies

and television.

Based on his experiences growing up in Miami Beach, the executive producer Mitch Glazer first pitched "Magic City," set in 1959, in 2007, before AMC's "Mad Men" thrust the period into the popular consciousness. CBS commissioned a pilot script but rejected the project.

On Starz "Magic City," the channel's biggest investment yet, will join a lineup that includes the bloody, stylized "Spartacus" and "Boss," about a Chicago mayor.

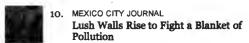
"I wanted to recreate the Jewish story in Miami Beach exactly as I remembered it," Mr. Glazer said. His father worked as an electrical engineer at the Fontainebleau Hotel, opened on South Beach in 1954 by the Jewish hotelier Ben Novack. Mr. Glazer recalls the Cuban revolution, a Meyer Lansky sighting and the Rat Pack roaming the marble lobby in iridescent suits. "If you went just over the causeway to Miami, you were aware you were a minority. But on the beach it was a world unto itself."

Although the Jews in "Magic City" live like kings, they still run across the occasional anti-Semite. The Holocaust is a fresh memory, and Jews cling to the safety of tight-knit communities. Like the sexism on "Mad Men" these details —a country club that bans Jews, a sly reference to "you people"— are intended by Mr. Glazer to be viewed cringingly through the prism of contemporary culture.

Jewish characters have long graced the small screen. On radio and later TV "The Goldbergs" broached topics like anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. In a 1939 episode someone threw a rock in the window as the Goldbergs prepared the Seder.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, as television became a high-stakes game, networks played it safe. Ethnic families gave way to white-bread families in sitcoms like "Father Knows

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Best" and "My Three Sons."

By the 1970s viewers rebelled "against a hermetically sealed television environment they had grown up with," said David Bushman, curator of television at the Paley Center for Media. In recent years Jews have become common staples on television, from Josh Lyman on "The West Wing" to Fran Fine on "The Nanny" and the power agent Ari Gold on "Entourage."





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A version of this article appeared in print on April 1, 2012, on page AR15 of the New York edition with the headline: Old Miami Beach: Sun, Schmaltz, Murder.

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VANITY FAIR

spotlight

April 2012

Miami Heat

Related: See exclusive video of Magic City, and view photos from the set.

By Bruce Handy



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF STARZ/GREG WILLIAMS.

The men of Magic City: Ohristian Cooke, Stavon Jeltrev Dean

Vaneuez Donny Huse

et in Miami Beach in 1959—sweet town, sweet year—the new Starz series Magic City weaves together a hook-filled plot involving mobsters, Cuban exiles, straying wives, Frank Sinatra, family, Judaism, and money—all centered on the mythical Miramar Playa Hotel. I say "mythical" not just because the Miramar Playa didn't actually exist but also because the show's aura of remembrance is so potent it feels less like nostalgia than dispatches from someone's fever dream about the past. Whose dream? That would be Mitch Glazer, the screenwriter, who created the series. He grew up in Miami as the son of an electrical engineer who designed lighting for the fabulous Fontainebleau, Eden Roc, and Deauville hotels—three rococo-modern masterpieces which pretty much define midcentury Miami. Glazer himself worked as a cabana boy at the Deauville (which stands in for the Miramar Playa's exterior) and saw the Beatles there in 1964 when they played the hotel's "famed" Napoleon Ballroom—so, yes, he knows from the Miami Beach hospitality industry.

The hero of his show is the Miramar Playa's owner, Ike Evans, played by Jeffrey Dean Morgan (a former *Grey's Anatomy* regular) with a heavy-lidded charisma reminiscent of Javier Bardem's and a stoic, honorable gravitas all his, or Ike's, own. Another key character is Ike's son Stevie (Steven Strait), who when we meet him is being serviced by a lady friend as he speeds down the highway in a '57 Thunderbird and is later seen making good use of the hotel's grounds and female guests. Did Glazer enjoy similar perks in his cabana-boy days? "No. The character is kind of a fantasy. What I got was these tiny, intense women, the grandmothers who would grab me and go, 'My granddaughter's

coming down from Hofstra-ya gotta meet her!""

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PERSONALITIES / MAGIC CITY BRINGS MAD MEN ERA MOB DRAMA TO STARZ

Magic City Brings Mad Men Era Mob Drama to STARZ

BY TOM AUSTIN



ON OLGA KURYLENKO: Light georgette pleated dress, Gucci (\$5,100). Bal Harbour Shops, 9700 Collins Ave., 305-868-6504. Fluorite, peridot, citrine, and crystal stone earnings, Iradj Moini (price on request). Ametrine gold ring, Carelle (\$3,306). ON JEFFREY DEAN MORGAN: Single-breasted suit, Hugo Boss (895). Aventura Mall, 19501 Biscayne Blvd., 305-792-6099. Slim-fit shirt, Thomas Pink (\$185). Bal Harbour Shops, 9700 Collins Ave., 305-864-0666. Calfskin leather belt, Brooks Brothers (\$98). Bal Harbour Shops, 305-865-8686







Walking through the set of Magic City, the new STARZ network drama set in 1958 Miami debuting April 6, is like taking a stroll through a terminally glamorous slice of local history. Midcentury Miami Beach was the aesthetic forerunner of Las Vegas, where heavy hitters wore white dinner jackets and escorted mink-draped showgirls to Frank Sinatra's midnight show, when the underworld met the elite, and high and low mixed with a certain glossy style. The 340,000-square-foot production studio, built near the Miami International Airport, provides a skinnydip into that 1950s fantasyland, centered around the fictional Miramar Playa Hotel, which serves as the show's equivalent of the Fontainebleau and Eden Roc hotels, both designed by the late Morris Lapidus. The Fontainebleau, in particular, was the epicenter of the Miami Beach elite and Mafia society, both using the ornate lobby as glorified catwalks to flaunt their prominence and clout. The portico of the Magic City set is made for the arrival of big-finned, gas-guzzling pink Cadillacs, and the lobby has another over-the-top prop, a massive chandelier that used to hang in the Eden Roc.

Magic City was created by Mitch Glazer, a hometown boy who went to Miami Beach Senior High School with Mickey Rourke, Roy Firestone, and Desmond Child. Glazer-also responsible for writing Scrooged, starring Bill Murray, and The Recruit, with Colin Farrell-grew up on Miami Beach's Hibiscus Island. His father was an electrical engineer who worked for Lapidus, Ben Novack, and then the owner of the Fontainebleau. For Glazer, who hasn't lived in Miami since high school, Magic City provided a chance to bring back the time of his youth: "The set of the Miramar Playa is a composite of all my fantasies, all the hotels my dad worked on," he says. "Miami Beach was a small town then. My grandfather used to play the balalaika with his friends, other Russian





FEATURED VIDEO



Elettra Wiedemann

Cover shoot: April 2012 issue of Ocean Drive magazine.

- 1. Miami's Next Top Chefs
- 2. Slideshow: Blk Water Launch
- 3. Gabrielle Union Changes the Game
- 4. Slideshow: Shot On Site: Miami
- 5. Miami's Most Influential Couples

Jews, at Lummus Park, and we re-created that time in Magic City. As a kid, I went to Hoffman's Cafeteria, where Jerry's Famous Deli is now, on Española Way and Collins. We set a scene at Jerry's, too, which looks just like Hoffman's."

Magic City represents everything the old Beach was—and more. It's an intoxicating mix of gangsters, sex, intrigue, brand-new money, and pure just-for-the-hell-of-it glitz. On the set, a graceful staircase is flanked by shimmering tiles, echoing the Fontainebleau's famed "staircase to nowhere." The fictional hotel's Sea Breeze Lingerie Shop is equipped with a bookie operation behind the back door. Autographed photos of Zsa Zsa Gabor and boxer Floyd Patterson adorn the owner's office. The Atlantis Lounge has a vintage jukebox, gold columns, and portholes that look into a swimming pool.

In Magic City, the Miramar Playa is ruled by Ike Evans, a family man who has been forced to make a deal with the Mob to stay afloat. He's played by Jeffrey Dean Morgan, who also starred in Watchmen and enjoyed a stint on Grey's Anatomy. In the first episode, Ike is throwing an epic New Year's Eve party featuring a Frank Sinatra concert and guests that include John Kennedy and Kim Novak. To thwart a union leader who's threatening to lead a strike and shut the hotel down, he reluctantly calls on his not-so-silent partner, mobster Ben "The Butcher" Diamond. In the series, Glazer has created a Miami Beach that blends high style with all the darkness of that era.

To Morgan, however, both the past and present Miami Beach are entirely new worlds. "I'd never been to Miami before this show," he says, "and hanging out here has been interesting, especially the characters we met." Yul Vazquez, who plays Victor Lazaro, the Cuban general manager of the Miramar Playa, "is a brilliant actor and also has great insights on Miami," says Morgan. (Vazquez spent time here as a child and keeps an apartment on South Beach.) "And Mitch is amazing. We've done scenes at the Deauville Beach Resort, which he says is like it was when he worked there as a cabana boy."

As for Ike Evans's plight, Morgan looks to Miami history. "My character has a bit of Ben Novack from the Fontainebleau," he says. "The real history is incredible, with hookers, bookies working out of the hotel, and Meyer Lansky trying to bring casino gambling to Miami after Batista fell in Cuba. CIA agents actually met in the hotel's Boom Boom Room to talk about hits on Castro. It was so open and free, a no-holds-barred kind of place. Novack, when he found out his wife was having an affair, went in and shot up the Fontainebleau in a crazy Wild, Wild West moment."

But then, reality often beats fiction in Miami. The 2009 murders of Ben Novack Jr. and his mother, Bernice Novack, are complete with kinky sex and plenty of intrigue. Narcy Novack, an ex-stripper and Ben's widow, and her brother have been charged with masterminding both crimes in a case that would defy the imagination of any screenwriter.

Morgan has learned to appreciate the absurdity of our town. "Miami is pretty wild now—one day while doing a scene, I looked through the portholes at the Atlantis Lounge and saw little strips of fake hair floating into the drain. We hired extras to swim nude in the pool, but they all had perfect silicone breasts and shaved private parts. To get extras that were au naturel with real breasts and pubic hair, like women in the '50s, was impossible in Miami."

The mobster Ben "The Butcher" Diamond is played by Danny Huston, son of film director John Huston and half-brother of Anjelica Huston. To Huston, playing Diamond entailed a bit of Meyer Lansky, Bugsy Siegel, Edward G. Robinson in Key Largo, "and a few other stereotypes I cheerfully embraced," he says. "There's nothing redeeming about Diamond. He just wants more of everything. In the end, there's something kind of likable about him—the fact that he's so unrepentant. Ike makes a deal with the devil when he does business with Diamond, but they're actually both pretty bad; Ben is just not afraid of the ugly side of their business."

All this is rich terrain for an actor, says Huston. "For men of that period, that was the last moment in history to behave with pure machismo. All that unapologetic smoking, drinking, and chasing women; it's terribly seductive, and they all have a wonderful kind of ignorance about the consequences of their behavior." Today's Miami certainly has evolved, but Huston notes a certain louche tone to our tropical city. "Those balmy nights in Miami, the music wafting in and out, still give people a certain carefree quality and ample opportunities to discover their darker sides."

Everything about Magic City is beautiful and lush, from the settings to the cars to the clothes. The wardrobe department is a source of drop-dead glamour, well suited to the character Judi Silver, played by actress Elena Satine, who originally hails from Georgia, in Eastern Europe. In the show, Silver is a platinum-blonde escort at the Atlantis Lounge who does favors for her protectors Ike and his son Stevie, who runs the lounge. Her seduction of certain clientele just might prove the old adage about orgasm being akin to a kind of death.

To Satine, it was a treat to immerse herself in another era. "We built a whole city for this show—it's such a decadent lifestyle. We spent months coming up with a distinctive style for Judi. She's a pro, a working girl, but also ahead of the curve for that time: The hemlines are shorter, the dresses more low-cut. In one scene, she wears a black corset straight out of Bettie Page."

For Glazer, the production of Magic City is a chance to come to terms with his hometown. "Even as a kid, I knew that Miami Beach was the coolest place on earth. It was beautiful and glamorous, like one big Bobby Darin song come to life, with all the high-rollers at the Fontainebleau and the women in furs. But you knew it was something that had to end, and when it did, it would never come back. Magic City brings some of my memories back to life, and modern Miami is still an amazing place. In our show, the Mob is trying to bring casinos to Miami, and now that issue is happening all over again. In the end, Miami never really changes all that much."

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Starz series 'Magic City' uses 2012 tricks to show us 1959 Miami

Starz series aims to recapture golden age of Art Deco glitz with classic cars and clothes, but how did designers pull it off in 2012?

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This red-and-white 1957 Chevrolet Corvette with the actor Steven Strait is owned by Deerfield Beach resident Mike Kukla who leased the car to "Magic City." "It's fun knowing that my car is a part of it," said Kukla, a sales executive who bought the car in 1996 and restored it. "It's nice to see it being used the way it's being used." (Greg Williams, STARZ / March 29, 2012)

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By Johnny Diaz, Sun Sentinel March 31, 2012

The Miramar Playa is the most glamorous Miami Beach hotel that

The fictional palace is one of the stars of the new Starz cable drama "Magic City," which is set in 1959 and revolves around hotelier lke Evans as he balances family life and ties to the mob with a backdrop of gamblers, entertainers and Fidel Castro taking over Cuba. Think: The Sopranos South Beach.

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When the period show debuts Friday, viewers will see series creator (and South Florida native) Mitch Glazer and production designers make 1959 new again with vintage cars, clothing, couches from that era. That was a tall order in modern Miami, where neon-lighted skyscrapers beckon from downtown and flashy sports cars purr along Ocean Drive.

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To recapture the look and feel of a swanky 1950s beach hotel, Starz had to literally build one.

"We had a hard time finding a space that would allow [us] to build this column-free unobstructed lobby," said Karen Bailey, vice president of original programming at Starz. "It became apparent that we needed to recreate something authentic to the style and have that grandiose new car smell. We ended up building the majority of the Miramar Playa."

Starting last year, crews spent 18 weeks planning and constructing the hotel's interiors on two soundstages at the Bertram Yacht headquarters along the Miami River. The stages house the hotel's grand lobby and concierge desk with faux terrazzo and marble floors under 40-foot ceilings.

Details such as 1959 telephones at the check-in counter and black-and-white autographed photos of <u>Dick Clark</u> and Liz Taylor help fill the scenery.

The Miramar Playa was inspired by the real designs of Morris Lapidus, the famed architect behind the Fontainebleau, Deauville and Eden Roc hotels.

"It's a complete original piece but it's in that same architectural vocabulary," said Carlos Barbosa, the show's production designer who visited those hotels to design the Miramar Playa. "It has that air of the Fontainebleau. It has that air of the Deauville or the Eden Roc, but it's not exactly like any of them."

Of course, viewers will be hardpressed to find the actual building on Collins Avenue. The exterior shots of the towering, curved 13-story story hotel were virtual creations.

"It's a 3D model that we created on the computer," Barbosa said.

For the pool scenes, they used the bottom floor of the Deauville, while the rest of the Miramar Playa's floors were digitally stacked on top.

"It's an homage," Bailey said. "You can see stylistically that it's reminiscent of the bigger and fancier hotels."

The cars were real, though, and populate the scenes as much as the characters.

"We used hundreds" of cars, said Bailey, noting they found the vehicles within 100 miles of Miami Beach through collectors, car clubs and private owners. In early episodes, a 1959 convertible Mercedes-Benz and a 1959 Chevrolet Corvette are parked in the circular driveway of the hotel lobby. Another scene shows a 1950s mustard-yellow Dodge school bus for "Dade County Public Schools" picking up a character's child.

The special effects

Robert Thompson, a TV professor at Syracuse University, said the challenge for the show's production designers and film crews was capturing 1959 Miami without any reminders of 2012 Miami. That meant having to digitally alter the aerial views and exterior shots to wipe out the newer skyscrapers and contemporary signs.

"'Miami <u>Vice</u>' had the advantage that it was contemporary. It was taking place in the same Miami they were shooting it," said Thompson, of the 1980s Miami-based police drama that starred <u>Don Johnson</u>.

Bailey said editors had to digitally erase modern ships and buoys in the sweeping aerial shots of the ocean. In scenes set in the waterfront-estate of mobster Ben "The Butcher" Diamond, crews had to digitally blot out the modern high-rises in the background along the Intracoastal. Hotels on Ocean Drive built post-1959 were also erased in post-production.

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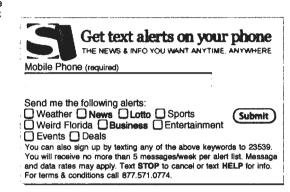
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