

Dillervision ready to get local: Miami-USA Broadcasting topper prepares multicultural region.(WAMI-TV channel 69; Barry Diller)(Miami - special section)(Company Profile)

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If local TV can't work in Miami, Barry Diller is betting, it probably can't work anywhere.

Local TV -- and that's really local, with more than just news and weather amid a morass of syndie fare -- is about to make its U.S. debut. And culturally diverse, high-ad-spend Miami is its chosen testing ground.

There'll be live kidvid blocks, magazines and talk. There'll be cabaret and Cuban culture. Starting October, there'll be exclusive NBA action with the Miami Heat. There may even, later on, be local sitcoms or drama. And there'll be no home shopping.

Miami-USA Broadcasting, which is branding itself simply as "Miami," starts beaming June 8 via WAMI-69 with a 24-hour slate. From the get-go, at least a dozen shows will be home-grown.

Covering the coast from the Keys to Boca Raton, and targeting what it calls an "aspirational" demo, Miami-USA embodies a long-held desire by Diller to prove the viability of local TV. If it works, the concept could be rolled out at 11 more Diller-owned UHFers; in fact, a second outlet is being prepared in L.A., based at Universal Studios.

"Miami's a complex, diverse, incredibly interesting place. Our job is to take that back to the community and show what's going on," says Miami-USA's editor-in-chief, Matti Leshem.

The visitor to Miami-USA's HQ, a storefront facil on Miami Beach's Lincoln Road, can't help but notice the buzz. Miami-USA execs are mostly in their 30s, and the whole setup breathes a desire to make TV different.

That desire starts with 36-year-old Leshem, a former actor and Internet programmer: "We have an opportunity to create programming that addresses people who've never been addressed before."

He cites the example of Generation n, a magazine show for bilingual Hispanics that takes its name from a Miami-based lifestyles rag. "They've been marginalized by Hispanic TV and Hispanic advertisers," he says.

Miami's sun-and-fun lifestyle nurtures shows that could hit locally and export nationally, Leshem says. "Ocean Drive," another rag-to-mag concept, will be emcee'd by local model Hunter Reno (Janet's niece).

Production head Mark Binke calls the mag "a voyeuristic take on the social scene," one that will hit the street, the beaches, the nightclubs to capture the model-and-celeb crowd at play.

As well as talent, like Reno, comedian Monique Marvez and Generation n publisher Bill Teck, Miami-USA is finding that locals have a lot to contribute off-camera.

Forti/Layne Entertainment, whose credits include Gloria Estefan network specials, is coproducing teen groove fest "Bar Code," which feeds off Miami's dynamic dance scene. Of Miami-USA's 230 staffers, adds Binke, "Maybe 2% are not local."

Inevitably, Miami-USA brings the skeptics flocking. With the exception of CityTV in Toronto, local TV projects in North America have had little impact.

In Miami, several producers who have worked on ideas with Miami-USA say budgeting is very