

## TV Review: Starz Creates Luscious World in 'Magic City,' Lacks Memorable Characters

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 6, 2012 - 2:08pm

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CHICAGO – The new Starz drama “Magic City” is a beautiful show to look at with its “Mad Men”-esque degree of period detail and half-naked people looking smooth, suave, and sexy. It’s visual eye candy that’s tasty enough aesthetically that it may lead some people to believe that it’s a more accomplished piece of work than it actually is. For while there are pretty things to look at in this “Magic City,” the population just isn’t interesting enough to warrant the trip.



TV Rating: **2.5/5.0**

“Magic City” starts at a luxurious resort hotel in Miami, Florida named the Miramar in 1958 on New Year’s Eve. The world is changing. Workers are unionizing and Havana is about to fall to Fidel Castro and his rebels. Amidst this backdrop of revolution, the power players in the community struggle to keep their positions. The fact is that the cultural and social revolutions of the late ’50s and ’60s made Miami-level excess a tougher commodity to maintain. Ike Evans (Jeffrey Dean Morgan of “Grey’s Anatomy” and “Supernatural”) sees the landscape changing in front of him and realizes he needs to adapt to change with it. And that adaptation may include violence.



Magic City

Photo credit: Starz

The premiere features Evans dealing with a potential strike on New Year’s Eve. This would be a problem for any hotel owner but it’s particularly troublesome given that Evans has booked Frank Sinatra for the night and the legendary singer has been promised a sold-out show with no problems. If there’s a single empty seat when the spotlight comes up, he’s gone. Evans will do whatever it takes to make sure there are no picket lines, protests, or, worst of all, strikes.



Magic City  
Photo credit: Starz

To ensure happiness, Ike basically turns to the devil, a tough guy named Ben "The Butcher" Diamond (a show-stealing Danny Huston). The Butcher can get the job done and keep his business partner happy and in business but at what cost? Will Ike sell his soul to stay high on the hog? And what will these morally shady decisions do to his sons and wife (former Bond girl Olga Kurylenko)?

Ike has two sons, one who seems (at least at first) to be the good one and the other the bad one. The good one, Danny (Christian Cooke), has a cute crush on a hotel maid named Mercedes (Dominik Garcia-Lorido), while the bad one, Stevie (Steven Strait), makes the incredibly stupid decision to sleep with The Butcher's wife, Lily (Jessica Marais). Neither have the charisma or character, at least in the premiere, to make their arcs interesting.

All of the people are strikingly beautiful and the settings have been lovingly recreated in a way that makes the show very easy on the eyes (it doesn't hurt that the gorgeous cast has gone along with the Starz patented brand of adult programming that pushes late night levels of skin), but "Magic City" is easy to watch but hard to care about. Some have compared it to "Mad Men" and "The Sopranos." At least at the beginning it's nowhere near either program in terms of quality of writing or performance but does seem to be mimicking them when it comes to tone and speed. "Magic City" is a purposeful, slow show, which makes it not nearly as much escapist fun as one would hope. The writing's not strong enough to warrant the deliberate tone (and neither are the performances...in particular, Strait and Cooke are dull). Only Huston seems to be having any fun. If the rest of the cast can't find the magic, there's no reason to tune in.

*"Magic City" stars Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Christian Cooke, Steven Strait, Olga Kurylenko, Jessica Marais, Dominik Garcia-Lorido, and Danny Huston. It was created by Mitch Glazer and premieres on Starz on April 6, 2012 at 9pm CST.*



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