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The New **TRIBES** of Miami

AN INFLUX OF FRESH MONEY FROM BRAZIL, VENEZUELA, MEXICO, AND RUSSIA RECEPTION-PROOFS THE CITY AND FIRES UP THE LOCAL SOCIAL AND BUSINESS SCENES.

By Rory Ross

Once again, Miami is showing the world that it moves to its own beat. While the majority of US cities remain weighted down by the effects of negative equity going into the fourth year of the recession, Miami has been soaring thanks to waves of cash flooding not only from its customary money pipeline, Latin America, but also from far, farther afield—Russia. The deluge of ruble-, bolívar-, peso-, and Brazilian real-exchanged dollars has bailed out Miami's real estate sector, crowded luxury label boutiques, recharged the restaurant scene, and is presently inspiring the best architects in the world to reshape the Miami skyline. Now, it is realigning the social and business sectors, too.

The newcomers are an amalgam of Latin one percenters—Brazilians, Venezuelans, Mexicans—mixed in with Russian oligarchs and “minigarchs.” Their arrival and impact justify the city's nickname, the Magic City, as Miami has indeed pulled off another miraculous self-reinvention during the worst global economic turnaround of the last 80 years.

Newcomers to Miami are actually nothing new. Throughout the city's history, various Latin groups have had their “seasons.” Cubans came here to escape Castro after he took over the country in 1959. The Venezuelan tide has ebbed and flowed since the '70s, depending on oil prices. Colombians came as refugees from the drug wars of the 1980s and 1990s. At the start of the new millennium, the Argentineans arrived to escape their country's financial woes. Brazilians have trickled in over the years, but that trickle became a torrent since 2008, thanks to the exchange rate differential and the arbitrage in real estate prices between São Paulo and the States. The Russians, having bought everything worth owning in St-Tropez and Monaco—and

looking to escape dreary Moscow winters when the south of France turns cold—are on the move. Lately, Miami has been welcoming waves of Venezuelans and Mexicans.

Perhaps more important than the sun-and-fun culture and great real estate deals, Miami offers security—a big issue for both Latin and Russian arrivals. Émigré one percenters see Miami as a city where they can enjoy their success, move about more freely and with fewer bodyguards and bullet-proof cars than at home, where staying sane means hovering between states of denial and paranoia. In Miami, they can cruise in luxury vehicles and race their Lamborghinis in a way that they'd never dare dream of in Caracas or São Paulo.

Then there's the fact that Miami society and its power circles have always been relatively easy for the well-heeled émigré to crack. Unlike many other US locales, foreign communities often call the shots and make the rules here. WASP hegemonies, which dominated so many cities in the South, never held the same sway in Miami. Palm Beach is only a one-and-a-half-hour drive away but worlds apart, where the money is older and quieter, and where you have to put in years on the charity circuit before getting a look in.

Miami is not a snobbish city, nor does it have many rules. In fact, rules and controlling governments are what many of its new inhabitants came here to escape. Blending in is easy. One-percenter money, regardless of original currency, tends to spend in similar ways beneath the tropical sun.

Brazilians are having the biggest impact among the new kids in town. The present wave dates from the financial crisis; while both US real estate and the US dollar took a nosedive, quite the reverse happened in São Paulo. Real estate and the real soared. Miami prices were suddenly a quarter of those in Brazil.

The Brazilians


Names to know: Indy 500 champion Helio Castroneves, race car drivers Emerson Fittipaldi and Cristiano Piquet (who also has a real estate firm), hedge fund investor Claudio Coppola Di Todaro of Castle Pines Capital International, Flagler Group's Ricardo Dunin, BrazilFoundation benefactor Andrea Dellal, journalist Chris Delboni, model Carime Lobo, Tassara Vilaca de Fonseca, designers Luciana Fragali and Daniela Pimenta, furniture designer and Artefacto owner Paulo Bacchi, actress Alice Braga, conductor Frederico Gouveia, Brazilian Consul General Hélio Ramos Filho, ballet sensation Renan Cerdeiro, Miami City Ballet artistic director Edward Villella, Mega Model Management's Marcus Panthera, artist Romero Britto

Hangouts: Zuma, Mr Chow, Il Gabbiano, Nobu, Carpaccio, The Forge, The Dutch, Ceconi's Miami Beach, LIV at the Fontainebleau Miami Beach, WALL at the W South Beach, Mynt Lounge, Vita restaurant, Tutto Pasta

Favored drink: Caipirinha

Preferred addresses: South of Fifth, Trump Towers in Sunny Isles Beach, Canyon Ranch Living Miami Beach in Aventura, and Key Biscayne. Young, single professionals prefer Brickell and Coconut Grove.

Dress style: Anything beachy-boho from Brazilian designer Oskar Metsavaht's Osklen boutique on Lincoln Road, white jeans, sexy-cut floral dresses, skinny jeans and Louboutins; Prada and Burberry. Brazilians are big consumers of “event” cocktail and evening dresses; Carlos Miele is a popular label. Vertiginous heels. Beach and sportswear: For sunbathing, the less fabric the better—micro and G-string bikinis. Favorite swimwear brands: Agua Bendita, Osklen, Jo de-Mer, Rosa Cha, Clube Bossa. For men: Two-button black linen blazers with jeans; Gucci, Maison Martin Margiela, Dior Homme, Carlos Miele



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serves as a presentation card, and when Mexicans emerge on the scene, it's likely in this arena," says de la Garza.

The Russians are among recent high-profile buyers, top among them Roustam Tariko—the billionaire owner of Russian Standard Bank and Russian Standard Vodka—who last April bought a \$25.5 million estate on Star Island. Nearby, Vladislav Doronin, chairman of Moscow-based real estate developer Capital Group, paid \$16 million for the Star Island home that once belonged to Shaquille O'Neal, the now-retired basketball player. Last December, a Russian paid \$14.2 million for a condo in the Palazzo Del Mare development on Fisher Island, which previously changed hands for \$5.25 million.

Local media coverage of the Russians in town is disproportionately tilted to their impact on Miami society, chiefly because Russians are perceived as the new rich on the block. The frolics of Doronin, otherwise known as Naomi Campbell's beau, drive local paparazzi into a frenzy. But for every big Russian real estate deal that gets splashed all over the papers, there are 10 equally big deals by Latin buyers that go unmentioned. Numerically small compared to their Latin counterparts, Russians represent between five and 10 percent of the real estate market in Miami.

Today's Russian one percenter typically operates out of pockets of prime real estate in the north part of Miami Beach, Aventura, and Sunny Isles Beach, or Fisher Island, where you can get by without speaking a word of English thanks to the numbers of businesses and stores whose employees are all Russian (gourmet shops, hair salons, dry cleaners, real estate firms, etc.). Some of the more popular Russian bolt-holes (Fisher Island, Indian Creek, and Star Island) remain in high demand, because of

their fortress-like specifications and partly due to the fact that they are, well, full of Russians. More recently, they've been flocking to the Apogee in South Beach, whose penthouse just sold to a Russian. "Once a friend buys, they refer another and then another and so on," says Gil Dezer. The building gets a reputation for "being Russian."

When the Russians first arrived in town, their sharp elbows and aggressive tactics raised a few eyebrows. "One knocked on the door of a Mexican acquaintance and asked, 'How much?'" says Uribe. "The Russian wrote out a large check, handed it to my Mexican friend, and said, 'Get out.' Fortunately, you no longer find that sort of behavior."

Russian motives in coming to Miami contrast starkly to those of other groups. While most Latin communities move here to settle, work, and raise families, the majority of Russians buy to round off bulging asset portfolios. Remember, they are purchasing their fifth or sixth homes, which tend to be located in vacation (as opposed to residential) areas and are scooped up as high-security status symbols, flashy investments that they can show off to other Russians. Whereas the Latin communities will happily intermingle and appear broadly similar when distantly observed, Russians, for obvious cultural and linguistic reasons, do not. They operate as a largely self-contained clannish subset of Miami life that has made little impact to date on the fabric of local society other than as a source of news stories.

But it's likely they'll come out to play, as each group that settles in town eventually does. And when they finally emerge from their local *dachas*, Miami should be on standby. For the day when the world's greatest vodka artistes mix it up with the Venezuelans, the world's *numero uno* Scotch drinkers, there should be one helluva party! **OD**

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