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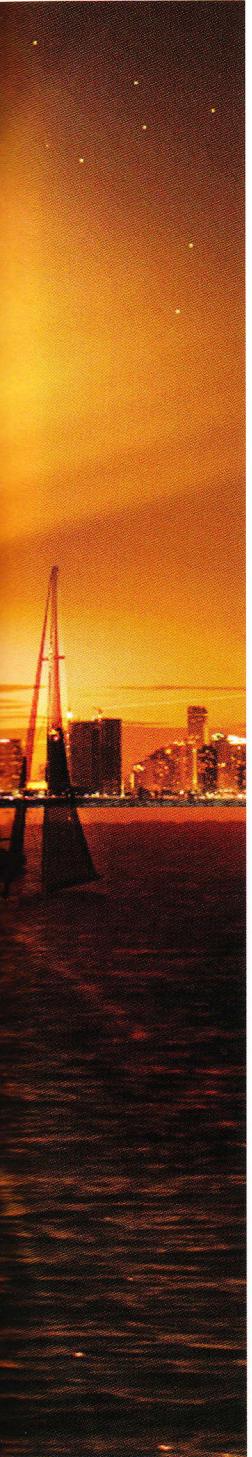
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Stadium of Dreams

Find out what plans are in place to restore Miami Marine Stadium to its former glory while providing residents and boaters alike with access to one of the most unique, exciting and magical venues in the world.

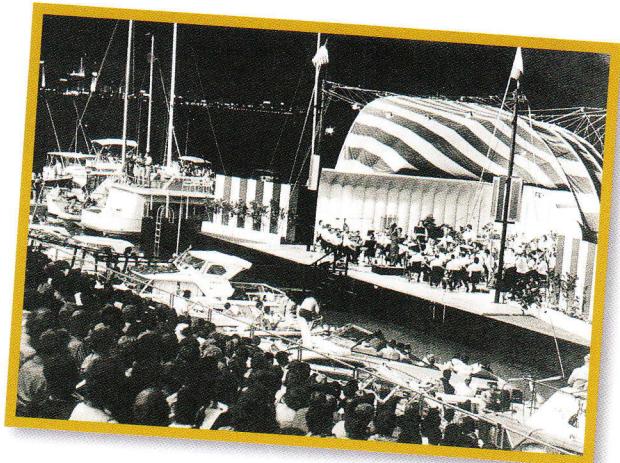
Text by DONALD WORTH

Photos courtesy of MIAMI MARINE STADIUM

During its years of operation from 1963, the Miami Marine Stadium provided South Florida boaters with unparalleled pleasures—boat races, concerts from a floating barge, and special events that are fondly remembered by several generations of Miamians.

Slated for the wrecking ball, the Ralph Munroe Marine Stadium (named after an early Miami pioneer) has now been designated historic by the City of Miami and has received extensive recognition from groups such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the World Monuments Fund, and singer Jimmy Buffett who produced a public service video.

A group called Friends of Marine Stadium was formed in 2008 and has advocated for its restoration. The Marine Stadium is now a key priority for Miami Mayor Tomas Regalado and it is the centerpiece of the newly approved Master Plan for Virginia Key.





History

The Marine Stadium and Basin are located on Virginia Key-on the way to Key Biscayne and only five minutes from downtown. The Basin was built in 1963 to watch boat racing. In the 1950s and early 1960s, Miami was considered a hot spot for boat racing, and boat racers often complained that they would bump into coconuts. The City built the Stadium and dredged the Basin for a total cost of \$2 million. It was designed by architect Hilario Candela (then 28 years old) of the firm Pancoast, Ferendino, Skeels, Grafton and Burnham, with engineering work done by Jack Meyer of Dignum Engineers. Old. The 6,566 seat is an all concrete structure which features a roof that is 328 feet long. The roof is considered an architectural marvel-it is comprised of a series of hyperbolic paraboloids and at one point was one of the longest spans of cantilevered concrete in the world.

Closure & Movement

After Hurricane Andrew in 1992, the City of Miami shuttered the Stadium and decided to demolish it. The City requested funds from FEMA for this purpose. An engineering study done at the time determined that the Stadium did not suffer any damage from the Hurricane, so the FEMA funds could not be used for demolition. Since then, the Stadium has been closed as numerous redevelopment plans for Virginia Key have come and gone. The Stadium has been vandalized and has become subject to much graffiti.

The legendary Miami Marine Stadium is on the verge of a rebirth thanks to the support of Friends of Marine Stadium and the surrounding community.

Since 2008, Friends of Marine Stadium, an all volunteer coalition of individuals and organizations under the administrative umbrella of



Dade Heritage Trust has worked tirelessly to first prevent demolition and then see the Stadium restored. A major grass roots advocacy campaign has resulted in support from important organizations such as the World Monuments Fund and National Trust for Historic Preservation—and much publicity.

Miami Mayor Tomas Regalado has made the Stadium a key priority of his administration and the Miami City Commission approved the Virginia Key Master Plan in July which makes the Stadium the centerpiece. An engineering study done of the Stadium in 2010 showed that it is structurally sound (although in need of much repair). Finally the Miami Dade County Commission approved an authorization of \$3 million from a Historic Preservation Bond Fund to restore the Stadium. The Florida Inland Navigation District (“FIND”) Commission and City of Miami have also funded a study to analyze the conditions of the pilings of Miami Marine Stadium.

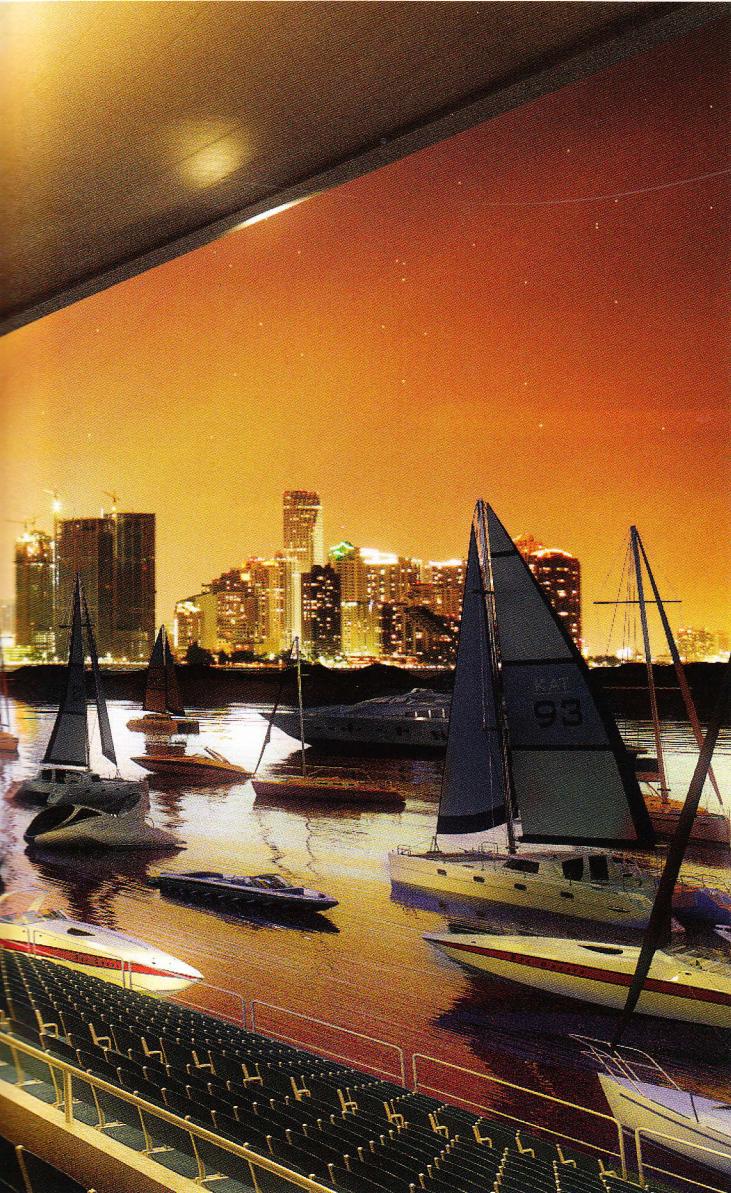


Future

The past was wonderful—but what of the future? Friends of Marine Stadium has worked very hard to talk with promoters and events organizations and catalogue new uses for the Stadium. The Stadium can work because it is a multipurpose facility: activities will include concerts, boat racing, participatory athletic events, movie shoots and special events. All told, over twenty promoters have expressed interest in using the Marine Stadium. Concerts will be a mainstay as the Stadium is considered the perfect size by many promoters. In fact, a local group, DawnTown is now sponsoring an ideas contest to design a new floating stage.

The Stadium will be home to many participatory athletic events. In fact, it is already a world class venue for triathlons; other opportunities





promote and run closed course inboard powerboat races at the stadium. During its 30 year existence FIRC became the essence of inboard powerboat racing in Florida, staging races in numerous communities around the state. The stadium closed in 1992, and FIRC dissolved in 1994.

Today, FIRC is back with a new mission. As the Miami Marine Stadium roars back to life, so does FIRC, now encouraging all forms of powerboat racing, including Offshore, Inboard, and Outboard. FIRC seeks to help create and mentor organizations interested in promoting and staging powerboat races. In addition, FIRC has embarked on a mission to preserve the history of this great sport, FIRC-BoatRacing.org.

Challenges Ahead

While much has been accomplished in three years, much remains to be done. Costs have to be further analyzed, and more money will have to be raised, either publicly or privately, to finish the job. As of this writing, The City of Miami is analyzing potential legal and operating structures and an outside operator will be sought to run the Stadium. Friends of Marine Stadium has now applied for its own not for profit status and intends to stay very involved, both advocating for and guiding the restoration of the Marine Stadium. For this project to be successful, the community needs to be involved and focused.

An operating, successful Marine Stadium will provide an enormous boost to Miami and South Florida. It is an architectural landmark recognized world wide, with a great local history. It can be an economic generator for the community, showcasing one of a kind events in a spectacular setting which simply cannot take place anywhere else. The Miami Marine Stadium and Basin are a "Sydney Opera House" and "Aquatic Central Park" all rolled into one and will provide magical experiences for many boaters in the future. For more information, visit MarineStadium.org. ☀

include major sculling and dragon boat races, long distance swimming events, and wakeboarding. There is the potential to offer these activities in a "festival" like atmosphere to provide real family participation and entertainment.

There are other very exciting possibilities as well. The Stadium hosted boxing and wrestling matches as well as basketball or tennis. A floating soccer field has even been created in Singapore! And the Stadium will undoubtedly see many movie and film shoots (The TV Show "Burn Notice" has already shot there twice) as it becomes the image of the new Miami.

Finally, there is boat racing. In 1964, the Miami Marine Stadium opened for racing and the Florida Inboard Racing Club (FIRC) was formed to