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Weekly

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An American hook to South Africa 'Shores'

Four women work for event company while filmed

By KEVIN KRIEDEMANN

CAPE TOWN -- A South African coal magnate is creating an unscripted drama with a location that the cast of "Jersey Shore" can only dream about.

"Clifton Shores" is a series about four American women who relocate to Cape Town to work at an events company for Quinton van der Burgh, the coal tycoon who executive produced and conceptualized the show.



"Clifton Shores" focuses on a group of women who live on the beach in South Africa.

Clifton, where the Americans live in a cliff-side mansion with three South African women, is arguably the most beautiful beach in Cape Town. (Indeed, travel guide Lonely Planet has rated the locale second on its list of the 10 best beach cities in the world in 2011, behind Barcelona.)

The show plays on comparisons with "Jersey Shore," served up in the tagline -- "new city ... better beach ... more drama."

But producer Clive Morris, of Clive Morris Prods., says that his more upmarket show has more in common with "The Hills" or "Laguna Beach."

Hisham Abed, who directed both "The Hills" and "Laguna Beach," was brought in to consult and helm the first three episodes of "Clifton Shores" before handing off to showrunner Chris Roland, an American director and producer living in Cape Town. Roland won the South African Film and Television Award for reality TV show last year for "Our House."

American David Kolko, who's worked with MTV and VH1, was hired as "Clifton Shores" content producer to make sure the South African story was suited to American audiences.

Morris says the show manipulates situations, but not the reactions to those situations. "You can't really write the relationships," he says. "You can't make people fall in love or hate each other. It either happens or it doesn't happen, so it was a relief when a lot of these storylines developed on their own."

Creative director Genna Lewis says "Clifton Shores" is "a classic fish-out-of-water story. It's been fascinating watching this group of foreign girls come to this beautiful city and make it their home," she says.

The series has been challenging for d.p. Sven Vosloo, who shot the 13-part, 30-minute series on three Panasonic AG-AF101s. He lowered one of the cameramen over the edge of Table Mountain, the flat-topped mount that looms 3,558 feet above Cape Town.

Notes Kolko: "We've also had our camera guy strapped to elephants; zip-lining down a mountain; shooting on the roof of a car at high speed; and filming Superman-style on the back of a van."

Morris says interest in the Van der Burgh-bankrolled show, which bowed at Mip TV earlier this month, was overwhelming, with the 2010 soccer World Cup having helped put South Africa on the map.

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"People suddenly know where Cape Town is, and are very interested in the story of American girls coming here to work for a local millionaire," Morris says.

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