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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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'I Love Lucy's' Desi Arnaz To Be Honored in Miami Beach

— *The beloved performer got his show business break on Collins Avenue* —

Miami Beach, FL – Known for his timeless TV catchphrases like “Lucy, I’m home” and “Lucy, you got some ‘splainin’ to do,” beloved entertainer Desi Arnaz will be honored by the City of Miami Beach nearly 90 years after the Cuban immigrant got his big break at a nightclub on Collins Avenue.

“Desi Arnaz represents the ultimate American dream,” shared Miami Beach Commissioner Alex Fernandez, who sponsored a resolution to partially fund a Florida historic marker in honor of Arnaz that will be placed in Collins Park. “As a proud Cuban American, Desi was a role model for future generations, including mine.”

The marker will be unveiled on **Tuesday, Oct. 15 during a 4 p.m. ceremony in Collins Park** (2200 Liberty Ave.) — the last day of Hispanic Heritage Month and the 73rd anniversary of the “I Love Lucy” premiere on Oct. 15, 1951. Together with Lucille Ball, his wife of 20 years, the couple won the hearts of America in what became the country’s most popular television show of its time.

“Miami Beach has been — and continues to be — home to so many who have come from elsewhere to make their marks on American culture,” added Miami Beach Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt. “Desi Arnaz remains not only a timeless pop icon, but also a visionary producer and innovator. Commemorating his story in the city which shaped him, at the site where he first started making his mark, is a deeply fitting tribute.”

Born to a family of privilege in 1917, Arnaz found himself at the other end of the economic spectrum when he arrived in South Florida from Santiago, Cuba. The man who would go on to introduce the “one, two, three — kick” conga dance craze to America at the then Park Avenue nightclub on Collins Avenue and 23 Street, cleaned canary cages for 25 cents apiece to help make ends meet while attending St. Patrick Catholic School in Miami Beach.

“When I thought how Desi began his life in Miami Beach — penniless and without the ability to speak English, yet within four years he's leading a band and making a name for himself as “King of the Conga” — I really felt he deserved something aside from the two Hollywood Walk of Fame slabs of pavement, pieces which say nothing about his story,” added Gary McKechnie, an author, speaker and former comedian, who led a three-year effort that will culminate with the Collins Park ceremony. McKechnie raised \$800 to put toward the historic marker largely from his own funds and donations from his family.

Arnaz enjoyed success as a band leader, star of television and motion pictures as well as owner of Desilu Productions and RKO Radio Pictures with Ball. He died in 1986 at the age of 69.

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