

Miami's Steven Bauer joining cast of '¿Que Pasa, USA?' stage show in May



Actor Steven Bauer became famous in Miami for playing Joe Peña, the hunky, older Cuban-American teenage son on the classic sitcom “¿Que Pasa, USA?” on WPBT-Ch. 2. He will reprise that role for the stage production of “¿Que Pasa, USA? Today...40 Years Later” this May. (Johnny Diaz / Sun Sentinel)



By **Johnny Diaz**
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Before Steven Bauer hit it big in Hollywood, he was best known for playing Joe Peña, the hunky, older Cuban-American teenage son on the classic sitcom “¿Que Pasa, USA?” on WPBT-Ch. 2.

Bauer will reprise that role for a live stage production of the sitcom — “¿Que Pasa, USA? Today...40 Years Later” — which debuts May 17 at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts in Miami.

Bauer made the announcement about rejoining the “¿Que Pasa, USA?” cast Wednesday morning with Nelson Albareda, chief executive officer of Loud and Live, at a press conference at **Miami Dade College** in downtown Miami.

Albareda called Bauer's decision to join the cast "a homecoming."

"Steven Bauer is coming home," Albareda said. "Steve has been the embodiment of hometown pride."

Bauer looked a little emotional talking about returning to a brand that made him a household name in South Florida and catapulted him into Hollywood.

"It's so long, so many years, it's such a part of my life," Bauer, 61, said of the original show. "It remains in the forefront of my mind because people remind me...The reality is that every time I am here, everybody talks about 'Que Pasa, USA' as much as anything else I have ever done ... but 'Que Pasa' is always there."

The original 1970s bilingual sitcom followed the everyday cultural clashes of the fictional Peña family in Miami: father Pepe, mother Juana, teenage children Joe and Carmen, and grandparents Antonio and Adela. Regular characters included Carmen's best friends, Sharon and Violeta.

Stories revolved around topics like Santeria, Cuban funerals, dating non-Cubans, chaperoned dates and telenovelas.

The new stage production follows the next generation of the Peña family with a mostly new cast. In addition to Bauer, three of the original cast members are part of the new production: Ana Margo, who played Carmen, will have a cameo role; Connie Ramirez, who played Violeta; and Barbara Ann Martin, who played Sharon.

Albareda and Bauer wouldn't detail the production's storyline, but the actor described his old character as "an all-American Cuban boy" who was still living at home with his parents and grandparents. And that "one can only imagine" what road he would have taken once he was out of the family house as a grown up.

When Bauer played the role, he was credited as Rocky Echevarría before changing his name. The University of Miami theater student went on to star in 1983's "**Scarface**" (which was partly shot in Miami and Miami Beach) and 1984's "Thief of Hearts" and other movies. In 2013, he joined the cast of the Showtime series "**Ray Donovan**." He has also been in episodes of "Queen of the South."

The "¿Que Pasa, USA?" stage production is a collaboration between Loud and Live, South Florida PBS and the Arsht Center. There are nine performances through May 26. And the cast is about to start rehearsals.

"We are going to do a very strong stage play that has some comedy but really is going to be a reflection of life for those of us who were from somewhere else and became Americans," Bauer said. "It's going to be the story of the breakup of the family and the glue that holds the family together which is the love and the connection from where we're from — Cuba."

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