

MIRAGE TILE & MARBLE

*Las Vegas natural-stone-flooring specialist services
high-end hospitality industry*

BY KARINA TIMMEL

LAS VEGAS-BASED MIRAGE TILE & MARBLE (MTM) has grown its high-end commercial-flooring-installation business from four people to 400 in a matter of two years. Considering the recession, that is quite a feat for the third-generation, minority-owned, unlimited-license commercial-flooring installer that also fabricates and supplies high-end natural stone and tile. “The economy took a nosedive nationally when we moved out to Las Vegas in 2007,” says Sam Kaoud, CEO. “But because we are such a hands-on family business, we are focused on delivering quality on every job that we do. Even if we have to lose money on a job, we are in business for tomorrow, not only today. This is our motto.”

MTM works in California, Arizona, and Las Vegas, and is currently expanding nationally and internationally to projects as far as Africa and Hanoi, Vietnam. It expects to grow to \$40–70 million within the next year, after completing the Las Vegas CityCenter project, a 67-acre city-within-a-city live, work, and play area that’s being developed by MGM Mirage. “We are one of five contractors in our trade in Nevada that hold an unlimited-license-contractor status, which allows us to bid on jobs of any level,” Sam says. The state of Nevada puts limits on what jobs contractors can bid on based on their financial strength and situation. Because of all the work it has, MTM was self-funded up until September 2009 (when interviewed), and now has partnered with Southwest Credit.

Originally named Kaoud Tile Co. and located in Michigan, the company was launched by George Kaoud—father to CEO Sam Kaoud and COO Robert Kaoud—who migrated to the United States from Ramallah, Palestine, just miles from Jerusalem, in the late 1960s. The sons worked with their father, primarily in the residential markets, up until 1991, when they changed the company name and expanded the focus to large-commercial contracting.

Unfortunately, the Michigan economy took a nosedive in 2001, mostly due to the demise of its auto industry. Down

to a skeleton crew and with little opportunity, in June 2006, Robert went to Florida and opened a tile and marble business while Sam went to California to start a real-estate-development company. It wasn’t until 2007 that the two met up again and decided to return to Michigan and grab the largest project in the state at the time: the Moto City Casino project. This mammoth project entailed laying 360,000 square feet of tile and stone in a tight schedule of 12 weeks. Rising to the challenge, MTM completed the project in record time: less than 10 weeks. With that, the company became the largest tile and stone contractor in Michigan.

In 2007, MTM migrated its corporate executive group—CEO Sam Kaoud, COO Robert Kaoud, director Christina Kaoud, vice president of operations Carlos Pena, senior project manager Mike Berry, and project executive Mauricio Bustos—out of Michigan and into Las Vegas.

The first success that landed the company on the Las Vegas map was the Lavo Lounge project at The Palazzo, the second location from the creators of the famous TAO restaurant and night club at The Venetian. For the project MTM did more than \$2 million Artesian-type custom-stone, mosaic, and handmade tiles.

Since taking its business to Las Vegas, MTM has worked on an array of new projects. Its current project list includes several restaurants and casino/residential towers, such as Company American Bistro, Japanese Masa, Café Centro, and Mastro’s Ocean Club; hotels, including Mandarin Oriental and ARIA; clubs, such as Cirque Lounge and Haze; and high-end boutiques, including Gucci, Carolina Herrera, Van Cleef & Arpels, and Cartier.

As a requirement by MGM Mirage, CityCenter will be LEED certified and, therefore, held to the highest standard of eco-friendly practices.

In addition to its flooring installation, MTM is developing a new arm of its business, LVS, which focuses on the

AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
LAS VEGAS, NV

EMPLOYEES:
400+

AVERAGE ANNUAL REVENUE:
\$22 MILLION

AREA OF SPECIALTY:
FABRICATION AND
INSTALLATION OF
NATURAL-STONE AND
TILE FLOORING

“

It's not just business to us, it's family, and this sets us apart from our competitors—we are a hands-on, corporate family-type business.

—Sam Kaoud, CEO

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CEO Sam Kaoud and COO Robert Kaoud stand in front of their latest project, the CityCenter by MGM Mirage in Las Vegas, NV.

MTM'S NOTABLE PROJECTS

HAZE NIGHTCLUB

This 20,000-square-foot two-story nightclub venue is equipped with a VIP area for special guests, and also boasts two kitchens, three service bars, three full-service bars, and a 1,500-square-foot dance floor. The floor installation included granite floors, antique-wood accents, black quartz, custom carpeting, and slate tile. In addition, MTM added bar and vanity countertops in soapstone, Black Galaxy granite, and marble, among other materials.

THE CIRQUE LOUNGE

This project commemorates the entertainment troop Cirque

du Soleil, and is located in the ARIA Resort & Casino at CityCenter. MTM was brought in to handle the project by THOR Construction after another stone and tile company could not deliver on time or within budget. MTM installed some very unusual materials and designs, including 2,580 square feet of white crystallized stone with 4,500-square-foot water-jet medallions displaying monkeys made of yellow- and black-onyx material. In addition, the company installed 1,000 square feet of black mosaic walls in the restrooms and a bar top made out of Noir St. Laurent stone. "The detail in the water-jet cutting and installation was of a magnitude that only a company

with much experience could handle," Robert says.

MANDARIN ORIENTAL RESIDENCES TOWER

Currently being built by Tishman Construction, the 60-story tower features penthouse luxury condominiums at CityCenter. MTM was responsible for installing the limestone floor tiles, ceramic walls, and engineered-stone countertops, supplied by Ravi Johar of Southland Stone, in the building's custom-designed residential units. The challenge with this project was that MTM's work schedule was reduced to a mere three months. To solve the issue, MTM increased its manpower and worked weekends and double shifts.



Rendering of the Mandarin Oriental Residences Tower at CityCenter in Las Vegas, NV.

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fabrication of high-end lines of stones and mosaics. LVS is a family- and corporate-owned subsidiary of MTM, which began to develop after Robert and Carlos were sent to travel the globe in search of exotic stones. "LVS is quite unique and will cater to our most sophisticated clients, like casinos and hotels," Sam says of the subsidiary, set to debut around Christmas of 2009. "The great thing about this product is we're able to save our clients money because we buy direct and avoid the middle men. Because of our direct sourcing of supply and ability to execute installation, it's much more cost efficient to the end buyer."

And at the end of the day, the heart of it all is the customer. MTM touts its good client relationships as the backbone of its continued success in Nevada. "After we begin working with a client, they are our client forever," Sam says. "I call it building a marriage of sorts with our clients—really engage their trust and friendship in order to sustain that relationship and get future business and referrals. It's not just business to us, it's family, and this sets us apart from our competitors—we are a hands-on, corporate family-type business." ABQ