

TRADITIONAL HOME

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SET DESIGN: ON THE SET OF EMPIRE.

Now in its second season, the award-winning American drama, *Empire*, (FOX Wednesdays, 8pm CST/9pm EST) continues to captivate viewers, thanks to the rocky and ever-evolving relationships between Empire Records mogul Lucious Lyon (Terrance Howard), his ex-wife Cookie (Taraji P. Henson), and their three talented, but drastically different sons: Andre, Jamal, and Hakeem. From the lavish Empire lobby to Jamal's posh bachelor pad, see what it's really like to live like a Lyon.



Production designer Cece Destefano and set decorator Caroline Perzan are responsible for the contemporary hip-hop-with-an-edge interiors, which were designed on a Chicago soundstage (doubling as Manhattan). For the reception area of Empire Records, Perzan chose Herman Miller chairs, reupholstered a 10-foot sofa from a used office furniture store, and added a black-and-white geometric area rug. Wall art in the form of a “curtain of LED lights” that can change from red to green to turquoise was added for an additional twist.



Perzan used a mix of vintage and contemporary for the decor in Empire Records' green room. Vintage office chairs were covered with brown alligator leather, while a midcentury chrome-and-leather sofa wears '60s avocado green. Lucite bar stools and round orb sconces complete the look for this spot where recording artists hang out.



For Lucious Lyon's post-prison welcome home party, the designers constructed a nightclub set with red banquettes, tufted cube ottomans, and French black velvet chairs. Perzan looked at numerous books on New York interiors, design websites, and recording studios for research.



For Jamal's Chelsea living room, where he often composes music in season two, Perzan designed a custom chandelier and constructed lampshades from cream recycled paper.



An area rug from Surya anchors the room's contemporary elements, including a Knoll womb chair and modern matching sofa and chairs. The grand pianos were designed by Warren Shadd, the country's only African-American piano manufacturer.



“Lee Daniels (the show’s producer) set the tone for the look of the interiors, and art is very important,” notes Perzan, a 25-year veteran set decorator whose work includes *Breaking Bad*, *CSI*, and *The Horse Whisperer*. “We brought in collections of high-end African-American art as well as pieces from newcomers.” Original works from artists Kehinde Wiley, Walter Lobyn Hamilton, and Mickalene Thomas (known for her paintings of strong black women in rhinestones, acrylic, and enamel), along with Monet, Van Gogh, and Andy Warhol are just a few of the featured art pieces that grace the walls.

Jamal’s kitchen receives an elegant touch with a Carrara marble island, high-gloss cabinets, and appliances from Sub-Zero and Wolf. Perzan aged the kitchen’s copper pendants with verdigris.



“The really cool thing is the backdrop of the city, which makes the set come alive,” says Perzan of Jamal’s terrace via soundstage. “Jamal’s loft is very earthy, so woods and copper were important.” A contemporary teak table and chairs completes the minimal look.



For Jamal's dining room, an image of Diana Ross in *Lady Sings the Blues* is front and center. "Lee loves, loves, loves this image!" Perzan says. "It was made to look like stained glass." The set decorator also added sconces from Jonathan Adler, merged two chandeliers for a bolder statement, and aged the copper dining chairs. Iridescent striped sheers are used on the floor-to-ceiling windows.



For Lucious Lyon's lair, Perzan notes, "Lucious is a serious art collector so we used classic paintings you would find in a museum."



For the Empire Records founder's living room, Perzan used "beautiful high-end antiques mixed with Van Gogh and hip-hop" for a gleaming and luxurious decor.

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