

LOCAL NEWS

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'Hawaii Five-O' may step into economic gap of 'Lost' departure

• Hawaii Five-O then and now

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By Mike Gordon
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Villains, crime lords and con men beware. Steve McGarrett is back on the job.

CBS plans to start filming a pilot tomorrow for a remake of "Hawaii Five-0," and with ABC's "Lost" about to conclude its six-year run in the Islands, the local film and TV community is hopeful the scowling detective will save the day.

The state estimates that a typical TV series contributes about \$70 million a year to the local economy, so the show, if it's picked up, could help pick up where "Lost" leaves off as a financial boon. But "Five-0" has more than economic value.

"Five-0" was groundbreaking TV, and it put the Islands front-and-center in millions of living rooms for a dozen years. It was such a big part of Hawaii's self-image that it comes with a warm haze of nostalgia attached.

NEXT PHENOM?

During its successful run, the show fashioned a local film industry from almost nothing, put minority faces into prime time and sold the Islands as a tourist destination.

The networks had never filmed a TV show entirely on location, as CBS did with "Five-0," and the series was credited with pouring \$100 million into the local economy.

"People have been asking me, how do you follow 'Lost'; how do you follow a global phenomenon?" said Walea Constantinou, Ho-no-lulu Film Office commissioner. "I think we have the answer: We bring back one of the most beloved series of all time with some of the best creative minds in the industry."

"Five-0" aired from 1968 to 1980. In the years that followed, rumors routinely arose predicting its revival. In 1997, CBS filmed a pilot in Hawaii starring Gary Busey — although not as McGarrett. It never aired.

Last fall, however, CBS hired a pair of writers skilled at crafting new versions of old favorites: Alex Kurtzman and Roberto Orci, who had teamed up on feature films that include "Star Trek" and "Mission Impossible III."



Jack Lord, adjusting his holster on a set of the original "Hawaii Five-0," is the Steve McGarrett most TV watchers know from reruns. Can they switch allegiance?

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"It's very action-oriented, which makes it very 'Hawaii Five-0'-like. Reading the script I could see McGarrett standing there."

MARGARET DOVERSOLA | casting director for remake and producer's assistant for original

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The possibilities are exciting to ponder, said Margaret Doversola, who worked on the original series as the producer's assistant and now serves as a casting director for the remake.

"It's very action-oriented, which makes it very 'Hawaii Five-O'-like," she said. "Reading the script, I could see McGarrett standing there."

The show will keep its familiar, brassy theme music, as well as McGarrett's familiar phrase, "Book him, Danno," but Doversola still wants to know what uniform the cops will be wearing: McGarrett's coat and tie, or an aloha shirt?

CBS wants local flavor, she said. "The producers want to use as many local actors as they can," she said. "Maybe someone wasn't quite right for the pilot, but they are all going to get a chance to work because (the producers) ... want to be here for a long time."

Despite Doversola's optimism, nothing is guaranteed. CBS will decide in May whether it wants to add the pilot and a "Hawaii Five-O" series to its fall lineup.

"I think Hawai'i needs it now," Doversola said. "Not just for us working here, but for all of us. It is public relations we can't buy. And people are dying to see it again."

The show's creators could be envied for the task ahead of them. Much has changed in the 30 years since the show's finale, including the reinvention several times over of prime-time police dramas. But that responsibility can cut both ways, said Robert Thompson, the founding director of the Bleier Center for Television and Popular Culture at Syracuse University.

"When you decide to remake 'Hawaii Five-O,' you are treading on pretty sacred territory," he said.

The original "Five-O" was a "well-written, meticulously executed program," he said. Via the magic of re-runs, most TV watchers are aware of the show. But that also means generations of TV viewers are wed to it as it was.

"Generally these remakes don't work very well," Thompson said. "You bring with it expectations and comparisons that are always going to be disappointing. It will take the first season to get over the fact that this isn't my old 'Hawaii Five-O.'"

The current competition in cop shows is pretty tough.

"We have seen this narrative territory done so beautifully and so exquisitely and so brilliantly that when the new plot of 'Hawaii Five-O' struts out, it is going to be watched in the context of a decade or two of extraordinarily good programming in the crime genre," Thompson said. "... There is so much else out there that we are going to be comparing it to."

SON OF CHIN HO

CBS passed on one chance to connect the old with the new. Honolulu actor Dennis Chun auditioned for the role of Detective Chin Ho Kelly, the role originally played by Kam Fong — his father. Instead, CBS cast "Lost" star Daniel Dae Kim as Chin Ho.

"It was extraordinary and rather meaningful for me," said Chun, who works for the state Judiciary and acts in local theater. "When I said the line 'I am Chin Ho Kelly,' it was one of the hardest lines for me to say, simply because for me, my father had always been Chin Ho Kelly."

His father, a former Honolulu police officer who died in 2002, was proud of his "Five-O" role.

"I am very grateful for the new show to even let me have a chance to do it," Chun said. "Just for one day I was able to touch it, and it felt really good."

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