

Hawaii had it all. Surf, sun and the endless wail of police sirens. America's longest lived cop show, *Hawaii Five-O* was justice served with a quiff. Nick Serchfield praises the Lord.

In paradise, someone has to stamp on the snakes. While *Kojak* and *Columbo* were content to play out their tales of larceny against the granite and car fumes of urban life, *Hawaii Five-O* simply topped up its tan and smiled. It was law enforcement with a travel show sheen, all beaches and blue skies and hard-boiled cries of "Freeze!" among the palm trees.

A glamorous blend of sunshine and felony, *Hawaii Five-O* was 70s TV at its most indisputably iconic. From the pulse-quickening theme tune to the breathless title sequence, from Jack Lord's incorruptible quiff to the deathless refrain of "Book 'em, Danno", this was crime drama with a peerless sense of cool. Where else could the very

was certainly above such humdrum hassles as jaywalking or breathalyser duty. No, for the Five-O boys it was psychos, Triads and Red Chinese nasties all the way, menaces that naturally called for suits and ties to be worn.

### Making waves

Originally known as *The Man, Hawaii Five-O* was fired by the vision of Leonard Freeman, a TV producer who had already pioneered location-based drama with the freewheeling *Route 66*. It would be the first time that the retina-seducing islands would be immortalised for the small screen. While early 60s detective show *Hawaiian Eye* had imported grass skirts and garlands to a Hollywood

## FIVE-O'S STEELY LEADER MADE DIRTY HARRY SEEM LIKE A LIBERAL SOFT TOUCH

words "Zulu as Kono" conjure such a strangely exotic thrill? Certainly not *The Streets of San Francisco*.

A double whammy of lush locale and pacey storytelling, *Hawaii Five-O* proved to be a triumphant formula. Premiering in the patchouli-scented days of 1968, the series finally took a bow in the edgy dawn of the Reagan era, outpacing everything from Vietnam to disco. Along the way it notched up a mighty 270 episodes and saw off all those pretenders with lollipops and shabby macs to become America's longest lived cop show.

Led by the eternally uncompromising Steve McGarrett, Five-O itself was an elite police team working the idyllic beat of America's 50th state. The show's earliest PR blurb simply defined it as, "The special investigating unit that handles cases which are too big for local law enforcement agencies", and it

backlot, Freeman was determined that Five-O would maximise the awesome photogenic potential of the state.

As Jack Lord himself argued in 1971, "We couldn't make this show in Hollywood. It's costing us 30% more to make this show in Hawaii than it would on the mainland, but we are getting 50-60% more in scenery, faces - the kind you can't get from the Screen Extra's Guild - and in the wonderful translucent light you find in the islands."

### Waves of fear

Initially, the state's tourist industry types felt distinctly jittery about its weekly portrayal as a nest of vice, corruption and general threats to one's well-being.

"Of course we have enemies," Lord once revealed in a candid moment, "some in the



another chance to see...

HAWAII FIVE-O

65 cult

# Crime wave!



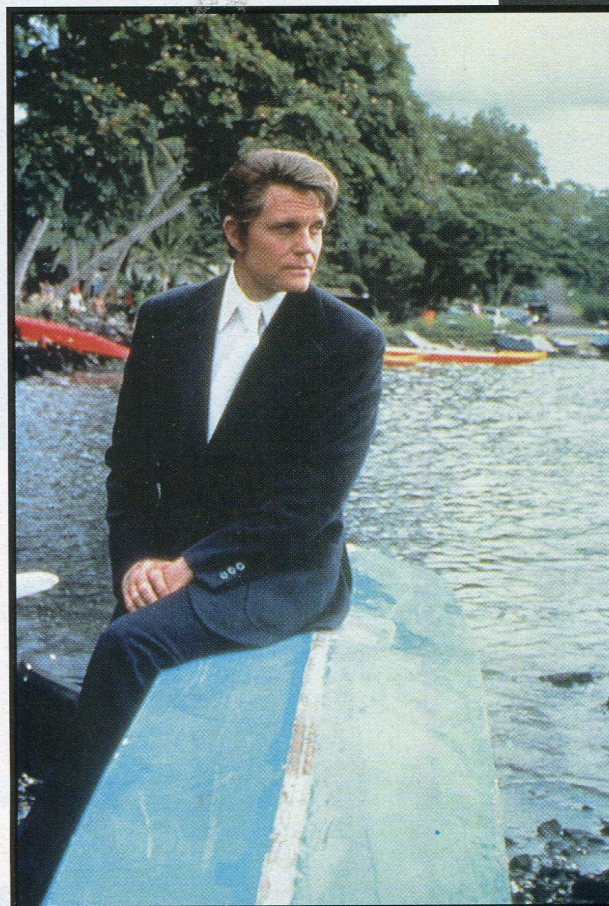
legislature, people who thought Five-O would give people the idea that crime was rampant in the islands."

A sudden influx of tube-inspired tourist dollars doubtlessly changed their minds. As *Hawaii Five-O* hit a peak of global popularity, tourism in the islands promptly soared, creating thousands of jobs and a beachfront skyline of new hotels. At one point it was estimated that CBS were pumping millions into the Hawaiian economy. A little burning rubber and gun-waving must have surely seemed a perfectly fair trade off.

## The Lord cometh

Forever posing with consummate cool on a skyscraper in the opening titles, the late Jack Lord was utterly inseparable from the very notion of *Hawaii Five-O*. A lantern-jawed edifice of justice armed with a killer quiff and boxy blue suits, Lord became an icon of the islands, the only cast member to last the long haul. His clipped, intense performance was perfect for the fearsomely upright McGarrett, described as "tough on criminals but known to the citizens of Hawaii as The Cop Who Cares." Five-O's steely leader made Dirty Harry seem like a liberal soft touch – felons were routinely dispatched with a relished snarl of "Aloha, suckers!" while bongo-playing counter-culture types were treated with obvious disdain. "Don't you ever call me cop!" he admonished one luckless punk. "The name is McGarrett and the title is Mister!"

McGarrett bristled at the concept of



Notorious perfectionist Jack Lord in location heaven.

# FULLY BOOKED

Hawaii's crime rate would surely have soared without the crook-booking expertise of James MacArthur. Danno's alter ego recalls his days as TV's most literate sidekick.

"I wouldn't even know how to read some-one their rights," laughs James MacArthur, asked if he really has a clue how to go about booking a miscreant. In Britain to promote a satellite revival of *Hawaii Five-O*, he has been dealt a disorientating double-punch of jet lag and *Big Breakfast* guest spot, and now sits sipping a blessed Budweiser on a London balcony. His eye-mugging Hawaiian shirt has summoned an unseasonal heatwave, and, as he recalls his time as Dan 'Danno' Williams, palm trees are surely sprouting on the South Bank.

"The life of *Five-O* is unbelievable," he continues, now a comfortably snowy-haired figure, famous blue eyes kept behind spectacles. "When we started making this show, who would have thought? I think that there are many things that just fell together the right way, some by design and others that just happened. We told good stories. The music was splendid, the titles – I can still feel my adrenalin going when I see them – you had Hawaii as the background and for whatever reason the cast just gelled. That's the one unknown that you can't formulate. It either works or it doesn't." 30 years on, does MacArthur recall what attracted him to the role?

"Well, I liked the idea of being a policeman," he confesses simply. "I'd played a lot of interesting things, but I was getting on to 30. The whole thing was just right, the right time. I'd just gotten divorced and the idea of going off to Hawaii and having a fresh start was very appealing."

Not that Hawaii's tongue-torturing place names were much of a lure.

"When I first got there the first thing I did was go on location," remembers MacArthur. "I'd get on a phone and I'd say 'Steve, I'm on the corner of Kah wah... kuh kah wah... kuh wah kah...' and I'd hear, 'Wait! Cut!' My Hawaiian friends soon coached me."

## It's a hard life

So how did MacArthur see the character of Danno?

"Well, he was the young cop and Steve was the old cop. It was very complementary, the two fitted together nicely and I think in the relationship there was a great deal of car-



By the book. MacArthur as essential 70s sidekick Danno.





another chance to see...

HAWAII FIVE-O



Hawaii Five-O's James MacArthur, 30 years on. Where did it all go so tragically right?

ing on both sides, and that was borne out in the scripts and the way we worked together."

In common with the other *Five-O* regulars, Danno suffered from a notorious absence of social life. Was this frustrating for the actor?

"No, because that's the way the show was," counters MacArthur. "I mean, did we ever see Mrs Chin Ho? I'd get a girlfriend once in a while but they'd knock her off, she'd get strangled or something. I never got the girl, put it that way! Within the framework of a cops and robbers show, you've got to have a bad guy and you've got to catch him. You know, it's not time to sit around the beach on a Sunday drinking beer."

It must occasionally be galling to be the living punchline to one of the world's most immortal catchphrases. MacArthur, however, insists it's not a problem.

"I was on a television thing the other day and they'd ordered 12 episodes to cull some footage from, and they only found one 'Book 'em, Danno!' It's just not done as much as you would think – on some shows it was 'Book 'em, Chin, believe me!'"

Danno, it transpires, owes his nickname to Jack Lord's childhood. "Jack and I were shooting a thing one day," recalls MacArthur, "and we both had our guns out and were going to surround someone. Jack said something like, 'Go down there, Danno', and I just stopped and said 'Danno? Who's Danno?'. We cut and Jack said, 'You know, I had a friend named Dan when I was a kid, and we used to call him Danno', and the next thing you know... It was really Jack's invention."

## The Lord's work

How was it working with Jack Lord, a notorious perfectionist?

"Put it this way," says MacArthur, "Jack came to work as prepared as any actor I've ever known, which was absolutely wonderful. The problem was that in Hawaii a lot of guys who were on the show were entertainers – they weren't used to hitting marks or understanding lighting, and they gave ad lib performances. Now there's a whole stable of actors who were trained how to be film actors by *Hawaii Five-O*, but you don't have all the time in the world to train people. We had a laugh on the set, but it was basically work, and you had to get it right."

Was Lord driven?

"Driven to succeed," MacArthur agrees, admitting he was never particularly close to his late co-star. "I don't think he was really close to anybody except his wife. We did work together for a long time and we used to have lunch occasionally and we'd chat, we discussed a lot of things. I know things about Jack, but I don't tell tales out of school, and I won't say anything about Jack I wouldn't have said long ago."

Did that immaculate quiff ever pose any particular problems to the shooting schedule? Surely all those shots of descending choppers were a constant hazard to McGarrett's heroic hairstyle.

"Oh, that was always a difficult thing," chuckles MacArthur, "that was the hardest thing to do! Jack would always go and get a Tyrolean hat or something, which just looked absurd. But even Jack

had a sense of humour about all that. He could send himself up. He'd laugh about that but he'd say, 'But that's my image!'"

## Waves of success

Is it true that Hawaii annually celebrates a Jack Lord Day, or is this too perfect to be true?

"I don't know, to tell you the truth," MacArthur laughs. "What the hell, maybe there's a governor's proclamation in some drawer somewhere – I don't know!"

Still, MacArthur is in no doubt that his series boosted the island's tourist industry.

"I did a one-hour documentary for Hawaiian television in 1996, and it was all about the impact of *Five-O*," he says. "While you can't exactly quantify what it meant in terms of tourism, the conclusion is very simple, and that is Hawaii could never have afforded to buy the kind of publicity that *Hawaii Five-O* brought."

As *Hawaii Five-O*'s popularity soared, MacArthur found himself in the unlikely position of providing celebrity cannon fodder in Vietnam.

"I went over there for the USO, and they did all kinds of tours for the troops, from big shows with Bob Hope and all the girls, down to where my end was, where you go places you can't take any girls. First thing they did was put me in fatigues that said MacArthur USO. So I'm up country and the Tet offensive started. I had so many guns I looked like Pancho Villa. I mean, I had a rocket gun and Christ knows what. The base colonel said 'We don't know where they're coming from. You know you're USO, but when they stack up the bodies they'll just say, 'oh, we shot the wrong one, right?'"

After 11 years of blue-eyed sidekickery, MacArthur quit the show in 1979.

"After Leonard Freeman died we had some very good producers, but there was a sameness, a staticness. I just felt it was getting stale towards the end. I was down in South America, and I called up my agent and said 'Tell them I'm not coming back'. He said, 'Wait! You can't do that!' I said, 'Well, I just did, and if they need to talk to me tell them I'm going up to the head waters of the Amazon, and I'm taking a river boat, with no radio onboard. And from there I'm going down through Brazil and I'll be home in two and a half months, and then I'll talk to anyone who wants to talk'. I wasn't angling for more money, or for this or that. It was just time, period."

## Last wave

MacArthur took one last bow as Danno in last year's unaired pilot for a new series. What did he bring to the part, 20 years on?

"White hair!" beams MacArthur. "I loved it. It was a *Five-O* for the 90s – a different cast, no McGarrett, and Dan Williams has become the governor of the state of Hawaii. 20 years later, I've turned wily and political."

As Hollywood increasingly raids the small screen, MacArthur knows that it's only a matter of time before that immortal tidal wave and thrilling theme invade the multiplex.

"I've always wondered to myself what *Five-O* could do that Mel Gibson and Danny Glover haven't done," he admits. "I mean, how much more could you blow up? You've got to spend at least 50 million bucks to do it right."

But who could possibly play Danno?

"Oh, God knows, anybody," roars MacArthur. "Get a monkey!"





Steve McGarrett liked nothing better than to end the day taunting the inmates of his prison by waving the key in front of their faces.

Williams. Rejecting O'Kelley, Freeman swiftly cast James MacArthur, a young actor he had worked with on the western movie *Hang Em High*. Once groomed as the new James Dean, MacArthur was known for roles as tortured, blue-eyed teens and other sensitive types.

"They said, 'You're out of your mind! He's too ethereal'" said Leonard Freeman, remembering the network's unease at MacArthur's casting. "I said, 'In my movie he showed an inner strength and a tough physical quality no-one has ever seen before. He'll be totally believable as a cop.'"

Freeman's judgement was shrewd – MacArthur's eager, dependable performance proved the perfect foil to Lord's zealous intensity. One of TV's most

opening titles broke new visual ground for television. an astonishing, razor-spliced montage of scenery and stars.

## Wave goodbye

Wisely, there was precious little tampering with *Five-O's* successful formula. Red Chinese menace Wo Fat habitually popped up to trouble the islands with some infernal Cold War plot, never truly foiled until the show's splendidly titled final episode, 'Woe to Wo Fat'. Chin Ho was killed off at the close of the tenth season, murdered while undercover in Chinatown. James MacArthur's departure in 1979 proved a mortal blow to the series, however – Danno's departure was like Robin abandoning Batman – and the show limped on to a less than glorious last gasp in 1980, boasting a *Police Woman*-style female lead and a character called Truck.

# MACARTHUR'S DEPARTURE PROVED A MORTAL BLOW TO THE SERIES - IT WAS LIKE ROBIN ABANDONING BATMAN

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Quality Time. His personal life was a blank, and he once confessed that the *Five-O* team were the only family he knew. He probably crashed on the couch in the office, no doubt kept from sleep by fresh schemes to eradicate the Hawaiian underworld. Only a fondness for troublingly flamboyant off-duty leisure wear hinted at the human being beneath the crook-crushing monolith.

## First waves

Although McGarrett enshrined him in the pantheon of TV greats, Jack Lord had gained fame as small screen rodeo rider Stoney Burke, and had once been bold enough to turn down the rather more iconic role of Kirk in *Star Trek*. Born John Joseph Patrick Ryan, Lord served as a merchant marine and dabbled in fine art before the lure of the boards brought him to Broadway and such film roles as the first Felix Leiter in *Dr No*. Lord was, by all accounts, a punishingly driven perfectionist, assuming an unparalleled degree of creative input into *Five-O* after the death of Leonard Freeman in 1974.

"I told Lennie, 'The show may be your natural child but it's my adopted one,'" Lord said. "I love it, so I end up working 85 hours a week."

Harry Endo, alias *Five-O* forensics expert Che Fong, also remembered Lord's professionalism.

"Jack played the part of a tough cop and sometimes he came off that way," he said. "But he accepted responsibility for everything. Hollywood people said there had never been a show with such good production values, and much of that is due to Jack."

'Cocoon', the series pilot, was shown on 20th September, 1968, a week before the first season of sunlit crimebusting began. A test screening in New York had already dictated one crucial change to the show's chemistry – Manhattanites had vetoed Tim O'Kelley, original choice for McGarrett's aide de camp Dan

perfect sidekicks, Danno never once balked at McGarrett's seemingly daily instructions to question every last loan shark in Honolulu, trail three-dozen armed counterfeiters and compile a definitive dossier on illegal money laundering between Oahu and the mainland. And possibly return with a copy of the *Hawaiian Times* clamped between his teeth.

Freeman drew on a pool of local talent to complete his cast. Kam Fong was chosen to play pipe-smoking veteran cop Chin Ho and, perfectly, had served 18 years in the real Honolulu Police Department before switching to acting: "I was ready to go to Hollywood and work as a waiter," Fong recalled of his pre-*Five-O* fortunes.

Recently fired from the Elvis movie *Girls! Girls! Girls!* for being "too big", he walked into the casting call and so impressed Leonard Freeman with his look that he was signed to a seven year contract without even reading for the part. "Lenny Freeman said, 'That's him standing there, that's Chin Ho Kelly. He looks like him, he stands like him, he smiles like him!'"

## Musclin' in

*Five-O's* resident muscle was supplied by the burly Kono, played by islands' comedian and ukulele turn Zulu. Soon resigned to standing around offices looking vaguely in need of air conditioning, Zulu quit at the end of the fourth season, complaining that fellow Hawaiians thought of him as, "A trained animal act... yes boss, no boss."

A moderate hit in its first year, *Hawaii Five-O* truly took off with its second season, reaching number three in the ratings by 1972. Some quality scripting attracted huge international audiences as well as such future Hollywood talent as Martin Sheen, Christopher Walken and Kurt Russell. Morton Stevens' relentlessly thrilling theme tune proved an enduring small screen classic, while Reza Badiyi's frenetic

Jack Lord's death in January gave a sense of closure to the story of *Hawaii Five-O*, ending rampant supermarket tabloid rumours of ill-health and Garboesque seclusion. He had passed on the chance to reprise the role of McGarrett for Stephen J Cannell's abortive *Five-O* revival in 1996 – never shown, this pilot had teamed new leads Gary Busey and Russ Wong with veterans MacArthur, Zulu and Fong, improbably returning Chin Ho from the grave without so much as a word of explanation. Without Lord, however, it was London without Big Ben, New York without the Statue of Liberty: unthinkable and ultimately pointless.

That's the way of icons.



Freeze! TV justice was never so iconic.

*Hawaii five-O* is currently showing  
Granada Plus on Weekdays, at 11am  
(repeated 4pm).