



The cast of BAYWATCH

Turning the Tide

Financial incentives and a new-found spirit of cooperation between government, business and labor are bringing a new wave of film productions to Hawaii.

BY DAVID CHOO

Masini was representing the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau and informed Bonann of a new current in the Pacific:

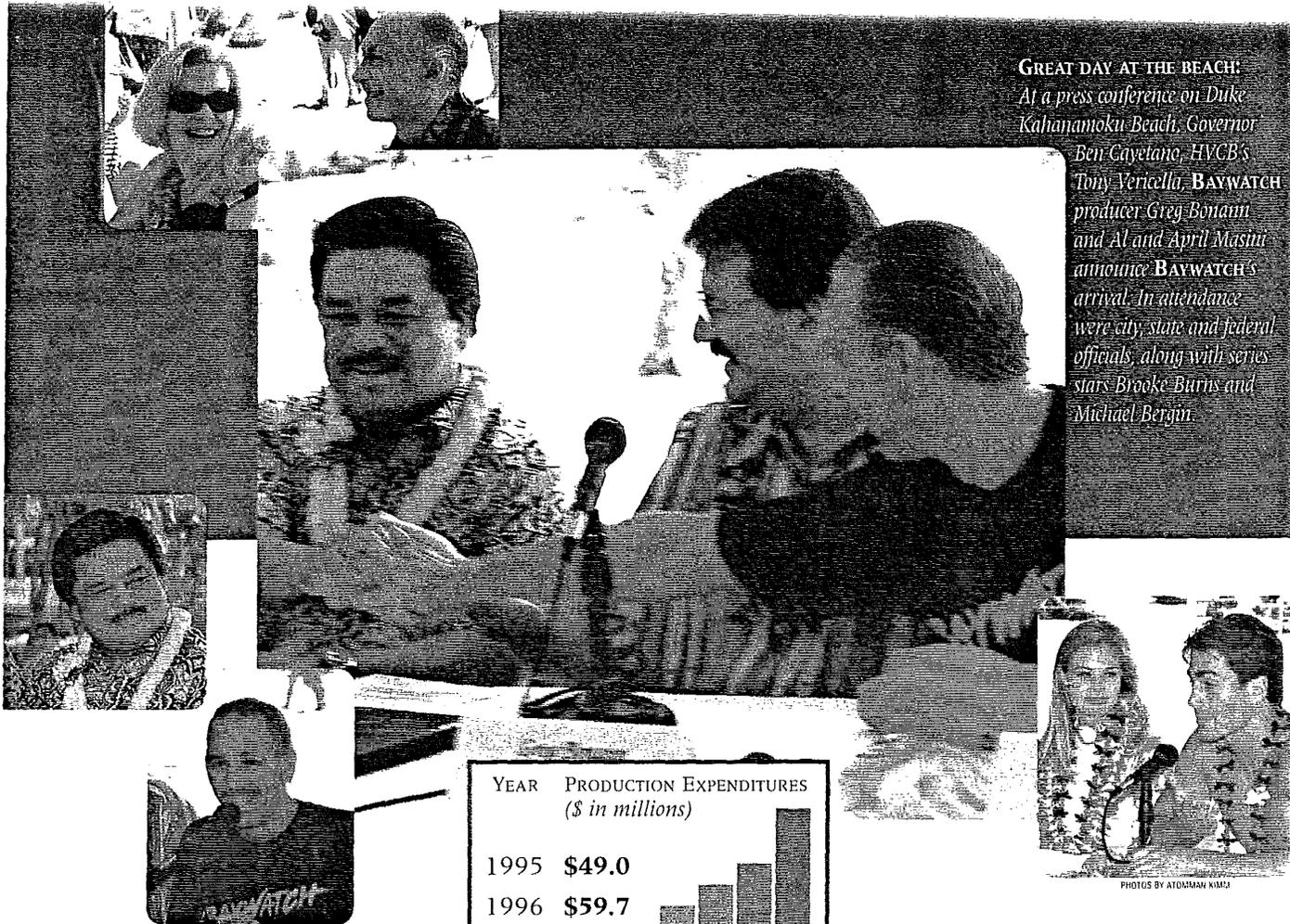
Hawaii has adopted a new, proactive approach when competing for high-profile exposure that will increase tourism while simultaneously building the entertainment industry.

"I had come back to Los Angeles on a Wednesday and was going back to Australia on a Friday when April called," says Bonann. "My assistant came into my office and said, 'You've got to take this call. I think you should listen to what this woman is saying.'"

Bonann and Masini talked. Bonann liked what he heard, but he was literally on his way to catch a plane to Australia, where scripts had been written, actors cast and newspapers were already reporting that Queensland was *Baywatch's* new home. However, Masini managed to convince the producer to give Hawaii a chance and arranged for Bonann to visit the islands

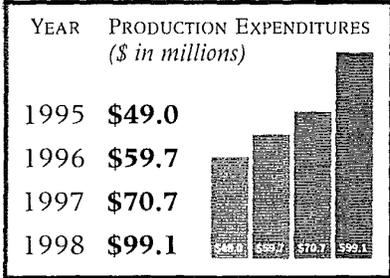
IN WHAT IS QUICKLY BECOMING a Hawaii entertainment legend, *Baywatch* is rescued from Australian waters and delivered to the shores of Hawaii. Greg Bonann, the show's producer had just returned to Los Angeles from Avalon, Australia, *Baywatch's* new proposed home, where townspeople had protested his show's relocation. The producer was back home and hastily putting together a plan to move to Queensland, further down the Australian coast.

But then he got a call from April Masini, who had read about the show's rocky reception. Masini, who with her husband Al have almost single-handedly revived Hawaii's television industry, made a pitch for *Baywatch* to make Hawaii its new home.



GREAT DAY AT THE BEACH:
 At a press conference on Duke Kahanamoku Beach, Governor Ben Cayetano, HVCB's Tony Vericella, *BAYWATCH* producer Greg Bonann and Al and April Masini announce *BAYWATCH*'s arrival. In attendance were city, state and federal officials, along with series stars Brooke Burns and Michael Bergin.

PHOTOS BY ATOMMAN KIMIA



after his trip to Australia. The rest, as they say, is television history.

"When I came to Hawaii I was just blown away," says Bonann. "My first stop was Washington Place. Governor Cayetano sat me down and told me how important having *Baywatch* is to the state. He told me that he would do anything and everything that he could to bring the show to Hawaii ... and he did."

The plot to this high-seas drama was actually written months earlier. With the help of the Masinis, Governor Cayetano had put together legislation with tax-incentives designed to attract television and film productions to the islands. The Governor and the Masinis were well aware that other states and countries like Canada and Australia were actively luring film and television shows away from Hollywood and Hawaii should do the same.

The tax incentives and a new-found spirit of cooperation between government, business and labor have started to pay big dividends. So far, *Baywatch* is on the crest of a wave of new television shows and feature films that have been shooting in Hawaii this year. The popular game show *Wheel of Fortune* had a successful week of filming here, along with network television movie *Too Rich: The Story of Doris Duke* and a cable television movie for Disney called *Johnny Tsunami*. A big-screen version of the island classic *Hawaii Five-0* will start filming this fall, and there are a couple of other feature films slated for production in the state that Georgette Deemer, Hawaii Film Office Manager, is not at liberty to discuss.

This is on the heels of the state's best year ever in which film and television productions spent \$99.1 million in production revenues, which translates into \$13 million in tax dollars. This is up from \$71 million and \$13 million for 1997 and \$59.7 million and \$10.9 million in 1996.

"Until last year, our biggest year was 1994 and that was thanks to *Waterworld*, which was here for over a year and spent \$35 million," says Deemer. "I don't think we can count on that ever happening again."

According to Deemer, while movies may have more prestige and glamour, television shows are the real money makers for Hawaii. For instance, in 1996 the state had a particularly good year in feature film productions with *Godzilla*; *Mighty Joe Young*; *Six Days, Seven Nights*; and *George of the Jungle* all filmed in Hawaii. But 1997