

TV Sunday



Aaron Spelling
(Producer)

THE PITCH

Spelling: I got a call from Barry Diller. He was the head of Fox at the time and he asked me if I would like to do a high school show. I said, stupidly, "Barry, what the hell do I know about high school?" He said, "You have two children, you idiot."

Jennie Garth: I knew there was this hum that there was going to be an Aaron Spelling pilot. And he'd had kind of a lull, so this was kind of a big comeback thing for him.

Spelling: There was one year that I didn't have a show on. One season I'm a has-been after all these shows? After 4,200 episodes you'd think one year isn't bad. Come on guys, we're not dead here.

Ian Ziering: I'd been in California for six months and decided I didn't want to live among all this opulence and arrogance and be at the bottom of the food chain. So I drove my smoking Honda out of the Beverly Center, Dodge, Rolls Royces and BMWs and drove back home. I said, "If it's going to happen for me, it's going to happen in New York." Three weeks later, I had an audition for "The Class of Beverly Hills."

Spelling: The title Fox wanted was "90210." I called Barry Diller and said, "90210? It sounds like they're in prison. Let's call it "Beverly Hills 90210."

THE AUDITION

Spelling: Casting was a bitch. I'll tell you that.

Ziering: I went in a day early to pick up a script and there was a pile of copies and no one around. I have a very cut-throat nature, so I stole them all. I walked out with like 23 scripts. There are far too few jobs and far too many actors.

Garth: We found out later the casting director threw my picture in the garbage. She didn't like my head shots, so in the garbage it went. So we had to fight our way in.

Ziering: I went over to the Fox lot for the audition

the 90210 diaries

They began as a bunch of rich, spoiled high school brats and invented a whole new brand of TV — the teen-angst drama. Now, after 10 addictive years, 'Beverly Hills 90210' is going off the air. The show's producer and some of the stars tell Michael Giltz what it was like from day one



The class of '90: The original cast (clockwise from bottom center) Tori Spelling (Donna Martin), Brian Austin Green (David Silver), Jennie Garth (Kelly Taylor), Ian Ziering (Steve Sanders), Gabrielle Carteris (Andrea Zuckerman), Luke Perry (Dylan McKay), Jason Priestley (Brandon Walsh) and Shannen Doherty (Brenda Walsh).

in there for an inordinate amount of time. And that's not good.

Gabrielle Carteris: I was so nervous, I was doing sit-ups in the hallway.

Ziering: Then the woman waves for me to come in and my heart just froze.

Garth: The doors open into this majestic office. It had this really dense, really

hairy carpet and I couldn't get over the carpet. There were like 80 million people in the room. It was horrifying.

Carteris: It was packed with executives. I was auditioning for two characters — Brenda and Andrea — and I would change clothes between readings so they wouldn't get confused.

Nobody laughed. It was such an uptight room.

Ziering: Then it's over. I The casting woman shows me out the door. I pass the third guy (waiting to audition for Steve). He asks me how it went, and I blazed the brightest smile I could and said, "It went great!" If you can psyche him out, you gotta do what you can do.

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JENNIE GARTH

"I found out the casting director threw my picture in the garbage. She didn't like my head shots, so in the garbage it went."

GETTING THE NOD

Carteris: Brian was the first person cast. Brian Austin Green: It was built around me, yeah. [Laughs] They had this brilliant idea with me in mind and built everything else around it.

Spelling: I saw Ian in the hallway after he auditioned and I said, "Great job, baby! Great job!" Ian later said, "I was so thrilled. God had told me it was a great job. But he didn't tell me I had the role."

Garth: I just remember jumping up and down I was so excited. A few days ago I was looking at the original breakdown of the show and all the characters and how many episodes they'd be in. It said, "Kelly, beautiful blond with the nose job. She's pretty but not too smart. Seven episodes out of thirteen." [Laughs.] Who could have ever imagined?

Spelling: Fox didn't like Luke Perry at all. They said, "You can have him, but we're not going to pay for him." I made them pay for it later. [Laughs.]

Carteris: When they called to say I got the role of Andrea, I literally fell to my knees crying. I called my family and said, "I got the series and my life is

changing."

Spelling: Tori had like four lines in the pilot. And I asked Fox if we could keep her and they said, "Sure, she's cute." I never thought about the nepotism thing because I never thought it would last this long.

Carteris: I'd also been offered another show and a play—"Six-Degrees-of-Separation"—at Lincoln Center. I was going to be the understudy. My mom was at a party a few months later, and someone at Lincoln Center said, "We're very mad at your daughter." The other series was "Dr. Ruth's House." And it was a sure thing—it was already picked up for six episodes. But I didn't like the script. Years later, I met Dr. Ruth and told her and she said, "Oh are you lucky! You were so smart!"

Garth: I was offered a part on "Hull High" (a musical drama set in high school complete with elaborate production numbers). But I passed on the role just so I could do the audition for "90210." Besides, I can't sing and it wasn't something I would want to watch.

Garth: Aaron invited us all to his house—which

wasn't the mansion yet. It was the mansion before the mansion.

Carteris: I was so nervous. I'm the kind of person that doesn't show I'm nervous—I'm just quiet. So you think I'm uptight. I couldn't believe I was in Aaron Spelling's house. I mean, we had a butler serving us food. And Jason was late and I thought, "How could you be late to Aaron Spelling's house? How disrespectful."

THOSE CHARACTERS; THOSE CLOTHES

Garth: I was so scared by the wardrobe I had to wear that I don't remember anything else. And that's the honest-to-God truth. They dressed Kelly as a snooty wealthy bitch. Horrifying clothes! Really ugly, tight, bad clothes. They said, "Here, put these hot pants on or these tights and this little leather jacket." I remember I felt better when



BRIAN AUSTIN GREEN

"I didn't think it was going to last... it would be over soon."



IAN ZIERING

"We went to Spain and there were 14,000 people waiting. It was the biggest thing since the Beatles."



GABRIELLE CARTERIS

"When they called to say I got the role of Andrea, I literally fell to my knees crying."

hopes for it. And they were all dashed when I saw the pilot. I watched it with my family back in New Jersey and thought "I was going to be looking for a job real soon."

Carteris: I saw the pilot and I thought it was terrible. I was in New York packing to move to L.A. and I remember thinking, "This show's never going to be picked up." That kind of blew my bubble.

Austin Green: I was at Alan Thicke's house. I grew up with his son. I didn't really think it was going to last. Okay, we're doing five more? Okay, fine. This'll be over soon.

MASS HYSTERIA

Spelling: It took off immediately around the world. It was playing in about 87 countries. But it was a little slower getting started here. I wish I could tell you the idea for summer episodes was mine but it was Fox's. We were thrilled because it gave us more episodes. Garth: We kept getting [orders for] three more. Okay, two more. But then the summer 11 episodes changed everything. They sent us to the malls and car shows and suddenly we were being crushed. You'd see kids getting elbowed out of the way.

Spelling: We had to have security guards for the kids—especially in New York. They couldn't walk down the street in New York.

Carteris: I couldn't go on the subway by myself any more.

Austin Green: We went to Disneyland for Grad Nite. Wilson Phillips was there and Another Bad Creation was

performing, so it was a big deal. There's the Tomorrowland Terrace where the stage comes up out of the ground, and that's where our appearance was. We were down in the bowls of Disneyland, which is like something out of a George Lucas film. And we hear everybody screaming and we think Wilson Phillips is about to go on. It can't be us; we can't pay people to watch this show. But they get us on the stage and we're all goofy kids so we decided to hide behind instrument stands and whatever. We all stood up at the same time and the crowd just lost... their minds.

Garth: We all went to Europe very early on everyone but Tori because she wouldn't fly at that time. It was mayhem. I was in Italy doing a little shopping and I turned around and there were people pressed against the window watching me. I was thinking, "How am I going to get out of here?"

Carteris: The scariest time was Israel. It was very bad there—I just felt frightened.

Garth: In Israel we had 10 bodyguards per person and we had to travel around on this secured bus. Of course, it said "Beverly Hills 90210" on the side. Oh my God, (at one event) we were standing on this stage singing "We Are The World." Me and Ian were holding hands and singing and people were screaming. I wish Someone had video of that.

Ziering: Brian and I went to Spain and there were 14,000 people waiting at the airport. It was the biggest thing since the Beatles.

THE DOLLS

WERE AN ISSUE

Carteris: They had toilet paper with our faces on it.

Austin Green: We had everything: toothbrushes and pillow cases.

Garth: There was so much controversy on the set over the dolls because a couple of cast members didn't get dolls. It was really tough because from the very beginning they were saying, "You're an ensemble cast. No one's better than the next person. It's about all of you." Then there were dolls missing and, hmmm, I guess it's not about all of us.

Ziering: Initially, that was pretty upsetting. For me and for anybody that collected them. I don't know what the rationalization was. There were other subsidiary characters that were made, but for whatever reason they never made a David Silver doll or a Steve doll.

Austin Green: I remember I was bummed when I didn't have a doll. But wasn't that a blessing in disguise. The five-year-old in me was like, "Howcome everyone else has a doll and I don't? Now I'm like, "Thank you, God!"

THE PILOT WAS... NOT SO GOOD

Ziering: I felt so lucky to be part of something really special and I had such high