

Warrior of the Worlds



**Mars'
Most
Wanted:**

**Jared
Martin**

Photo: Michael Courtney

Those menacing Martians are moving in, and only this actor can stand against them. Now, if he just had his yo-yo . . .

There are these aliens, see, and they come out of these oil drums and take over the world and then live happily ever after in syndication. Sounds crazy, no? Well, Jared Martin, leading man in the *War of the Worlds*, admits that the series' premise has a few problems but, "it's just too good an idea," he enthuses. "It's too rich, too filled with good possibilities and good storylines *not* to do it."

Of course, he is referring to the producers' reasons for mounting the show. As far as Martin himself is concerned, he says, "I'm having a complete blast. The level of wisecracking on this set is non-stop. It's watching Richard [Chaves], who has become a dear friend of mine, do nine takes

BY PETER BLOCH-HANSEN

of swinging from a ladder or tree, watching eight different ways that something can go wrong at 2:00 a.m., with everybody freezing to death in the middle of the Canadian wilderness. It's the kind of thing that really welds people together.

"We're a bunch of bandits. We hit and run. We pick up our shots and we're on to the next, dashing all over the place. This is the closest I have ever come to student filmmaking—in the good sense."

With the show well into its first season, Martin is a man clearly enjoying himself. He leans back in his chair, stretches out his long

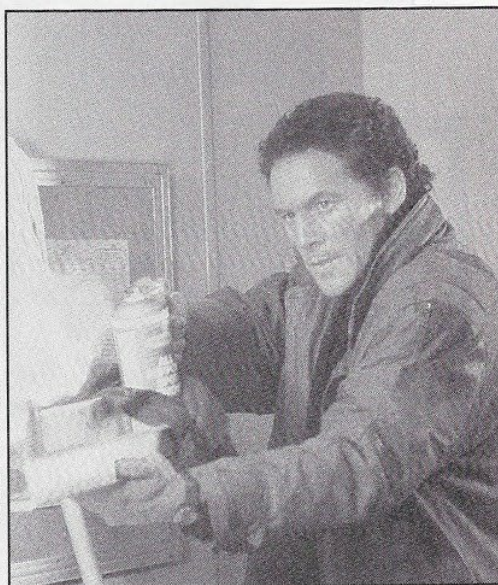
legs on the conference table of the "War Room" (production office) and tips back his black corduroy baseball cap. "I'm afraid to go on Christmas vacation," he adds. "I'm afraid reality is going to hit me."

Reality, as Martin well knows, can hit TV science-fiction actors hard. *Fantastic Journey*, Martin's first SF series, lasted only nine episodes. Twelve years later, he comments, "*Fantastic Journey* bounced around through so many time zones that we never could get a fix on what particular era we were talking about. We were never able to pinpoint our story in a particular time and place and talk about what was going on there. It wound up being a 50-minute mini-opera, almost a cartoon. It was pure fan-



Armed with Minoltas, Ironhorse (Chaves), Harrison (Martin) and Suzanne (Green) pose as tourists in "A Multitude of Idols" where the souvenirs are Martian-made.

All War of the Worlds Photos: Copyright 1988 Paramount Pictures Corp.



tasy/adventure. I think the public resists having pure fantasy thrown at it. They have nothing to attach themselves to. In *Fantastic Journey*, we dressed up in strange costumes, there was nothing tangible or identifiable."

He is emphatic, however, about the differences between his old series (which he discussed while it was on the air in an interview in STARLOG #9) and his new show. "*War of the Worlds* comes from an entirely different point-of-view. We are a reality-based series exploring fantasy and imagination. Our base is here and now, and the people and things we're dealing with, our science toys, the concepts and technology, are real," he says.

"The writing on this show is better. Not the level of talent of the writers, please make that distinction. But there is more time to prepare. We can infuse the stories with all kinds of interesting things that kids and people can pick up on, concepts and scientific stuff."

Digging In

Martin is confident that *War of the Worlds* will overcome the problems that stopped *Fantastic Journey* in its tracks. "We've been able to develop the characters," he points out. "We have four main characters. That's it. If one is not terribly successful in a couple of episodes, we throw in an episode to bring that character up to par. We tend to do that so we can bring everybody along. Also, being syndicated, we aren't in the firing range of a network TV time slot. We are tucked away where we can actually develop things at our own pace and pick up our audience as we go along. Look how long it took the original *Star Trek* to get going. It was only in syndicated reruns that they could find their audience and develop a secure niche, just like we're doing."

War of the Worlds is not the first TV show about an alien invasion, but Martin admits, "I've never seen *The Invaders*. 'V,' I didn't like very much. I thought 'V' got very quickly rooted in a cops-and-robbers

melodrama. Beyond the original concept, it was kind of barren, just a bunch of stories, with derring-do—a cop show.

"In our series, there's an episode called 'Choir of Angels' where the aliens program subliminal messages into music and drive people insane. When they drive Harrison Blackwood [Martin's character] insane, he begins spouting the alien line, which is that we should have befriended them because they know more. They are an older, more technologically advanced civilization, and they can care for the planet better. So, I become a kind of fifth columnist until I come to my senses. If we are the Mighty Mouse/Superman, the 100% natural, North American hero and they are just the bad guys, then the show isn't going to have that wonderful balance, that kind of spritz that it *should* have. We always have to create that feeling of being in jeopardy, that it's not lock-sure that we will wipe these guys out. We're just a half-step ahead of them.

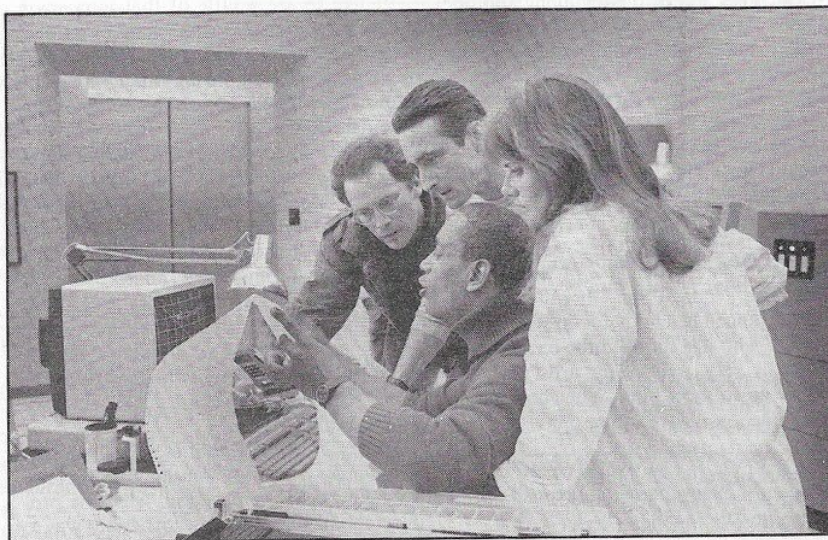
"The 1950s SF paranoia was based on a kind of Cold War mentality and the fact that we had just gone through an agonizing

"I would like to insert more humor into Harrison, show more of his essential wackiness," notes Jared Martin.

world war where many countries had been invaded," notes Martin. "The science-fiction movies of the '50s were basically a recapitulation of that theme: entire cities being destroyed, all that kind of stuff. But now, we've been at peace for a long time. That theme has dwindled. We're looking forward to what is out in space and in what form it will be, and how we will interact with it.

"A metaphor for terrorism is certainly developing, though. The aliens could just stay in their oil drums and watch TV for four years till their buddies arrive, but they are programmed to attack. Cut off from their own source of supply, they have to do what terrorists do—basically create disorder and panic to make us destroy ourselves. If

Martin admits that there's an attempt to shine the spotlight on his co-stars, Richard Chaves, Philip Akin (seated) and Lynda Mason Green in order to keep their characters interesting.





Martin has "a happy memory" of the "missed opportunity" that was *Fantastic Journey* with Ike Eisenmann (center), Katie Saylor, "the consummate professionalism" of Roddy McDowall, and Carl Franklin.

you look at history, man always seems to be just totally delighted to destroy himself."

According to Martin, *War of the Worlds* has a social message. "In certain select areas," he comments, "the show has much to say about the interaction between science and society. We want to get away from the idea of the pushbutton society that we all seem to be slowly slipping into."

"It also has much to say about the interaction of people working together on a mission—teamwork. Then too, there are touches where you will get the alien point-of-view. They will be driving along and one will say, 'Humans are so silly because they speed up at a yellow light instead of slowing. Why do they do that?' That will increase. The series will begin to show us ourselves through alien eyes."

While critical of the quality of *Fantastic Journey's* scripts, Martin is pleased with the scripts he's getting now. "There is a variation of quality, of course, in everything, but generally, I'm happy. Of several scripts, there is one in particular I'm thinking of called 'The Prodigal Son.' It's the story of an alien trapped in a body for 35 years. He is a mutant who has survived the bacteria and become a very well-selling artist in New York. I go to meet him. What happens in our interaction is very interesting."

PETER BLOCH-HANSEN, *STARLOG's* Canadian Correspondent, profiled John Colicos in issue #138.

"There are much richer stories beginning to develop. There is a love story which we just shot. The aliens harvest people, implant them with things, and send them back out again to be recalled at certain times. I fall in love with a girl who is then called back."

"People are going to watch for character and for a particular kind of bridge to the alien world. The aliens are going to start emerging as personalities. They can't just remain faceless bad guys that get blown away at the end of every script. That's not what we want to do."

"I like to see a little of that interaction between the four characters in every script," he adds. "I always want to push beyond the obvious. And I would like to insert more humor into Harrison, show more of his essential wackiness."

And thanks to *War of the Worlds* showing off more of the actor, Martin is often recognized on the street. "It used to be mostly for *Dallas*," he says smiling, his voice soft. "In America, people run up and attack you around the ankles, but in Canada, people are a little more reserved. If you find yourself in a discussion, then they'll say that they've seen you on the show. But it's definitely swinging around to being recognized as Harrison Blackwood, which is great."

Martin has few memories about working on *Fantastic Journey*. Pausing to reflect, he says slowly, "I mainly recall what the producers went through; how difficult it was to

produce, because it was like grand opera every week. Also the consummate professionalism of Roddy McDowall, a delightful person. It's mostly a feeling of missed opportunity. It is a happy memory, though, in the sense that it was the first series I had ever done. I really like the character of Varian, a healer from the future. It's a very interesting, lovely concept. I'm always interested in stories about the human race getting better instead of worse. Memories other than that? The amazingly small amount of money I was paid each week."

Suddenly, Martin's face brightens. "I'm always amazed," he says, "by how science-fiction shows manage to make something which is totally commonplace look like it's absolutely out of this world. I remember the lot where we shot *Fantastic Journey*. It was basically this square acre out in the Valley behind the Columbia studio. We had these dressing rooms and there was this little papier-mache mountain, literally papier-mache. It had a ladder going up inside it and a platform where we all stood at the top. We shot so many things from the top of this mountain, looking out over the plains of Mars, looking into the future or whatever, and right next to it was this lavatory and a fish tank, both gurgling away. Loud. And it always looked great. We do the same thing here. We will grab a little piece of the side of a road. Traffic will be going by 20 feet away and we're looking into the future again."

Lashing Out

Further in his past, Martin appeared in an episode of *Night Gallery* called "Tell David," which was directed by Jeff Corey and starred Sandra Dee. "Jeff was my teacher," Martin recalls. "He brought me from his class against the common practice of going outside and getting a star. It was wonderful. We had certain code words that we used. He brought up exercises from the class. He moved me through it as a teacher would move a pupil through it, rather than as a director would move an actor. He's a great man. He came up and appeared in an episode of *War of the Worlds* for us ['Eye for Eye']. Jeff's in his late 70s now, and he has more energy than I do."

Suddenly, Richard Chaves bursts into the room, a gust of friendliness and high energy. He and Martin banter for a few minutes, discussing the purchase of heavy coats for the chilly Canadian winter. Then, Martin continues. "Directors do strange things to us. For instance, this episode ['Among the Philistines'] where I'm supposed to fall in love with this girl. As always happens, you meet her, then in the scene five minutes later, you're kissing her madly. That's exactly what happened. 'Hi, I'm Jared Martin.' We got our makeup, we're out in the street downtown, kissing. This is a mad kissing

(continued on page 70)

Kneale

(continued from page 52)

STARLOG: In the United States, you worked on the aborted *Creature from the Black Lagoon* remake, and dealt with several people familiar to STARLOG readers, including producer Jon Davison and director Jack Arnold. What's your opinion of Arnold?

KNEALE: We got on extremely well. He's a very friendly man. I don't know about that one; it was one of those projects that seemed ready to go but—well, I think it was replaced by *Jaws 3-D*. This, the poor, old resurrected *Creature* in 3-D, seemed possibly a mistake. The first two films were combined, but very much updated with a more sophisticated story.

STARLOG: And Joe Dante?

KNEALE: To be frank, I don't like discussing people. I've only met him three or four times, so I'm not qualified anyway. He seems very likable and lively-minded, and a skillful director. He's very choosy about subjects but perhaps he needs to be even more choosy.

By the way, it was through Joe that I got drawn into writing *Halloween III* for John Carpenter. He had been asked to direct a *Halloween* movie on the understanding that it would owe nothing in style or subject matter to the first two. This suited me, as I hadn't liked them at all. And I wrote an original, large-scale screenplay with a lot of black humor in it debunking sentimental "Irishry," which was used in the story as a cover for hi-tech witchcraft. After delivering it and going through extensive re-drafts, I was told that the orders had been changed. The front office had demanded that *Halloween III* should be exactly the same as *Halloween I* and *II*. "Got to give the kids what they want" was the cry, "a big scare every three minutes." I objected that Alfred Hitchcock would have had a problem making *Psycho* under those conditions. The answer was crisp: "You couldn't make *Psycho* today. The kids wouldn't want it."

So, my screenplay was cut down to B-picture size, and eye-gouging and electric-drillings added. Precisely the kind of clichés I had avoided. It bore no resemblance to what I had written, so I took my name right off it.

I read an interview later that described my screenplay as "old-fashioned." Well, if that wraps me up with Hitchcock, I'm pleased to be in his company.

STARLOG: Although this is a clichéd question, it does need to be asked: Where do you get your ideas?

KNEALE: Oh, I suppose everyone could solemnly think up some even seriously and work along, analyzing the situation. But other times, you just casually read a headline, or somebody says something over breakfast, and that starts it. Usually, you know, they drop through a filter slot. Many of them don't—it sounded good for only a moment there, and so it's only the really good ones that get through. ✱

Saperstein

(continued from page 27)

ty close to when I start to do the actual writing, I cross a line and decide whether it's a movie or a book. At that point, I do an outline—although it's really only a roadmap. I know how it begins and ends with the hope that I will wander the road in between. That's really the fun of it. In a movie, you can't do it too much. You're restricted by the number of pages and budget. In a novel, you can just wander and go anywhere and be anybody you want."

It's that speculative and searching quality in his characters that also attracts Saperstein to the genre. "I'm a science-fiction fan," he admits. "I've always read SF. Not avidly, but selectively. So much of science fiction is science fact now." As for his own writing, Saperstein admits, "I like to try lots of different things. *Cocoon* is science fiction; *Red Devil*, fantasy; *Killing Affair*, murder mystery. I'm in lots of different genres which gives my publishers fits, but I just can't write the same book twice. My next film, *Hearts & Diamonds*, is a comedy, while *Personal Choice* was a coming-of-age story."

As someone who has managed to succeed both as an author and a filmmaker, Saperstein takes his responsibility to the public and his peers seriously. It's an obligation he learned in his youth while working at CBS News for the legendary television journalist Edward R. Murrow. "One thing I learned at that time was that this man had a great deal of power. He knew the powers they had on that tube before anybody—and he used it really judiciously. He was kind and gentle, not a domineering, opinionated man, and I've learned that from him. Being a director on a set, you have total power. Many directors push people around. The lesson I learned was that you can accomplish a great deal by being kind and gentle and quiet rather than being a bully."

These are the lessons of youth that continue to drive David Saperstein even as he grows older and grapples with the same dilemmas which faced the fictional characters of *Cocoon* and millions of other aging Americans. However, disturbed by what has been done to his storyline by the filmmakers of *Cocoon: The Return*, he is anxious to extol the virtues of his sequel. "I think the people who cared about *Cocoon* will seek it out," he states.

He is also extremely pleased with what *Cocoon* has meant to so many people and its effects on perceptions of the elderly. "It was so unexpectedly successful in terms of an audience reaction. I always believed parents loved their grandparents, but *Cocoon* said it was OK to deal with old age on television and in movies. It was a watershed and as a result of that, it sometimes envelops me. I like to distance myself from it once and a while and do other things.

"But it's nice to know that with *Cocoon*, I can come back and say I'm the guy who did this." ✱

Martin

(continued from page 20)

scene—the screen melts. We had to overcome a little inertia to get to that point, but on the last take, the director, George Bloomfield inserts himself in between us and we just narrowly avoid kissing him. He's a big man, and his face suddenly comes into the shot, right between us."

But those are antics he wouldn't mind more of if *War of the Worlds* is successful. In fact, he would like to stay with the show even for as long as five or six years. "I love being up here [in Canada]," he explains. "I love the people I'm working with, and I love the character."

Trying to develop the personal side of Harrison Blackwood has presented some surprising difficulties for the actor. "I would like to get everything about Harrison on the screen," he enthuses. "I was really gung ho to have Harrison drinking little bottles of Perrier, but they said that there was a marketing problem with that so I couldn't do it. I love Uncle Scrooge comic books. I grew up on them. I really wanted to have Harrison reading *Uncle Scrooge*. Couldn't use it, because Walt Disney isn't about to let Uncle Scrooge go out there. So, then they brought all these comic books in that they thought nobody would kick up a fuss about us using. I looked at them and I immediately saw why: They weren't terribly interesting comic books. So, I put that idea aside.

"I've worked with Harrison playing with a yo-yo, but I found that wasn't really selling. I always wanted the idea of Harrison doing toys, a Slinky say, but that causes problems with sound. So, you run into these problems. The little points of light that you want to put out about the character get considerably shaven. But I keep trying."

Admits Martin, he and his character are not that different. "I tend to be moody," he observes. "Harrison is a little more upbeat than I am, so it's a nice stretch for me to go up to meet Harrison, rather than if it were the other way around. I tend to be pretty much on my own when I leave here, but Harrison is gregarious, although his chosen method is to work alone. I'm not non-violent, but I'm anti-violent. I'm a vegetarian who eats fish every once in a while. I play music. I describe myself as a New Age person, a cosmopolite, and I'm very curious. I wanted to be an ichthyologist, strangely enough, and I've always been interested in archaeology. I might have been a scientist, if I hadn't become an actor."

Renewing his membership in the select group of science-fiction heroes, Jared Martin muses about his audience. "Many people say, 'Oh, a science-fiction show,' and they don't watch it because they think it's going to be very abstract, difficult to understand, and all about monsters, colored rocks and weird special FX. SF people are a really hard sell in the beginning, but once they like *War of the Worlds*, they'll tune in every week. Virtually forever." ✱