

# JARED MARTIN SERIOUS HEROICS



**L**IKE Varian, his character in **The Fantastic Journey**, Jared Martin has travelled a long and sometimes rocky road in his career as an actor. During the Seventies and Eighties the handsome and unassuming Martin appeared as a guest star on countless popular television shows, and as a regular on the night-time Soap Opera **Dallas** and the Science Fiction series **War of the Worlds**. For him, being cast on **The Fantastic Journey** was like receiving manna from heaven.

"I was a young actor in Hollywood," recalls Martin. "I was living in a garage with out a bathroom. I used to go to the house next door and use theirs. My young son was visiting me for the summer and he slept on my only couch – this is all true by the way, although no one has ever asked me about this before – while I slept on the floor

next to him. I was obviously in a severe slump, but I got a call from my agent at the time telling me that he had got me an audition for **The Fantastic Journey**. I went in to read and they liked me. They called me back to do it again and they must have *really* liked me because I got the part. Needless to say, it turned my life around."

In the original pilot for **The Fantastic Journey**, a small scientific expedition sets off across the Caribbean to the Grand Cayman Islands to study a natural phenomenon known as 'red tide'. Led by Professor Paul Jordan (Scott Thomas) the team consists of, among others, Jordan's teenage son Scott (Ike Eisenmann), Eve Costigan (Susan Howard) and Doctor Fred Walters (Carl Franklin). Not long after setting sail the ship travels into the Bermuda Triangle where it is enveloped by a strange storm that deposits its passengers and crew

on an uncharted island. There they meet Varian, a 23rd Century scientist whose spaceship has crashed and who has been attempting to find his way home by using the many time rifts that exist naturally on the island.

## Fantastic Promotion

Although the network was happy with the premise of the show, they were disappointed with what they felt was a lack of on-screen chemistry among the cast. Much to his surprise, Martin's character was pushed to the foreground in the second episode.

"To be honest, I can't tell you what happened," explains Martin. "I was very much on the outside then and was just happy to have a job and my first break, as it were. They certainly didn't consult me, so when I heard about this I was quite surprised and



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kind of shocked that something like this would really happen.

"The series was always in turmoil. They were constantly changing or tweaking it and bringing in this element and that element. My guess is that they looked at the pilot and decided not so much that I was the best thing since sliced bread but that they just didn't like the chemistry or where the series was headed. The programme was in a death time slot opposite **Welcome Back Kotter** and **The Waltons** and they were desperately trying to come up with something that would capture the attention of the viewers. They decided to go with the future aspect and make it more of a Science Fiction or Fantasy show as opposed to the typical American family in peril. The future aspect was represented by my character, Varian, so they kind of took me and shoved me up front."

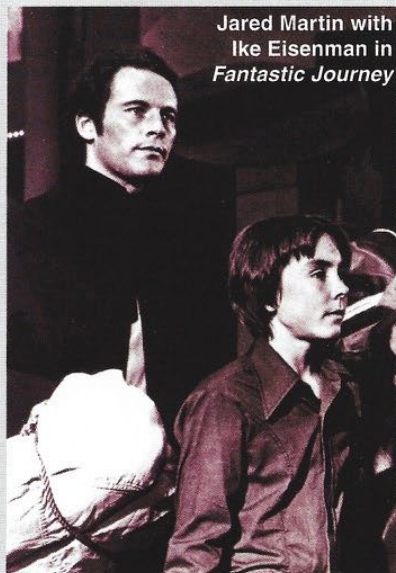
### Loincloths and Cardboard

The first glimpse audiences have of Varian is a well-built man wearing only a loincloth and a headband, similar to a Native American. It took some technobabble and a change of clothes for him to convince people that he was actually from the 23rd Century.

"He was a very simply drawn character. He was a non-violent healer who, I feel, was an exemplification of all the good things people hoped humanity would evolve into. In fact, he was almost absurdly simplified and rather difficult to play. It was like playing an angel. He had emotion but no sexuality or any real personality; a kind of a cardboard cutout. He was difficult to play because the guy was always running in and doing the perfect thing. In spite of that, I did like the role very much."

In their quest to find a way back home, Varian, Scott and Doctor Walters are surprised to meet up with two other people who are seeking the same thing. They are the half-human, half-alien Liana (Katie Saylor), a woman who has the ability to communicate with animals, and an eccentric scientist from the 1960s named Jonathan Willoway (Roddy McDowell).

"Katie and I didn't get along," Martin says candidly. "It just did not work. Carl I liked a lot and always have, and I saw him occasionally after we finished the series. He's turned into one of the very, very best directors in the business and I take my hat off to him. Carl's an intelligent, natural guy and the type of companion you can only hope to get cast alongside when working



Jared Martin with  
Ike Eisenman in  
*Fantastic Journey*



Protective pose in  
*War of the Worlds*

on a series. With Roddy, all I can say is what you see is what you get. He's a consummate professional, always available but kind of distant – basically part of his own legend. Ike was a cool kid, bright but even at that age very professional.

"I often wonder what has happened to Ike and indeed what has happened to Katie," Martin ponders. "My opinion towards her has softened because she was up against a lot of stuff too. We were all trying to make a success of the series as well as ourselves as actors. Sometimes I think we were probably a little bit more aggressive than we should have been."

Although **The Fantastic Journey** made a promising début with some respectable ratings, the series took a turn for the worse and finished up in the television graveyard

after only nine episodes. To this day, Martin is still proud of the work he and everyone else did on the show and feels very little could have been done to save it from cancellation.

"When we did **The Fantastic Journey** it was, obviously, a different time. The series was sort of a holdover from the Sixties and very much in the same vein as **Lost in Space** rather than a forerunner of the sorts of Science Fiction shows that came later and were very successful. Given the make-up of the show and the people who were producing and writing it, I don't feel that anyone could have done anything differently.

"I think the series was kind of stillborn. It was a valiant attempt at family entertainment mixed with Science Fiction, but I don't feel that those two things really go



*Fantastic Journey* – short-lived





*War of the Worlds* became darker as the series progressed...

together. When you do Science Fiction you have got to go for a select and specific audience. That's why shows like **Star Trek** and **The X-Files** are so successful. Because we were aiming at the family we ended up sometimes looking like a sitcom, then Saturday morning kid's stuff and finally bizarre Science Fiction with television-style special effects. Even back then audiences were getting smarter, and they saw all this going on and very quickly passed."

Martin's next journey into the realm of Science Fiction came in 1988 with **War of the Worlds**, a sequel to the 1953 film of the same name. In this series the actor played astrophysicist Doctor Harrison Blackwood, one of a small team of specialists who band together to stop aliens from the planet Mortax from taking over the Earth. It was a twist of fate that gave the actor his chance.

"Originally, Michael Nouri had been cast in the part but he ended up backing out at the last minute due to a problem with his salary. They called me up and flew me to Toronto. I stepped out of the car, walked into a room – not a studio, but a room – and literally did the screen test for them right on the spot. After that I went to a hotel and waited while they flew my tape down to the producers in Los Angeles to watch. I really think, though, that they had already decided. The show had begun production and they had no one to play Blackwood, so they gave the part to me and that was that."

Helping Martin in his battle against these extraterrestrial invaders was a young British actor named Adrian Paul, who is currently starring in his own runaway hit syndicated television series **Highlander**.

"I liked Adrian and we struck up an in-



teresting type of relationship. I'm slightly older than he is and it could be said that he was brought in to sort of usurp the leading man type of action/adventure stuff. I was concerned about this and remember thinking, 'Gee, here's my show and they're bringing in this other guy.' Adrian's a very smart guy and an extremely hard worker.

## Inside Scoop

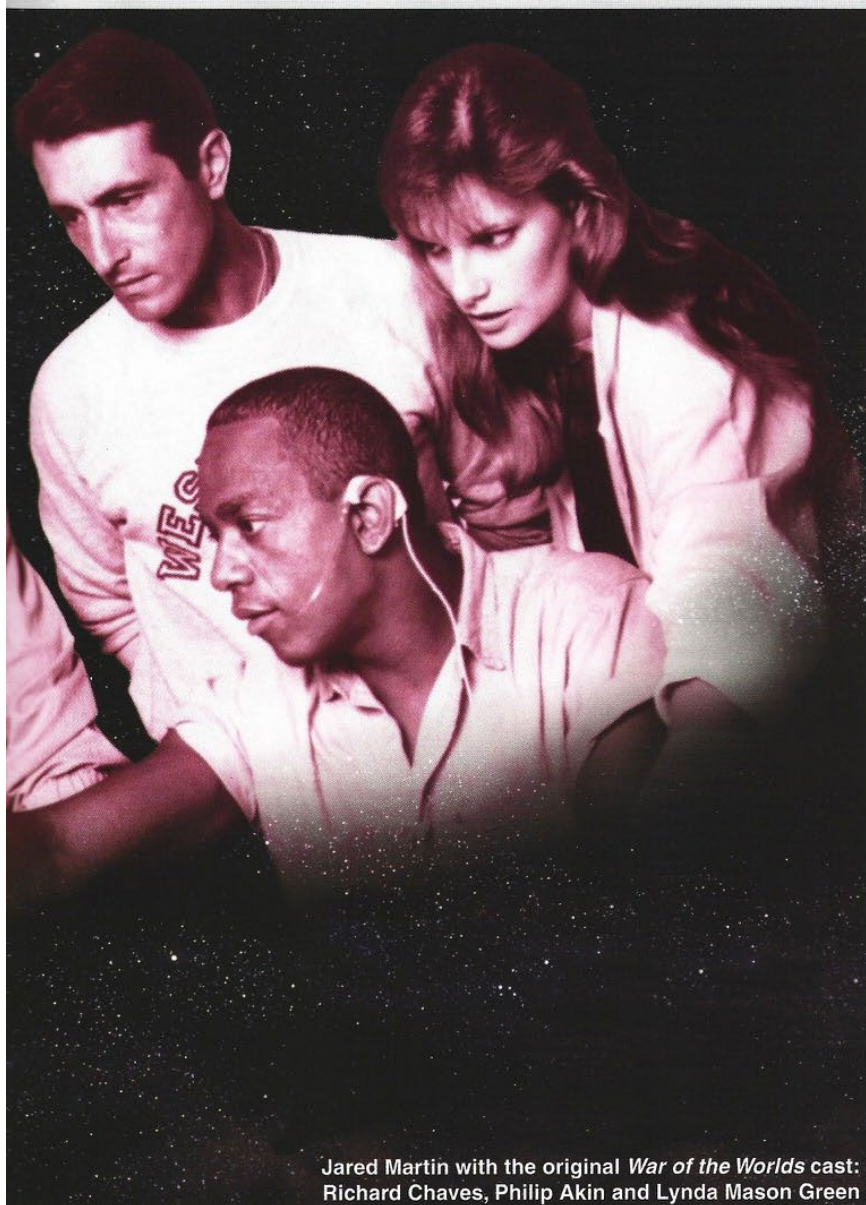
"Here's a little inside scoop about **War of the Worlds**. About four episodes into the second season the story editor took very ill. He was rushed to the hospital and never returned to the series, so Adrian and I became the de facto story editors. They'd send up these scripts, some of which would ar-

rive in splints and bandages. I don't know what's passing for Science Fiction scripts these days but these were pretty awful. They were out of sync and just didn't make any sense. We'd look at this stuff, and then at each other and smile and say, 'No matter what our imagined differences might be, this is our show. We're both smart cookies. Why don't we get together and whip these scripts into shape?'

"We were very short-handed and the producer that year, a guy named John Anderson, was smart enough or prescient enough to say, 'OK guys, go for it'. We were also smart enough not to write ourselves major parts or anything like that. We really just fell into being story editors and I learned a lot about what it takes to get the job done.



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Jared Martin with the original *War of the Worlds* cast: Richard Chaves, Philip Akin and Lynda Mason Green

not so much that people weren't watching the show but that Paramount went from the number one studio to number six within a year and they had to start cutting back.

### Bad Timing

"When you start cutting back you look at a show like ours, which was shot in Toronto with an idea towards syndication – something you don't get a return on for a few years. Also, our bunkmate up in Canada was **Friday the 13th**, a series that we shared a studio with and that incurred the wrath of Reverend Donald Wildmon. He's still around, I think. He went after shows for their violent content. He didn't go after us specifically but because **Friday the 13th** was also a Paramount show we, too, suddenly became a liability just as I thought the show was getting very good. I poured most of my heart and soul into Harrison Blackwood, and I thought we had a hell of a show, I really did."

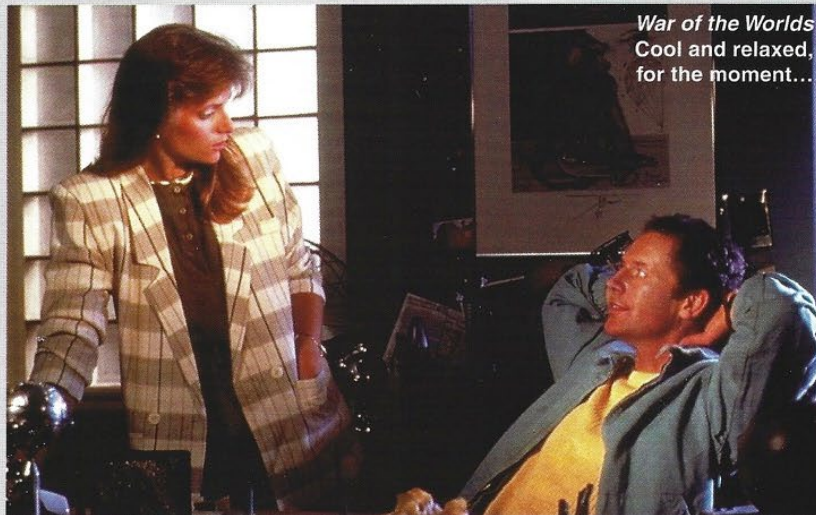
Like many actors Martin became interested in performing when he joined a theatre group as a child. As a young adult he worked on several independent films in New York City before going out to Hollywood and snaring various film and television roles. Throughout the years he has returned to New York to act in stage productions, including **The Crucible** and **Torch Song Trilogy**. Martin recalls the latter as having been particularly challenging.

"I had no idea what I was getting myself into. My agent called and asked, 'Do you want to do a Broadway play?' I said, 'You bet'. I wasn't that familiar with the material [the life of a quiet homosexual man] but there I was flying back east to be in this play. Sexuality questions aside – I

Adrian was just great. I've seen him occasionally while flicking through the channels and I'm very happy for him and for all of his success."

Despite several radical changes made in the programme during its second season – including a title change to **War of the Worlds - A Second Invasion** – the series continued to hold its own in the ratings. Unfortunately, the business climate in Hollywood had begun to shift and the series was just one of the town's many casualties.

"As distant and as forgetful as I am about **The Fantastic Journey**, I still have a strong feeling about **War of the Worlds** and, I guess, a slight regret. I think it could have made it. I truly feel it was a precursor to **The X-Files** and I think that our failure was



*War of the Worlds*  
Cool and relaxed,  
for the moment...



jared martin as dr harrison blackwood





## interview



don't care anything about that – I got on fine with the cast. I think I was voted the World's Greatest Heterosexual! It was a wonderful experience, but I was on stage for something like four hours and twenty minutes, and I had more lines than you could shake a stick at.

"I also enjoyed the work I did on the television miniseries **How the West Was Won**, but in many ways my role of Dusty Farlow on **Dallas** was difficult because the character was like a sputtering engine that would never work right. He seemed very popular with the viewers but they never really wrote him a story line. He would just fade in and out, so that was kind of a personal disappointment. This guy was potentially a very interesting character but nothing really happened.

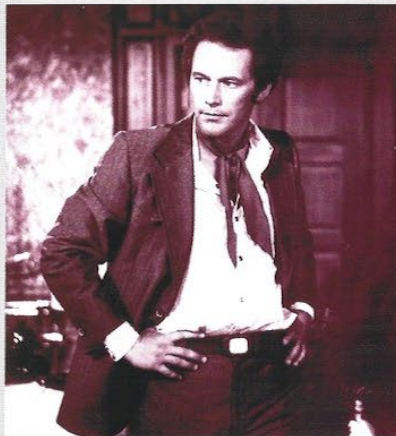
### Wonder Woman Moments

"I also played a mad artist on **The Waltons**, which that I really liked. I did, and hold on to your laughter, a two-part **Wonder Woman** which I thought was also very good. If you have two brain cells clicking together you realize that when you do guest-spots on television shows you can't expect to do major roles. What you can work for, however, are moments and there were some moments in **Wonder**

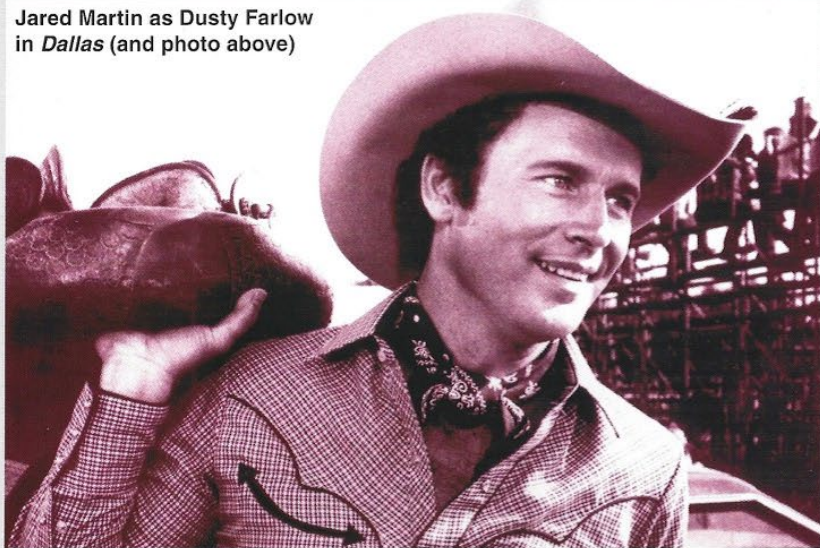
**Woman**, for example, when I thought my work was effective. I was very happy with the work I did in **War of the Worlds**, and if my career as an actor is over it was a good way to go out."

Martin currently resides in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he is busy concentrating on work as both a photographer and director.

"I've had a kind of hit-and-miss relationship with acting. It is, I guess, the thing that is my identity, but I probably haven't taken it as seriously as many other actors do because I always knew there were other things I could do. That's really happened more and more in the latter stage of my



Jared Martin as Dusty Farlow in **Dallas** (and photo above)



career. I realized that I wasn't interested in the work that I was doing. It wasn't challenging any more. It was my dissatisfaction with all the stuff Hollywood was asking me to do that led me to what I'm doing now.

### New Directions

"As a photographer I've had my work exhibited in some galleries in Philadelphia, but I'm sort of holding on to some work right now. I feel like a mad scientist, but it's because I'm experimenting in different techniques. So I'm trying to get things right before I jump out and say, 'Hey, look at me, I'm a photographer.'

"In terms of directing, I never really thought about it until my current business partner, a Philadelphia businessman whom I met in Los Angeles, said, 'Why don't you come east and direct a short documentary presentation?' To make a long story short I did, and about a year-and-a-half later I directed **In Deeper**, an hour-long documentary that went on to win three awards, including one at the Chicago Film Festival. Jeff and I are now part owners of a Philadelphia production company and we've started something called The Children's Film Festival. We basically take disadvantaged or at-risk kids living in bad neighbourhoods and teach them how to make their own films. They write, act, and direct them as well as do such things as the lighting and artwork. We're doing some really terrific stuff. It's as if I've died and gone to heaven.

"I'm not one of those actors who regrets the fact that he is no longer on television or that his residual cheques are now down to sixteen cents. I feel very fortunate to be doing what I'm doing. I blundered into a children's theatre group when I was thirteen and here I am years later closing it all out by doing the same thing. I've fallen madly in love with the whole process of directing. It has filled up an entire part of me that was never touched by acting. Suddenly I'm in the midst of a total career change and I've never really looked back."

Steven Eramo