

'War of Worlds' fan star of series

By LANE CROCKETT
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It's only right that actor Jared Martin should turn out to be the star of Paramount Pictures' syndicated "War of the Worlds" series.

"I saw the film when I was a kid, and I loved it," says the actor in a clear, crisp voice. "It really turned me on. It's still one of the jazziest stories they ever had. It was a lead-pipe cinch for a kid."

The series is loosely based on the classic 1953 film that starred Gene Barry as a scientist suddenly finding himself battling invaders from Mars. The picture, which won an Academy Award for special effects, was based on H.G. Wells' science-fiction novel of the same name.

Liking the film wasn't Martin's only connection. He later worked with Barry in a film. One of the features of the wrap-up party for the cast at Barry's home was a showing of "War of the Worlds."

In the series, Martin, once Dusty Farlow on CBS' "Dallas," portrays eccentric astrophysicist Dr. Harrison Blackwood. It's 30

Inside TV

years later. The aliens, thought to have succumbed to ordinary earth bacteria, only retreated into a form of suspended animation and were imprisoned by the military in a state of involuntary hibernation. But the aliens manage to resurface, intent on completing their mission.

Blackwood and a hand-picked team, under government secrecy, must find a way to stop the invaders.

"War of the Worlds" has proved successful. Martin says he's been told that it's the second highest-rated syndicated drama series behind "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

Besides the series, Martin has a great fondness for his character.

Martin admits he uses some of his own personality traits for the character. They both are anti-violence, preferring to use the mind instead of might. They dress the same — casual and outdoorsy. The actor is a vegetarian, so is Blackwood.

So far, says the actor, everything has been upbeat about "War of the Worlds." He's already in conferences with Paramount about concepts for next season. And he doesn't mind being tied to a series, preferring to create a character over a long period of time. "And I'm single right now. My son is old enough to go on his own, so I can dump my whole life into this."

An interesting side to Martin is that he is keeping a daily journal that has now stretched to 6,000 pages.

Best Bets

□ **Alice in Wonderland:** A girl follows a white rabbit into a fantasy land in the story by Lewis Carroll.

(8 p.m. on ABC stations, Channels 5/Cleveland, 7/Detroit, 24/Toledo. One hour.)

□ **Santa Claus:** Santa and an elf from the North Pole foil a New York toy manufacturer's scheme to get rich off Christmas.

(9 p.m. on ABC stations, Channels 5/Cleveland, 7/Detroit, 24/Toledo. Two hours.)