

## Perkins makes classy exit in NBC's 'Deep Woods'

### Suspense hindered by TV limitations

By Steven Alan McGaw

Actor Anthony Perkins inhabits a distinctive space in the public mind. With his carefully constructed portrayal of murderous mama's boy Norman Bates in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* in 1960, Perkins moved beyond the status of mere movie star to become a familiar resident of our collective nightmares. In his long career, beginning with 1953's *The Actress* to his death last month from AIDS, Perkins enjoyed many successes, from his Oscar-nominated turn in *Friendly Persuasion* to a Tony-nomination for his performance in Broadway's *Equus*. On a lark, he partnered with Stephen Sondheim to script 1973's delightful puzzler *The Last of Sheila*, and he offered a determined Javert in the lavish 1978 remake of *Les Misérables*.

Still, it was *Psycho* that defined

Perkins' indelible place in film, and he seemed content with that, even reprising the role of Norman in three sequels. He also used the *Psycho* pedigree to color other ominous or mysterious portrayals, like the oddball arsonist in 1968's *Pretty Poison* and the crazed street preacher in Ken Russell's unnerving *Crimes of Passion* in 1985.

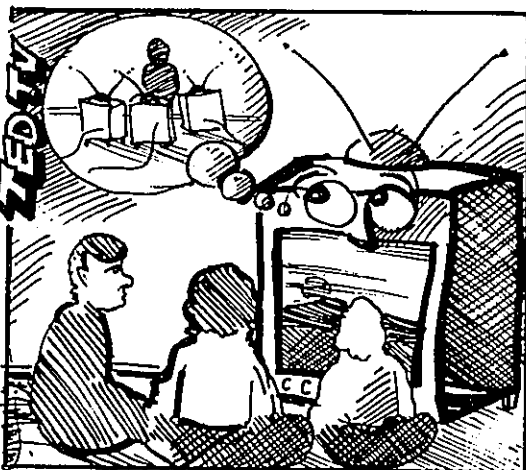
Perkins' presence is a powerful part of NBC's suspenseful *In the Deep Woods*, a two-hour film airing Monday, Oct. 26. Based on a chilling novel by Nicholas Conde, the movie focuses on Carol Warren, a successful children's author played by Rosanna Arquette. When a childhood friend apparently falls victim to the serial murderer known as the Deep Woods Killer (after the locations where he dumps the bodies), Carol meets New York detective Eric Gaines (Will Patton)

and learns that after at least 40 victims, the police are no closer to tracing the killer. She is further alarmed to realize she matches the profile of the Deep Woods Killer's victims.

Days later, at a book signing, Carol notices a tall, somber man waiting in line. "Sign it 'To Suzanne,'" he says flatly, handing the writer her latest book. Carol hastily scrawls the inscription and returns the book, somehow knowing she'll see the haunted-looking stranger again.

*In the Deep Woods* is among the best suspense-type telefilms the networks have produced in a long time. Arquette delivers a powerful performance, heading a fine cast that includes Chris Rydell as her dutiful, angelic-looking brother and D.W. Moffett as a charming womanizer. The script by writers Robert Nathan and Robert Rosenblum is a skillful adaptation of Conde's novel, and director Charles Correll keeps the action moving at an admirably swift pace. On the whole, the movie achieves a high degree of suspense, but the format of mainstream television (commercials, etc.) simply doesn't allow for the sustained tensions a work such as this really needs.

It is, of course, Perkins who dominates the film, in a role calculated to trade on his larger-than-life persona. Perpetually swathed in a trenchcoat, his unsmiling Paul Miller says more with his sad, silent gaze than most characters can with a soliloquy. It is a fine final bow for an actor whose place in cinema history is assured.



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