

Anthony Edwards joins cast of CBS' 'Northern Exposure'

Hyperallergic lawyer finds home in Cicely

By Dan Rice

"Quirky" describes many of the residents of the town of Cicely, Alaska, and the series in which they can be found, CBS' *Northern Exposure*. The adjective certainly applies to the town's newest resident, who will join the show for seven episodes beginning Monday, Nov. 2.

Anthony Edwards (*Top Gun*, *Mr. North*) plays Mike Monroe, a corporate lawyer from the Minneapolis/St. Paul area afflicted with environmental illness, a chemical-sensitivity syndrome marked by allergic reactions to toxins. Having suffered too many migraine headaches from new carpet and the like, Mike searched for a remote town with clean air and a doctor and found Cicely, one of the last refuges left for him on the mainland. There he sets up housekeeping in a geodesic dome.

Edwards describes his character as "one of those people who's seen

the face of death and is learning to survive in his own dramatic way.

"He's incredibly well-educated on environmental issues, but in a real way, not a political way, because he had to know what happens when a benzene spill occurs and the effects of underground nuclear testing on the environment. I think he's sympathetic because he sees himself as a barometer of the world's health. He's the canary in the coal mine."

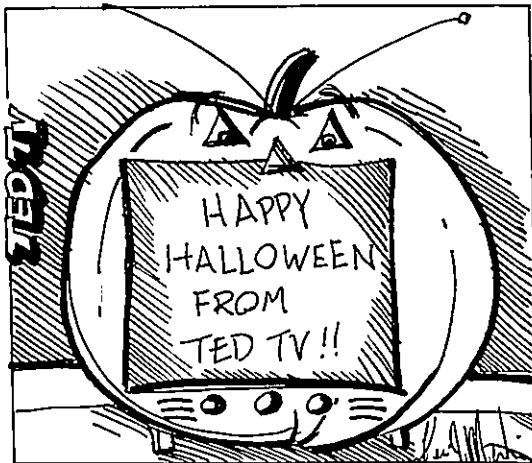
How does the community take to the newcomer? Dr. Fleischmann (Rob Morrow) considers him a medical challenge, though Mike is also a hypochondriac, and his allergic symptoms amount to no more than sniffles and a sore throat. Maggie (Janine Turner) is, according to Edwards, "very intrigued by the character because he is unreachable. I think we're attracted to each other because we've cut ourselves off from society in different ways — me physically and she emotionally. So there's a good friendship developing there."

Maurice (Barry Corbin) lends Mike his old space suit to wear during allergic attacks, and Mike is free to walk about unprotected at

other times, but he must wear gloves when handling paper. In an episode airing later this month, the ex-astronaut enlists the lawyer's help when authorities in West Virginia try to extradite metaphysical deejay Chris (John Corbett) for breaking parole seven years earlier.

"I think the greatest part of why Cicely works is that it's full of eccentric, crazy people, not unlike my character," Edwards offers as an explanation of *Northern Exposure's* Emmy-winning mystique. He says that while the characters are markedly different types, they are "very similar in their ability to be loving. As an audience, we like watching it because we see and feel both extremes."

Will Chris elude the long arm of the law? Will Maggie break through the new resident's barriers without making him sneeze? If a romance develops, will Mike survive the apparent curse on Maggie's boyfriends? Will Joel discover a cure for environmental illness, or will Maurice promote Cicely as a haven for the hyperallergic? Learning the answers to these and other questions merely requires more *Northern Exposure*.



On Wednesday, NBC's *This Is Michael Bolton* offers the singer performing several R&B standards.