

Arquette's normal mom has paranormal abilities

By Rhonda Stewart

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Patricia Arquette is getting used to strangers asking her strange questions.

On the street or at Kinko's, they ask where she's been or how she's doing and tell her they miss her. They've gotten used to seeing her every week. And when she doesn't show up on Monday nights at 10, they worry.

Arquette is the star of "Medium," NBC's surprise hit about a psychic named Allison DuBois who helps local law enforcement solve crimes. The character was inspired by the real-life DuBois, who works as a consultant for the show. The premise of "Medium" sounds unusual enough, but here's the real twist: Arquette's character is also a seemingly typical married mother of three.

Speaking by phone from Los Angeles, the actress says the chance to explore both sides of the character is what drew her to her first TV series role. "The writing was so well done. I really liked the relationship, the marriage. I liked the premise. I thought it was high time someone do something like this. On the other hand I wasn't surprised by positive reactions to the show because it was interesting subject matter, and I thought a lot of people like me will tune in."

Character evolving

And so they have: With more than 15 million viewers a week, the show is consistently in the top 20, and it was the first new series NBC renewed for next season. The network also ordered an extra three episodes for this season, so there will be new episodes leading up to the May 23 season-finale cliffhanger.

Arquette's character has grown since the show's pilot, when she was so confused and scared by her psychic abilities that she would drink to quiet the voices in her head. When the visions come to her in dreams, she still bolts upright in bed gasping and drenched in sweat. But even if Allison's hunches turn out to be wrong somehow, she's gradually coming to terms with her unusual gift.

"I think she's getting more confident with her abilities and



NBC Universal

Joe and Allison DuBois (Jake Weber and Patricia Arquette) are a happily married couple trying to cope with Allison's ability to talk with the dead on "Medium."

Tune in

■ "MEDIUM": 10 p.m. Mondays on NBC. It's preempted this Monday so NBC can show "Hercules" from 8 to 11.

that they're important and that she's not such a freak and so alone in the world," Arquette says. "She's started to create a network around her that's a place where her talents and abilities are appreciated."

With each new show, Arquette's character displays a combination of self-assurance and self-doubt that makes her endearingly human. Her husband, Joe (played by Jake Weber), is both supportive and skeptical.

The talented young actresses who play her daughters, Maria Lark and Sofia Vassilieva, also show signs of having their own psychic powers. Allison regularly deals with crime drama as well as drama on the home front, where things are clearly loving but also sometimes tense and moody.

Glenn Gordon Caron, executive producer of "Medium," says the show's mix of the supernatural and the downright ordinary has struck a chord with

viewers. "With the exception of this one thing, she's an amazingly normal person, she's chasing three kids, she doesn't have time to go to the gym," Caron says by phone. "There aren't a lot of people on TV where someone looks at them and says, 'I know that person.'"

"It seemed the only way to make somebody with these extraordinary gifts believable is empathy," Caron says. "You needed to cast someone unvain who didn't spend a lot of time looking at herself in the mirror."

'Heart and soul' of the show

With her blond hair, blue eyes, and baby-doll look, Arquette, 37, could hardly be considered ordinary looking. But in the prime-time universe, where even desperate housewives always manage to look perfectly pulled together, the decidedly un-skinny Arquette is still the exception rather than the rule.

Caron understandably describes Arquette as the "heart and soul" of the show, given that she's in virtually every scene and spends 15-hour days on the set. He says she was the first actress he considered for Allison after his girlfriend read the pilot script and said she could see Arquette in the role.