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'Sworn' is based 294 on Waco murders

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The mountains in the opening shot of *Sworn to Vengeance* are the quick giveaway that although the made-for-TV movie's plot is based on the 1982 Lake Waco triple murders, "based" is the operative word here.

Those familiar with the murders, particularly as recorded in Carlton Stowers' book *Careless Whispers*, probably will stay tuned, simply to see what facts get changed and which ones remain in the David Epstein-John Carlen teleplay.

Those unfamiliar will find the case and subsequent trials will find just another TV-for-the-hard-of-thinking murder mystery involving a never-say-die cop and a smiling psychopath.

Jack Stewart (Robert Conrad) is an overly dedicated sergeant on the Carson City, Nevada, police force when the brutally stabbed bodies of three teen-agers turn up in a local park.

Stunned by their violent deaths, Stewart whispers a vow to bring the killer to justice into the ears of the dead teens.

What follows is a rough approximation of former Waco police sergeant Truman Simons' crucial

TV REVIEW

"Sworn to Vengeance"

8 tonight

CBS, Channels 10 and 4

investigation in the case, an adaptation hamstrung by Conrad's one-note performance and a script flawed by implausibility and cliched dialogue.

In fact, the plot is so close to Simons' actual story that he intends to seek a temporary restraining order today from 74th State District Judge Alan Mayfield to block broadcast of the film.

Compressing the complex story into *Sworn to Vengeance's* two hours strips away necessary characterization and plausible motivation. What's left is a grim, steely-eyed Conrad staring down suspects and witnesses while mouthing standard cop cliches.

Waco-area viewers may have more fun watching real people transmuted into fiction: Simons into Stewart, David Wayne Spence into Michael (Spike) Burke, Gilbert and Anthony Melendez into Hector and Jesus Martinez, Muneer Deeb into Wanda Monroe and former McLennan County District Attorney Vic Feazell into DA Cynthia Gallup.