Written by Michael Gingold
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If there’s any teen actress with serious genre qualifications these days, it’s Chloë Grace Moretz, whose big-screen résumé stretches from 2005’s THE AMITYVILLE HORROR to this year’s DARK SHADOWS, with lots of horrific stops in between. But there was one question regarding her starring role in the new film version of Stephen King’s classic novel CARRIE that Fango felt compelled to raise upon sitting down with her at the recent New York Comic-Con.

To put it bluntly, there have been those who’ve opined that perhaps Moretz is too pretty for the part of a girl described in King’s book as plain at best and “look[ing] like an ape” at worst. The young actress has heard this buzz herself, and responds, “Honestly, I don’t view myself as, like, ‘Whoa!’ When I think ‘pretty,’ I think Charlize Theron or Nicole Kidman. But then you see Nicole Kidman in THE HOURS or Charlize Theron in MONSTER, and you go, “Oh my God.” No matter how beautiful you are, as long as you’re a good actor, and also have a great hair and makeup team or whatever, you can be whoever you want to be. That’s the true sign of a versatile actress. Yeah, maybe you’re beautiful when you’re on the red carpet, but when you’re on set and in character, you can become anyone you want to become. You can be homeless, and then you can turn around and be in a movie where you’re a superhero, you know? I mean, look at Meryl Streep. You don’t look at her as, ‘That’s Meryl Streep in a movie,’ you think, ‘That’s that character,’ you know? That’s hopefully what you’ll think when you see CARRIE. You won’t go, ‘Oh, that’s Chloe Moretz with red hair and an ugly dress,’ you’ll go, ‘That’s Carrie.’ ”

The new CARRIE (opening March 15, 2013 from Screen Gems), directed by BOYS DON’T

CRY’s Kimberly Peirce and scripted by Robert Aguirre-Sacasa (the playwright acknowledged for helping save SPIDER-MAN: TURN ON THE DARK, and a former FANGORIA intern) is being billed as a new and more faithful adaptation of King’s story rather than a remake of Brian De Palma’s 1976 screen take. That movie helped make a star out of Sissy Spacek, but Moretz says she didn’t look to Spacek’s portrayal when preparing to play Carrie. “I hadn’t seen the film since I was about 13,” she notes, “and when I went in, my main thing was, I wanted to create my own character. I didn’t want to be compared to someone else; I wanted my character to stand alone. Our movie follows more along the lines of the book than it does the original movie. Sissy’s character was so amazing, and obviously, if I wanted to sit and think about it, I’d go, ‘Oh my God, am I ever going to live up to what she did?’ But I couldn’t think that; I just had to do my thing and do what I needed to do and be happy with what I put out there.”

As noted above, Moretz has played a wide spectrum of fanciful and frightening roles over her 15 years, including the vampiric Abby in LET ME IN and the violent junior superheroine Hit Girl in KICK-ASS (for which she’s currently shooting the sequel). Yet she viewed CARRIE, in which she plays opposite Julianne Moore as Carrie’s psychotically religious mother, as an opportunity to go deeper into a role than ever before. “What I really wanted to do for this character was things I’d never done before,” she explains. “I’m not, in a sense, the most Method of actors; I’m more of just a…go actor. I can be smiling and happy, and then crying and devastated the next minute. Whereas with this role, I wanted to try something where I really felt this person all day long, and be in that character from start of the day until end of the day, and change my body and my feelings and my hair and everything to the point where, when I looked in the mirror, all I saw was Carrie. It was very interesting. And working with Kim—she’s a very Method director, and likes to show her cast a different way of acting. So I had a beautiful experience doing this film; I’m not the same actor that I was now that I’ve finished it, I’ve learned so much and I’ve grown up so much and become someone totally different.

“I think this character needed that,” she continues, “because this is a girl who’s so unlike me, but at the same time, I can relate to her so viciously. In my childhood—which I’m still in—I had been told ‘No.’ I’ve been told, ‘You’re never gonna be that actress who’s at the Oscars. You’re never gonna be the one; you’re never gonna be Meryl Streep.’ That’s what I was told a thousand times. And then I grew up and I’ve chosen characters where I’ve proven myself, and I’ve looked at those same people and said, ‘Well, look. You told me I’d never be that actor, and now I’m succeeding at it.’ I’m actually reaching farther and beyond anything I’ve done before.

[redacted]