Written by Trevor Parker
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Picture the pantheon of so-called Masters of Horror in your mind, all seated together in their alabaster temple. John Landis is making wisecracks, Takashi Miike tucks into a sashimi platter, Dario Argento is looking sharp in his toga and black leather gloves. We adore them all, these genre deities—and as much as we hesitate to play favorites, most fans would admit there’s something about John Carpenter that makes his throne seem to be perched higher than those of his colleagues. Is it the wealth of concrete classics on his résumé? His catchy, minimalist musical scores? Perhaps it’s his divine sheath of cascading white locks…?

As Carpenter returns to the screen with THE WARD (continuing its festival tour this spring, with VOD and theatrical play to follow from ARC Entertainment and XLrator Media), Fango decided to celebrate by speaking at length with the living legend. Following its premiere at the 2010 Toronto International Film Festival, THE WARD has divided those fans who have seen it. But we’re not here to critically evaluate THE WARD (in which DRIVE ANGRY’s Amber Heard uncovers horror at a sinister mental institution); rather, we’re more interested in determining just what it is about the man that commands his ever-swelling, fevered level of worship from horror lovers the world over.

Carpenter is diverse, a cinematic polymath. He has excelled at sentimental science fiction (the Oscar-nominated STARMAN), tense action (ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13) and even musical biography (the fondly regarded TV movie ELVIS, starring regular collaborator Kurt Russell). And while he has no problem with being acknowledged predominantly for his horror work, he can easily envision a return to some of those other genres if the stars align: “I’m wide open. I’ve always been wide open. I don’t discard anything, but this business is all about the business. You’ve got to sell something in order to raise money. With me, you generally have to sell it as horror or science fiction.”

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