

Exclusive video: John Carpenter at 2011 Fright Night Festival

Written by Trevor Parker

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It's July 22, and the continent is in the chokehold of one seriously punishing heatwave. In Louisville, Kentucky, fans and guests congregate for the start of the 2011 Fright Night Film Festival under a steamy blanket of humidity. Returning guest Sean Clark of *HORROR'S HALLOWED GROUNDS* describes a previous year in which the fest venue's AC suffered a sudden and fatal coronary, turning a packed hall into one gigantic oven. Needless to say, grumpy and perspiring horror fans and sweltering celebrities do not a recipe for happiness make. Fortunately, this year's location in the Fern Valley Conference Center is more than equipped to deal with both the weather and influx of enthusiastic bodies.

Upon entry into the pleasantly cool hallways, the usual suspects can be found at tables or milling around the convention floor. Clusters of chatting fans suddenly go silent as Kane Hodder, owner of the most threatening walk in the business, strides past. Tiffany Shepis entices visitors to her table with her customary mix of high energy and salty sense of humor. Yet these folks are almost a distraction alongside the presence of the guest of honor—the architect of the modern horror film, John Carpenter. The director is welcomed with an eager politeness by the fervent Kentucky faithful, and seems honestly humbled by all the attention and affection shown.

For your Fango correspondent, the most entertaining aspect is the wide array of Carpenter paraphernalia in constant flow underneath the man's felt-tip throughout the day. His signature is scrawled on homemade white Shatner masks, actual butcher knives purloined from home (Mom's gonna be pissed...), massive and antiquated laserdiscs of vintage titles (*MEMOIRS OF AN INVISIBLE MAN* is conspicuous by its absence) and a fantastic range of poster art—foreign and domestic, authentic and reprint, familiar and alternate. One lucky character has Carpenter sign a copy of the extremely limited Shepard Fairey poster design for *THEY LIVE*, issued by Mondo to commemorate the recent Alamo Drafthouse screening.

Alongside its popular convention showcase, Fright Night is still, at its core, a film festival. Its directive of featuring and supporting indie productions is strongly reasserted by fest organizer Ken Daniels during his emotional closing speech. In terms of the awards scoreboard, the locally shot *OVERTIME*, an amusing and breezy sci-fi/action comedy, looks to dominate until Darrin Dickerson's soldiers-vs.-mutants flick *D4* swoops in to claim the big plaques for Best Director and Best Film. (Fred Olen Ray's soggy *SUPERSHARK* is unsurprisingly shut out.) A self-deprecating Carpenter then reappears onstage for a brief acceptance speech after collecting a Lifetime Achievement Award, along with a customized Louisville Slugger baseball bat.

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For Fango readers unable to hit up the festivities in person, enjoy the exclusive videos below of the spirited Carpenter Q&A session that took place Saturday afternoon. Watch as Carpenter reveals his favorite film subgenre, which contemporary actress he'd love the chance to direct and the real reason for the introduction of pagan mythology into the early HALLOWEEN sequels, and more.

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