There may be few situations more pleasant than being alone on an island with Thandie Newton—or, for many people, being alone on an island with Cillian Murphy. But in the psychological thriller RETREAT (opening in limited theatrical release today), the actors star as a troubled married couple whose remote home is visited by a mysterious stranger (Jamie Bell) who makes things very much unpleasant. The film marks the directorial debut of British filmmaker Carl Tibbetts, who spoke to Fango about its creation.

Martin (Murphy) and Kate (Newton) are trying to recover and preserve their marriage after their first baby winds up stillborn, secluding themselves in a cottage on the otherwise unpopulated island off the Scottish coast. Their self-therapy is interrupted by the appearance of the wounded Jack (Bell), who claims to be fleeing an airborne virus that has decimated the mainland. He insists that they must seal themselves up in the house for their own safety—but once they have, Jack starts playing dangerous mind games with the duo. Tibbetts gave us the lowdown on RETREAT following its world premiere earlier this year at Montreal’s Fantasia film festival.

FANGORIA: Prior to RETREAT, did you have any experience in short films?

CARL TIBBETTS: No; I was a practicing fine artist for a few years, and that sort of led me to more narrative cinema. I went from installation work into film, taught myself to edit and became an editor in London for a few years. I was working on commercials and TV programs and all kinds of things, not really wanting to stay an editor—enjoying it, but wanting to be a writer/director. The thing about editing is that it’s like anything—if you want to be a really big editor, that’s all you do, but you can’t do that and also write and direct feature films. So I was working on my own screenplays, and RETREAT was the one that broke out and allowed me to make my directorial debut.

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