Written by Lee Gambin and Chris Alexander
Saturday, 07 May 2011 13:04

From only a single glance, Shelley Duvall is not someone whose visage you soon forget. With her impossibly big eyes, lanky body and drawn features, she is certainly beautiful, but hers is a unique beauty, one fueled by a joyous personality and spirit, not to mention a ferocious, questing intellect.

The Texas-born actress fell into cinema in her early 20s, nurtured by maverick filmmaker Robert Altman in such pictures as McCABE & MRS. MILLER and NASHVILLE, and even played on her offbeat physical persona as stringbean love interest Olive Oyl in Altman's charming flop POPEYE. Duvall is also an entrepreneur and an Emmy-winning producer who entranced children with her FAERIE TALE THEATRE and, later, exposed older viewers to Gothic horrors with the NIGHTMARE CLASSICS series. But of all her professional achievements, her Fangorian recognition will always be tied to her work as Wendy Torrance in Stanley Kubrick's slow-burn masterpiece of the macabre, THE SHINING.

Released in 1980 to mixed reviews, Kubrick's distillation of Stephen King's novel is now rightly recognized as one of the greatest horror films in history, due not only to its director's eye for somber nightmare logic, its batty lead turn by Jack Nicholson and its blood-freezing Wendy Carlos music, but for Duvall's strong yet vulnerable performance as Wendy, who loves her broken husband even in the face of his booze- and spook-fueled possession.

Thirty-one years later, THE SHINING serves as a benchmark of supernatural and psychological terror. Fango spoke with the semi-retired Duvall about her life in film…and especially, of her days spent cowering at the Overlook Hotel.

FANGORIA: How did you get the part of Wendy Torrance? Was it offered to you or did you have to audition?

SHELLEY DUVALL: My agent was sent the script; they were after a tall actress with "common housewife looks," if I remember correctly! The script sat on my desk for around two weeks before I got a call from one of Stanley Kubrick's people asking if I was interested. I read it one night and thought it was really good. Jack was already cast, so the chance to work with him was too good to pass up, and I really liked my character's outline; I knew it would be a challenging role.

For the whole story, pick up FANGORIA #303, on sale this month. Go here for full issue details, and here to order the issue or subscribe to the magazine!

{jcomments on}