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It’s not every day that this Fango correspondent gets the chance to chat with an actress with the stature and glittering résumé of the inimitable Ms. Karen Black. Candid, vivacious and refreshingly opinionated, the screen legend took the time to chat with FANGORIA about her turn as Ruth, the prickly mother of Ken (Kevin Corrigan) in director Jack Perez’s well-received horror/comedy SOME GUY WHO KILLS PEOPLE (out now on DVD from Anchor Bay)—among other topics.

**FANGORIA:** What attracted you to the SOME GUY WHO KILLS PEOPLE project?

**KAREN BLACK:** Well, they wanted to see me about it, and so I read [the script] and thought it was great. I thought it would be a wonderful movie, kind of a spoof on all the television shows I like to watch like CSI: MIAMI and THE CLOSER. It was lighthearted; a very nice plot and a very good part. And I liked the fact that it was a comedy. I like doing comedies, and I don’t get to do them very much. People think of me as more of a serious actress, but all of my friends think of me as a comic. And [SOME GUY] was an interesting kind of comedy as well. Instead of Ruth being your sort of dumb bimbo kind of role, she was an acidic person, sarcastic; I like to call her the “acid center of sanity in the world,” in a sense.

I saw the first screening of the movie and I got every laugh I intended to get, so I was very happy with that! I instantly liked Jack Perez with all my heart, because he's a very endearing person. Everything was just perfect: the part, the director, and the script by Ryan Levin was awfully good, just wonderful.

**FANG:** How was working with your co-star Kevin Corrigan?

**BLACK:** I love Kevin. I didn't know him that well, but he was absolutely amazing playing my son. He was so funny, really hilarious. When I was off-camera, he'd shuffle across, left to right, and I'd just start laughing. The way he played that part was great. It was like his reflexes and perceptions were off, and I think that as his mother, just seeing him move toward more self-destruction, and so often, got slightly boring for me.

**FANG:** SOME GUY WHO KILLS PEOPLE was an independent production. Do you enjoy working on smaller-scale movies?

**BLACK:** I really do, I love it. It's so much closer to my heart than studio films. Studio films are dangerous. I had a horrible experience one time…I guess two, because Menahem Golan's [producer of Tobe Hooper's INVADERS FROM MARS remake, in which Black starred] would be a studio kind of film. In general, with independent features, I've had a lot of what you might call "wins" doing these movies. EASY RIDER, FIVE EASY PIECES and this one. I did one that seemed wonderful to me called MARIA MY LOVE the year before last; it went to Tribeca, and now it's on DVD.

I just take a lot of chances. It reminds me of something which is a very peculiar metaphor, but it's real to me. It's about when you were young, and I was young and I think when a lot of kids were young…they make up stories. Kids come over to the house, and you go in the basement, and I put on my mother's dress that I got out of her closet, and I'm the queen and somebody else is the prince…people just make up stories. When my kids were growing up, we were always improvising. I just love all of that—improvisation and creating on the spot. I could just hang out with kids forever.

So to me, when I've done studio films, there's been a whole lot more of…heavy agreements. Now, I'm not saying I'm always right, I'm only saying I had the experiences I had. And it was

like, "If you don't want to wear that dress, you're a bad person." But on an independent feature, you say, "OK, let's try the purple one." They don't mind, you know what I mean? [On studio pictures] it's like, everybody's worried they're going to lose their jobs or get fired. Everyone's always concerned, and it's all serious. Oh my God, not that I don't come incredibly prepared and do the best job I can think of doing, but it just isn't…fun.

I'd say HOUSE OF 1000 CORPSES was fun, even though it was sort of a studio picture. But DAY OF THE LOCUST was pure hell; it was like having died and gone to hell, and I couldn't get out. It was a horror. And when I did INVADERS FROM MARS with the Menahem Golan company, ugh, it was awful. Although I love Menahem, he's really a great guy. AIRPORT was fine, and the Hitchcock film [FAMILY PLOT], but you know, these were great directors. Jack [Smight] and Hitchcock, they were just fun to be around, they were chums. Like Jack Perez; he's like a chum, you know? The director really has to be a chum or you're going to be miserable. There was one independent feature I did that was hell, and that was the one with Kris Kristofferson [1972's CISCO PIKE]. That was difficult because it was a very strange director [B.L. Norton], and everyone was miserable. [The cast] were all miserable, because we had a director who couldn't be a chum, couldn't be a friend, and didn't understand that.

**FANG:** You mentioned how much you enjoy improvisation. Did you get the opportunity to improv much on SOME GUY WHO KILLS PEOPLE?

**BLACK:** No. I did a lot of improvisation with MARIA MY LOVE. What [director Jasmine McGlade] did was eschew the idea of actors memorizing like robots; she didn't like it. She said, "Get the idea in mind, and then say it your way." I do love improvisation, and I think I'm real good at it. A movie I did once called CAN SHE BAKE A CHERRY PIE? was all improv. There were only two lines in that movie that were given to me, the rest I completely improvised. You are fulfilling an endeavor to write a movie as you improvise it, and it is the most exhausting feat in the world. It is *exhausting*… I remember I couldn't wake up the morning after. You have to be a good writer to improvise [*laughs*]. But in terms of [SOME GUY], I would say no, I never really made up a line. However, the feel of the set and the feel from the other actors was improvisational. The sensibility was like that. You had the idea that anything could happen, and there was a freedom of motion and emotion.

**FANG:** Do you have anything upcoming that you'd like our readers to know about?

**BLACK:** I'm probably going to do a horror movie with Michael Oblowitz, this year or next. Look

him up, he’s got a great way of doing thrillers. Even though I say I don’t want to do horror movies, some huge, multimillion-dollar company said to Michael, “We think we want to do a horror movie with Karen Black.” Michael Oblowitz is a great director of thrillers, so this should be a great movie!

*Look for lots more from Black on her scream career in a future issue of FANGORIA!*