



Top Takes...

Inland Empire 2006
Darkened Room 2002
Rabbits 2002
***Mulholland Dr.* 2001** ☆
The Straight Story 1999
Lost Highway 1997
Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me 1992
Wild at Heart 1990
***Blue Velvet* 1986** ☆
Dune 1984
***The Elephant Man* 1980** ☆
Eraserhead 1977
The Grandmother 1970
Six Figures Getting Sick 1966

RIGHT: "I am not an animal! I am a human being! I . . . am . . . a man!" (*The Elephant Man*)

DAVID LYNCH

Born: David Keith Lynch, January 20, 1946 (Missoula, Montana, U.S.).

Directing style: Innovative maker of enigmatic and unsettling dramas that make viewers feel like they are stepping into a surreal, circular nightmare; painterly cinematography; perplexing Borgesian narratives; vibrant color.

If high hair is an indication of genius, then David Lynch's plumage outclasses that of his contemporaries—steeper than Jim Jarmusch and wilder than David Cronenberg. The same goes for his oeuvre. With their steep and wild puzzle narratives, Lynch's films are to be experienced instead of explained—never good with words, he is more of a preverbal philosopher than an evangelist, questioning instead of answering.

A true obsessive, it took Lynch six years to complete his first feature. Surreal, romantic, and harsh, in raw black and white with a subterranean industrial noise soundtrack, *Eraserhead* (1977) is inimitable and profoundly unsettling. No wonder it became an immediate midnight cult classic. The wide acclaim of the similarly downbeat but fact-based biopic *The Elephant Man* (1980), still in black and white but more lush, seemed to pave the way for large-scale Hollywood-friendly projects; instead the science-fiction epic *Dune* (1984) failed to satisfy.

Blue Velvet (1986) tells of a teenager's exploration of abuse, sexual decadence, and drug-crazed violence underneath the surface of a white suburban paradise, and was a ruthless antidote to sweet 1950s coming-of-age dramas. Road movie



and Elvis Presley tribute *Wild at Heart* (1990), for which Lynch received the Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival, completed his fixation with small-town America.

Increasingly unconcerned with narrative logic, and shifting from realism to gory violence and surreal hallucination within the frame of a few scenes, *Lost Highway* (1997) is more feverish than before; paranoid and noir, it is Lynch's version of free jazz. Helped by an incredibly cool soundtrack provided by David Bowie and Trent Reznor, *Lost Highway* convinced audiences to take the required large leap of faith into Lynch's unfathomable universe. The very similar *Mulholland Dr.* (2001) continued that appeal, but then the momentum dropped slightly and Lynch branched out into the Internet, animation, and digital video. The intensely self-reflexive *Inland Empire* (2006), however—in which actors' lives begin to mirror those of the characters they play—was as hair-raising and Lynchian as ever. **EM**

ABOVE: Nothing is as it seems in the Hollywood dream of *Mulholland Dr.*

Weird on Top

Away from the bright lights of Hollywood, David Lynch created the unexpectedly successful TV phenomenon *Twin Peaks* (1990–1991). The series soon acquired a cult following and gave rise to various tie-in enterprises such as *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* written by Lynch's daughter. The drama extended Lynch's small-town interest—this time unearthing the underground secrets and shenanigans of a windswept lumber town under Federal Bureau of Investigation examination. The second series lost viewers rapidly, however, and the movie *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* (1992) was a flop.