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NEW YORK

# The Quirky Allure Of



DEAD HOMECOMING QUEEN  
LAURA PALMER (SHERYL LEE)





# TWIN PEAKS

WELCOME  
TWIN PEAKS  
Population 11,704

## By John Leonard

*I saw a lot of strange things happen in the woods, and it just seemed to me that people only told you 10 percent of what they knew and it was up to you to discover the other 90 percent.*

—David Lynch on his childhood in the Northwest.

*It's like sex and it takes time.*—David Lynch on *Twin Peaks*.

*When you can talk about it, you're not using cinema.*

—David Lynch.

AT 10:01 P.M. THURSDAY, APRIL 19, THE TELEPHONE started like a tribal drum. Everybody in the continental United States—including my children, my editors, my enemies—wanted to know about the dwarf. What did the dwarf mean? Why was he talking backwards?

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, in Madison, Wisconsin, and in Berkeley, California, there are *Twin Peaks*—watching parties every Thursday night, after which . . . Deconstruction. About the dwarf: Like, wow. Buñuel was mentioned, and Cocteau, and Fellini.

Jane O'Reilly shouldn't have been watching television at all. The author of *The Girl I Left Behind* should have been finishing

her book on radical nuns. After the dwarf, she went to Central Park, where the dog-walkers were extremely upset about the way parents treat their children in the Pacific Northwest, as if *Twin Peaks* were their own hometown, as if something strange were always happening to them in the woods. O'Reilly herself wants Leo, the wife-beating, coke-dealing, ponytailed trucker, dead.

Barbara Ehrenreich had long ago finished her book *Fear of Falling*, published by Pantheon before the Purge. Nevertheless, she rushed home for Thursday night's episode: "I left my exercise class after I'd only done one leg; I risked asymmetry." She hasn't cared about any program since *St. Elsewhere*, for which she never abandoned an exercise class. She found Agent Cooper's dream of the red dwarf "deeply puzzling." She's sure the brothel, One-Eyed Jacks, is very important.

Friday morning, after the brothel and the dwarf, in the bowels of the CBS Broadcast Center on West 57th Street, there was a gathering of the Lynched. A graphic artist has programmed and imaged a "tree" of *Twin Peaks* relation-

CREATOR DAVID LYNCH.

Russel Wong/Outline





SHERIFF HARRY S. TRUMAN  
(MICHAEL ONTKEAN) AND FBI  
AGENT DALE COOPER (KYLE  
MACLACHLAN).



ships: Harry and Jocelyn; Benjamin and Catherine; Ed, Norma, and Nadine; James, Laura, and Donna; Bobby and Laura and Shelly; Dr. Jacoby and the Log Lady. In *Twin Peaks*, every Other is Significant. (Wilfrid Sheed can't even watch; he's too linear: "I was blinded by the number of people who go to bed together.")

But how do you compute a singing dwarf? And this was before anybody at CBS knew about Laura's cousin Madeleine. And why aren't people at CBS gathering on Friday mornings to talk about Valerie Bertinelli?

Friday noon, Elizabeth Pochoda, book editor of *Entertainment Weekly*, and Andrew Kopkind, the radical journalist, met for lunch. Instead of Lithuania or Earth Day, they discussed *Twin Peaks*. Pochoda can't explain the dwarf and doesn't want to. "It's a warm bath," she says. "I'm on an intellectual and moral vacation." Kopkind's indignant at the suggestion that Leo killed Laura: "Leo's a redder herring than Lenin."

Obviously, Lynch, who used to be a "cult director," now has a cult that runs to the tens of millions and a 21 share (28 in New York). Against *Cheers*. Plus-17 is a hit.

*We told them we were going to give them a two-hour moody, dark soap-opera murder mystery set in a fictional town in the Northwest, with an ensemble cast and an edge. And very early on, after we delivered the pilot, they said that we'd given them exactly what we said we were going to give them. And that what we'd done was so foreign to their experience that they couldn't presume to tell us how to do it any better or any different. Basically, they said, "Guys, you go make the series, and we'll be real anxious to see what it looks like."*

—Mark Frost, the collaborator.



AT LAURA PALMER'S FUNERAL.

**B**Y NOW YOU KNOW, UNLESS YOU'VE BEEN LIVING IN LITHUANIA, that David Lynch, the director of *Eraserhead* (1978), *The Elephant Man* (1980), *Dune* (1984), and *Blue Velvet* (1986), got together with Mark Frost, who had been the story editor of *Hill Street Blues* for three years, to produce a prime-time surreal serial about the corruptions of sex, drugs, politics, and maybe even psychiatry in an all-American lumber town near the Canadian border. They wrote the pilot in 9 days and shot it in 23, on time and under budget (about \$4 million), with Lynch directing. The rest is hysteria.

## Michael Ontkean calls it

WHEN 'BLUE VELVET' MEETS 'HILL STREET BLUES' (the New York Times). "The first great drama series of the '90s" (the Detroit Free Press). "As strange and unsettling a project as any in the medium's history" (People). "The first TV masterpiece of the '90s . . . Dallas with an IQ, Dynasty without all that lousy acting" (the Dallas Morning News). "Like nothing you've seen in prime time—or on God's earth" (Time). "Just this side of a godsend. . . . A captivating blend of the existential and the pulpy, the surreal and the neo-real, the grim and the farcical. . . . new age music for the eyes" (the Washington Post). "What you might find if you dragged the bottom of Lake Wobegon" (Connoisseur).

This is what happens to television critics when they look at something new, and to newspapers and magazines desperate to be with-it. There's an interesting new book at least three or four times each month, and so book reviewers learn to hoard their adjectives and their ecstasies. Television, that talking furniture we look to as a cure for loneliness, is not expected to surprise. The odd is downright thrilling. Not to embrace it is to perceive yourself as finished, dead to the New, terminal in the enthusiasms. Besides, it's a chance, for once, to be serious, after Richard Chamberlain and Jacqueline Bisset. And never mind that we used to be able to count on magazines like Time as early-warn-



ing-signal systems, on the lookout for a menacing avant-garde and anything else that might alarm the bourgeoisie. The media today are not to be distinguished from the engines of publicity at the corporations whose business is image-making; counterfeit myth.

I'm guilty, too. In these pages, I described the pilot as "*Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman* written by Louis-Ferdinand Céline. . . . Or *Peyton Place* meets *Naked Lunch*. . . ." What could I have been thinking of? But can I blame me when one of the actors, Michael Ontkean, himself describes *Twin Peaks* as "a Kabuki-style *Peyton Place* on peyote buttons"?

Lynch is a lot more realistic: "I still don't see what the great difference is," he told *Rolling Stone*. "To me, it's a regular television show." And his partner, Frost, though surprised and pleased by the response of the working press to this black soap, was also worried. On the phone the weekend after the singing dwarf, he said, "The pace of the culture is accelerating all the time in this country. Trends and fads. Too much attention is dangerous. Maybe they'll digest us too quickly, spit us out."

*Diane, I'm holding in my hand a small box of chocolate bunnies.*—FBI agent Dale Cooper, to his micro-cassette recorder.

*Who's the lady with the log?*

*We call her the Log Lady.*—Exchange between FBI agent Cooper and *Twin Peaks* sheriff Harry S. Truman.

*I've only been in Twin Peaks a short time, but I have seen decency, honor, and dignity. Life has meaning here.*

*Sounds like you've been snacking some of the local mushrooms.*—Exchange between Cooper and a Joe Friday FBI forensics chief.

*Do you believe in a soul?*

*Several.*—Cooper and deputy Hawk, an Indian.

*There's a sort of evil out there . . . strange in the woods . . . a darkness, a presence.*—Truman to Cooper, before a meeting of the Bookhouse Boys.

*The thing is about secrets.*—David Lynch.

**"Maybe people will digest us too quickly, spit us out," says Mark Frost.**

type biker who thought he was in love with Laura but is probably really in love with her

best girlfriend, Donna Hayward (Lara Flynn Boyle), a doctor's daughter who knows more than she's saying about Laura's secret life, which turns out to involve porn magazines, coke addiction, and too much cash in a safety-deposit box. And, of course, Leo, who deals dope and likes to play with an ax.

And maybe even Ben Horne (Richard Beymer), lodge owner and land grabber, in mysterious cahoots with Catherine Martell (Piper Laurie), who wants to sell the sawmill out from under Jocelyn Packard (Joan Chen), her brother's Asian widow, who's secretly in love with Sheriff Truman. Or Dr. Jacoby (Russ Tamblyn), the creepy town psychiatrist who wears cotton swabbing in his ears and obscene ties around his neck.

But probably not Laura's parents (Ray Wise and Grace Zabriskie), even though they cry too much. Nor Ed Hurley (Everett McGill), uncle to James, because he's a member of the Bookhouse Boys and works undercover for the cops, even though he's in adulterous love with Norma Jennings (Peggy Lipton), who runs the local diner while her husband's in prison for manslaughter, which could make Ed's crazy wife, Nadine (Wendy Robie), with her eye patch and her drapes, a suspect. And probably not Pete Martell (Jack Nance), Catherine's husband, who lets Jocelyn know about the double-entry bookkeeping at the sawmill, mainly because Jack Nance has shown up in almost every David Lynch movie so far. And certainly not Dr. William Hayward (Warren Frost), Donna's father, because Warren Frost in real life is Mark Frost's father. I've left out Audrey Horne (Shirley Fenn), Ben's daughter, a teen vamp who makes a play for Agent Cooper after the Norwegians leave town and about whom director Lynch has a saddle-shoe fetish. I wouldn't put anything past Ben's brother Jerry (David Patrick Kelly), who is as dirty-minded about the Brie as he is at One-Eyed Jacks, where Laura may or may not have been employed when she



DR. JACOBY (RUSS TAMBLYN).

**"a Kabuki-style Peyton Place on peyote buttons."**

**T**HE BODY OF SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD HIGH-SCHOOL HOME-coming queen Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) washes ashore, in a plastic bag, near the *Twin Peaks* sawmill. Before Sheriff Truman (Ontkean) can even begin to investigate, another victim of torture and rape is discovered. The FBI, in the person of Agent Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan), enters and runs the case. Everybody's suspect: Laura's boyfriend Bobby Briggs (Dana Ashbrook), who is a football quarterback, who bays at the moon, and who is the part-time lover of Shelly Johnson (Mädchen Amick), a waitress at the local diner who's married to the ponytailed trucker Leo (Eric Da Re), who beats her up with a bar of soap wrapped in a sock and makes her wash his bloody shirt. And James Hurley (James Marshall), a sensitive James Dean—

wasn't working the perfume counter. And I don't know about the Log Lady.

*I don't know why people expect art to make sense. They accept the fact that life doesn't make sense.*—David Lynch.

#### ONE-EYED JACKS BORDELLO.



Of course, so would a synopsis of the fall of the House of Atreus also sound ridiculous. And I have reason to believe that the letter "R," dug out by tweezers from under a fingernail on Laura Palmer's corpse, will prove to be a serial killer's way of spelling out his name, victim by victim, in spite of all the "J"s at which Agent Cooper threw stones in his reenactment of a Tibetan deductive technique involving major-league-baseball measurements and a broken bottle.

Anyway, what this synopsis



leaves out is everything we associate with artifacts of Lynch—the sinister fluidity, the absurd detail, the shocking relief, the elegant gesture, the deadpan jokes, the painterly pointillism, the bad puns, the erotic violence, the lingering close-up camera, the rampaging of non sequiturs, the underlining and italicizing of emotions, the warping of the light, the appetite for all that's grotesque and quirky, a sense of unconscious dreaming . . . moon thoughts . . . sadness . . . demonic possession. (Marshall Berman, author of *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* and the only intellectual I know who admits to enjoying television almost as much as he enjoys Marx, Freud, and the Modernist gangbusters, likes the way *Twin Peaks* looks through doors into rooms with doors into still more hidden rooms, “the way the shots convey an endless depth. . . . It's a kind of *soft lab-*

## MacLachlan,



*yrinth.*”) Why does the deputy sheriff cry at the sight of blood? What about those traffic lights, that ceiling fan, the stag's head in the bank? “Let me stop you in the hallway,” says Cooper to Truman as he stops him in the hallway.

What any synopsis also leaves out is Angelo Badalamenti's compositions on the synthesizer, which seem sometimes to clue us in on a shift from musical beds back to the murder investigation, and at other times to impersonate the wind in the Douglas firs and the horns in the mountain fog, and just as often, deliberately, to subvert the emotions on the screen, blowing our nose like a whistle, playing our sinew like a harp.

Not to mention the acting, for which Lynch seems to want to give casting director Johanna Ray all the credit. Michael Ontkean, from *The Rookies*; Peggy Lipton, from *The Mod Squad*; Piper Laurie, from *Carrie*; Lara Flynn Boyle, from *The Preppie Murder*; Richard Beymer and Russ Tamblyn, from *West Side Story*. “David,” says Wendy Robie (one-eyed Nadine), “loves broken beauty. He loves to see something—or somebody—that's beautiful, and then broken in some way, who still goes on.” MacLachlan, of course, is his alter ego, the boy who knows too much, living—to quote Pauline Kael, as everybody has—“in an indefinite mythic present that feels like the past.” As the mind-reading FBI agent who loves cherry pies, Douglas firs, and snowshoe rabbits, who's even thinking of buying property in Twin Peaks, he might as well be on *Dune*. He seems to be secretly listening to radio waves from the zodiac, through the fillings in his teeth. He's a wonder, a puzzlement, a Boy Scout from Sirius the Dog Star.

Lynch, Badalamenti, and MacLachlan, to be sure, didn't do all this by themselves. Lynch, in fact, directed only the pilot and the second (singing dwarf) episode of the series. The first and disappointingly conventional episode was directed by Duwayne Dunham, a veteran of Lukasfilm and the editor on *Blue Velvet*. The third and much improved although not-so-weird episode, which ran last Thursday, was directed by Tina Rathborne (*Zelly and Me*). Subsequent episodes are in the hands and eyes of Tim Hunter (*River's Edge*), Lesli Gladder (*Amazing Stories*), Caleb Deschanel (*The Escape Artist*, *Crusoe*), and co-conspirator Frost, who's done most of the actual writing.

According to Lynch, Frost is his reality check. “We have to

### BOBBY BRIGGS BARKS.



please a wider audience,” said Lynch on the phone the weekend after the dwarf. “Left to my own devices, I'd do things. . . .” Elsewhere he's explained, “[Mark] took the edge off and made me more presentable, helped me stay on the highway.”

*The bags had a big zipper, and they'd open the zipper and*

*shoot water into the bags with big hoses. With the zipper open and the bags sagging on the pegs, it looked like these big smiles. I called them the smiling bags of death.*—Lynch on his student days in Philadelphia, kitty-corner from the body bags in the morgue.

**A**BOUT LYNCH, WE KNOW THAT HE WAS BORN 44 YEARS AGO in Missoula, Montana; grew up all over the Northwest, where his father was a research scientist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture; hated high school in Alexandria, Virginia; studied art, first at the Boston Museum School and later (after ten days in Austria looking for the expressionist Oskar Kokoschka) at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, which is where he fashioned his first film, a one-minute loop of six heads throwing up

## David Lynch's alter ego,

and bursting into flames; a second short attracted the attention of the American Film Institute, under whose auspices at the AFI Greystone Mansion in Beverly Hills—where he camped out after leaving his first wife and first child—he completed *Eraserhead*, about a zombie, the zombie's spastic girlfriend, and their mutant child. It's considered autobiographical.

He was working for Mel Brooks—who calls him “Jimmy Stewart from Mars”—as a writer when Brooks, after a screening of *Eraserhead*, made him director of *The Elephant Man*. It would be the last time Hollywood loved him. *Dune*, the \$40-million bomb that might not have been much better, only longer, if Dino De Laurentiis hadn't butchered it, sent him back to Bob's Big Boy. After the sandworms, a severed ear. He had total control over the voyeurism, the castration anxiety, and the sado-masochism in *Blue Velvet*, which is where, after another wife and another child, he met his bi-coastal inamorata, Isabella Rossellini, whose body is tortured in that movie by his camera and who has told the *Times* that Lynch is “seraphic, blissed. Most people have strange thoughts, but they rationalize them. David doesn't translate his images logically, so they remain raw, emotional. Whenever I ask him where his ideas come from, he says it's like fishing. He never knows what he's going to catch.”

According to his daughter Jennifer, “He loves Reagan. David loves America. He's got a very strong go-get-'em attitude when it comes to America's enemies.”

According to *Newsweek*: “He's fascinated by human organs: when one of his producers underwent a hysterectomy, he made her promise to send him her uterus.”

Since *Blue Velvet*, he's been busy—with a Julee Cruise album, a BAM theater piece, and his weekly cartoon, *The Angriest Dog in the World*—but nothing's shown up till now anywhere on any screen. Mark Frost was supposed to help.

*I would sit at the keyboard and David would sit in a comfy chair and we would go back and forth. You throw your minds up toward the ceiling and they meet somewhere near the light fixtures. The script becomes written by a third party. The author is someone called Lynch-Frost. I can only describe it as a kind of Vulcan mind meld.*—Mark Frost.

**B**ORN 36 YEARS AGO IN NEW YORK, RAISED IN MINNEAPOLIS and Los Angeles by a family of actors, Frost wrote his first play, for the Guthrie Theatre, at fifteen and was a veteran of network television before he was old enough to drink. Steven Bochco plucked him off the campus of Carnegie Tech after his junior year to write episodes of *Sunshine* and *The Six Million Dollar Man*. From California he returned to Minneapolis, taking “a six-year vow of poverty,” as a literary associate at the Guthrie and playwright-in-residence at the Playwrights' Center, after which it was documentaries for public television till Bochco sang his siren song again. For three years on *Hill Street Blues*, Frost served as writer, story editor, and executive story editor. Since *Hill*





JOCELYN PACKARD (JOAN CHEN).



SHERIFF TRUMAN.



AGENT COOPER.

seems to be secretly listening to radio waves from the



CATHERINE MARTELL (PIPER LAURIE).

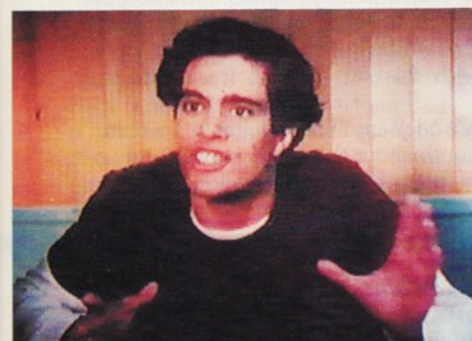


NORMA JENNINGS (PEGGY LIPTON).



DONNA HAYWARD (LARA FLYNN BOYLE).

zodiac, through fillings in his teeth. He's a wonder,



BOBBY BRIGGS (DANA ASHBROOK).

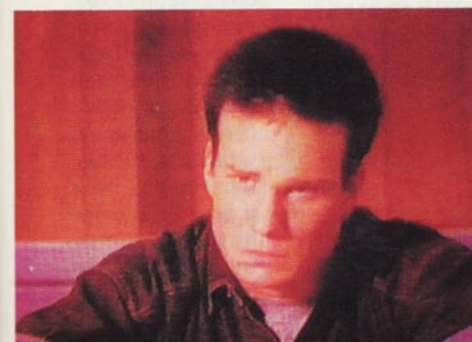


NADINE AND ED HURLEY (WENDY ROBIE AND EVERETT MCGILL).



AUDREY HORNE (SHERILYN FENN).

a puzzlement, a Boy Scout from Sirius the Dog Star.



JAMES HURLEY (JAMES MARSHALL).



SHELLY JOHNSON (MÄDCHEN AMICK).



LELAND PALMER (RAY WISE).





CONFRONTATION WITH AUDREY.

## "When does *Twin Peaks* turn into *Two Breasts*?" asks Susan Rice.

ask Lynch and Frost how they got away with the Brie business in the episode of the singing dwarf and the Tibetan stone-throw.

Street, he has written the script for *The Believers*, an overwrought but interesting

voodoo-cult thriller set on the streets of New York.

If *Twin Peaks* is picked up as a series in the fall—if, that is, the share sticks at 21 the rest of this spring and the folks at ABC, who don't seem to appreciate *China Beach*, are feeling guilty enough to provide alternative quality programming—Frost will go back to his executive-producer responsibilities, which he says are "backbreaking."

On the other hand, these guys need a hit. In the four years since Lynch and Frost teamed up, a script on the strange death of Marilyn Monroe, called *Goddess*, couldn't get backing; their Steve Martin–Martin Short movie, *One Saliva Bubble*, was canceled because of the Dino De Laurentiis bankruptcy; and NBC turned down their idea for the pilot of *The Lamurians*, about a bunch of Earth detectives chasing after alien infiltrators. It really wasn't a question of whether Lynch could learn to live with commercials; nobody was ready to let him try.

*There are two things that continue to trouble me, and I'm speaking now not only as an agent of the bureau but also as a human being. What really went on between Marilyn Monroe and the Kennedys, and who really pulled the trigger on JFK.*  
—Agent Cooper to Diane.

**T**win Peaks IS FULL OF INSIDE JOKES LIKE THE ONE ABOVE making fun of a Lynch-Frost failure. The bird that shows up at the start of several episodes is a play on the robin at the end of *Blue Velvet*. The title of the show, we're told by the *Times*, is "a male joke about women's breasts. The Western landscape does, after all, prominently feature the Grand Tetons." The flickering lights in the morgue were an accident that Lynch liked so much, he wrote it into the script. So, according to *Rolling Stone*, was the misunderstanding between Agent Cooper and the

Unless the ears in my family were mistaken, when Ben was introduced by the despicable Jerry to Brie on a baguette, straight from Paris, he was volubly reminded of, ah, the taste of women—you know, tee-hee—in their fraternal youth. Just like Brie. Much giggle-wink. On this point, Lynch was evasive. Frost explained that Bochco on *Hill Street* had been a master at walking the Broadcast Standards line: "You go so fast, and it helps if the guys have their mouths full when they're talking."

About the differences between working with Bochco and working with Lynch, Frost is diplomatic: "One's an earthling; the other's a Martian."

About that dwarf: In the two-hour version of *Twin Peaks* available on videocassette in places like Mexico and Bulgaria, on which the killer is identified in the last eighteen minutes (which have become as notorious in the past month as the missing eighteen minutes of Richard Nixon's White House tapes, and maybe not by accident), the dwarf does not appear to Agent Cooper in a dream. We flash, instead, 25 years into a future, where everything's explained, including the bearded stranger and the blood-scrawled message FIRE—WALK WITH ME. I didn't see this tape, and I don't want to.

*I'd like to live in a country where Twin Peaks would be a hit, but I think they've got a tough road ahead—*Brandon Tartikoff, NBC.

**A** TOUGH ROAD? DOESN'T BRANDON WISH, CONSIDERING his own network's troubles. After the smashing debut of the pilot, with a 33 share on a Sunday night, the first Thursday episode did dip to 27, and the second to 21, losing a portion of those women over 35 who usually watch prime-time soaps, perhaps because the first episode ended with a long fade-out on a wife-beating, leading us to imagine that Shelly would be the next victim. Women are impatient with this sort of sick tease, and they should be.

As I type, last Thursday's Nielsens aren't available. I wouldn't be surprised if word of mouth about the dwarf urged them up a bit. Maybe not, but *Twin Peaks* is still doing a lot better than

## Lynch seems to have an unlimited, unedited access:

morgue attendant who was told to leave the room. The attendant, an amateur actor who misheard what MacLachlan said, blurted his own name instead of leaving, and David Lynch laughed his auteur laugh.

From *Soap Opera Weekly*, I learn that the singer in the roadhouse is the Julie Cruise for whom Lynch and Badalamenti produced an album. The dead Laura was named for Gene Tierney's character in the 1944 movie of the same name, and of course this brand-new Laura will also have a double. The countertop jukebox in Norma's diner is supposed to remind us of a William Shatner episode of *The Twilight Zone*. Stephen Saban in *Details* informs us that the art on the walls of Dr. Jacoby's office is actually by Russ Tamblyn. The *Twin Peaks* sheriff is called Harry Truman because that was the name of the codger who vanished on Mount Saint Helens.

I don't know why there's a fish in the coffee, or the reason for Nadine's eye patch, or the symbolic meaning of the Log Lady, though Lynch is said to be thinking of creating a series for her alone called *Branch of Knowledge*. I did

*The Young Riders*—hunks on horseback—did for ABC in the same time slot. Can it sustain itself? Well, as, exactly, what?

A mystery-soap can go anywhere. This Thursday, the long-haired Indian deputy Hawk (Michael Horse) tracks down the one-armed man, and the teeny-boppers start their own investigation of the murder, and Norma's husband gets out of jail. Entire series have been spun out of less. Unless Agent Cooper himself is the killer (would Lynch do that to his favorite "devi-

BEN HORNE (RICHARD BEYMER).



ous" actor?) or the whole town turns out to be a delirious dream (shades of *Dallas*), American Gothic's a bottomless pit. And if Cooper's really buying property in *Twin Peaks*, maybe he'll finally get it on with Audrey and her saddle shoes.





COOPER'S DREAM, WITH THE SINGING DWARF (MICHAEL J. ANDERSON) AND A LAURA PALMER LOOK-ALIKE.

(Marshall Berman worries about Cooper's always going to bed alone. No wonder he dreams about dwarfs. Berman also wonders about the rape-torture victim who disappeared into the intensive-care unit in the pilot and hasn't been heard from since. Was this just Lynch indulging his kink for wounded women?)

More to the point is how much time Lynch will have in the fall. With all the *Twin Peaks* publicity, his career has taken off again. He has a new movie, *Wild at Heart*—the Return of Laura Dern—and he's even made a television commercial for Yves Saint Laurent's Opium perfume.

Walter Clemons, *Newsweek's* book critic emeritus, worries about Lynch's involvement: "I was as excited by the first episode as I was deeply disappointed by the second, which David

## to his own unconscious.

Lynch didn't direct. When he came back for the third I was interested again, but the spell has been broken and I'm afraid they're losing me."

Likewise Susan Rice, one of the best TV scriptwriters in the business, who's not even all that thrilled about an invasion of auteurs into prime time: "Not all directors have a vision. For every Martin Scorsese, there're 100 John Landises. Lynch does something for TV, and you'd think it's Earth Day. But he had 23 days to shoot the pilot. That's a long time, a big deal for a television movie. It's leisurely and quirky, and everybody thinks it's the greatest thing since chocolate-chip cookies, but when does *Twin Peaks* turn into *Two Breasts*? That's what usually happens out here."

Lynch, who seems to have an unlimited and unedited access to his own unconscious, lets us think we recognize ourselves; we're seeing our favorite movies, reading our favorite books, standing in front of our favorite paintings. Linda Wolfe, author of *Wasted*, wanted *Winesburg, Ohio*, and for a while she had it. Jane O'Reilly was looking for Don DeLillo—"the theology of secrets" elaborated in *Libra*—just as her son Jan Fisher wanted *L'Avventura*. Marshall Berman was watching for F. E. Church and the Hudson River School; he's a bit weary now of so many waterfalls.

And me? for a while I wanted agent Cooper to be Wittgenstein, arriving in Cambridge from Vienna, the capital of alienation, with

his clarinet (and his despair) in an old sock; the philosopher of the impasse and the cul-de-sac, afraid of open spaces; the poet and prophet of the Unsayable: "Whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent." This, of course, is ridiculous. By the time of the dwarf, I was hoping instead for something like Tom Pynchon among the Thanatoids in *Vineland*. This is almost as silly.

Wittgenstein had a philosophy, and Pynchon has some politics. Lynch is merely moody, more of a Warhol. Though beautiful to

look at, there isn't much of anything inside his soft labyrinth except an unimportant secret. Unlike, say, *The Prisoner*, with Patrick McGeehan, or *The Edge of Darkness*, the brilliant British eco-thriller that Channel 13 refuses to run, or *The Singing Detective*, which Lynch says he's never seen, *Twin*



*Peaks* has nothing at all in its pretty little head except the desire to please. In this, and only in this, it resembles almost everything else on television. But beautiful is better. Must we, like the Deconstructionists, moisten everything with meaning?

Through the miracle of modern communications technology, these last words: When I called the Navaskys, Victor, the editor of *The Nation*, was in Asia. His wife, Annie, a financial consultant, left this message on my answering machine:

"When I made three friends and my mother all stay home to watch the first *Twin Peaks* because of your review, I was astonished to have each one call after a different commercial to tell me I had lost all credibility, because the fact is this program has everything I ever hoped for in television. The story of the beautiful homecoming queen with 'something else going on' is irresistible to women who were never cheerleaders. The strange comic asides are deliciously mysterious. Forget the doughnuts! Why is that kid boogying into class in the first episode? But the best part is just listening to the music, watching the Douglas firs, and feeling your skin prickle. Love, Annie."

Amen.