



BOWIE: STARMAN AND THE SILVER SCREEN

Twin Peaks

Fire Walk with Me

Originally met with universal derision, almost 30 years on *Fire Walk with Me* has had an exceptional reversal of fortune: the feature-length follow-up to the hit TV series is now heralded as a masterpiece in horror. It features a stunning performance from Sheryl Lee, a short but impactful appearance from Bowie as Agent Jeffries and, of course, Angelo Badalamenti's score, which undulates with disquiet. *Fire Walk with Me* is a terrifying fever-dream that lives long in the memory.

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Given that *Twin Peaks*, the television series, represents a bizarre fusion of the values of prime-time soap-mystery with the sado-delirium of David Lynch's evolving vision, it is at once surprising and horrifyingly inevitable that this feature spin-off should pare away all the elements that made the show bearable and cultishly appealing, coming up with what may well be the director's cruellest film since *Eraserhead*. Refusing to satisfy the series' fans' wish to know what happens next by not picking up from the show's cliffhanger ending – which is referred to obliquely by the momentary appearance of the inexplicable Annie, who refers to a future when Bob has (temporarily?) prevailed over Agent Cooper – the film instead returns to the backstory of Laura Palmer.

Furthermore, in pruning the catch-phrases, comic sub-plots, big-business soap, eccentric flourishes, playful eroticism, and detective story elements, not to mention many popular characters/actors from the original series, the film deliberately chooses to alienate a large segment of the audience who found the show likeable – as witness the extremely hostile reaction to its screening at Cannes – and to concentrate on a genuinely disturbing, genuinely frightening descent into Hell. Indeed, Lynch opens with a prologue designed to disorient the viewer familiar with the show by dramatising the Teresa Banks case as a capsule re-run (pre-run?) of the whole plot – another evocative theme tune, another dead girl, another FBI agent, another sheriff, another diner, another forensics man, another clutch of eccentrics.

The difference is that this presents a joyless, glum and senile community bereft of the pretty girls, natural beauty, ensemble acting camaraderie and skewed charm which make up much of the appeal of *Twin Peaks*. The only familiar element is Lynch himself, cast in the role of the hard-of-hearing Cole, who introduces Agent Desmond to his dancing mime cousin. Her peculiar act delivers a complex message which Desmond then decodes for his sidekick, Kiefer Sutherland, in a parody both of the process of intuitive deduction from minimal clues upon which Cooper's investigations depend, and of the way Lynch's own works tend to be combed for multi-level symbols and signifiers that, in the end, may be no more than atmospheric set-dressing, multiple MacGuffins.

Although the first half of the series was mainly concerned with raking over the ashes of the past shown here, *Twin Peaks*, the television show, abjured

almost completely the use of flashbacks, preferring to present possible versions of the past as various characters were drawn down the same path as Laura Palmer. The most powerful moment, in a Lynch-directed episode, was Leland/Bob's murder of Laura's lookalike cousin, named Madeleine Ferguson in a nod/reference/homage to *Vertigo*, and also played by Sheryl Lee. This renders redundant in narrative terms anything in the current film, an aspect made even more bizarre by the inevitable process of time, whereby all the actors who return from the show are now older, even though the film takes place before everything we have seen. The only replacement cast member – Moira Kelly taking over from Lara Flynn Boyle – is actually more convincing as a younger version of her character than any of the others, who are taking up not from where they left off but from a point prior to where they started in the first place.

The conventional way of providing a film to cap the cancelled series would have been to take up all the unresolved plot-lines and tie them in a neat knot, preferably allowing Cooper a victory over Bob and revealing which characters survived or were killed in the explosion that untidily scrambled a whole bunch of storylines in the final episode. This prequel, however, is actually more in line with the general drive of *Twin Peaks* which, with all its time-hopping, was as concerned with delving into the hidden past as progressing into the narrative future.

After the prologue, there is a flurry of re-establishing touches – micro-cameos from series regulars like Mädchen Amick and Eric DaRe, capsule scenes to recreate plot elements – before the film plunges into Laura Palmer's degradation. In the monster father figure of Leland/Bob, Lynch has a bogeyman who puts Craven's Freddie Krueger to shame by bringing into the open the incest, abuse and brutality which the *Elm Street* movies conceal behind MTV surrealism and flip wisecracks. When Donna is slipped a hallucinogen at the Renault roadhouse, the images (and, as usual with Lynch, the multi-layered and terrifying soundtrack) couldn't be any more disturbing.

The film's many moments of horror – an excursion into a drab room in a picture given Laura by a spectral old woman and which turns out to be one of the entrances to the Lodge; Laura's hysterical and numbed laughter as Bobby is shocked by the murder he has committed; the alternations of the glowering Leland with the insanely evil Bob – demonstrate just how tidy, conventional and domesticated the generic horror movie of the 80s and 90s has become. The angel that finally adds a touch of hope in Laura's after life, and which could have strayed in from Lynch's *Wild at Heart* where she was played by Sheryl Lee, is the single upbeat element in a movie relentlessly concerned with nightmare. While not exactly comfortable or pleasurable viewing, *Fire Walk with Me* succeeds in showing the sour heart that has always lurked beneath the onion leaves of the show.

Kim Newman, *Sight & Sound*, November 1992

TWIN PEAKS: FIRE WALK WITH ME

Directed by: David Lynch

©: Twin Peaks Productions, Inc.

Production Companies: CiBy 2000, Lynch/Frost Productions

Presented by: Francis Bouygues

Executive Producers: Mark Frost, David Lynch

Produced by: Gregg Fienberg

Co-producer: John Wentworth

Associate Producers: Johanna Ray, Tim Harbert

Unit Production Manager: Gregg Fienberg

Supervising Co-ordinator: Joseph Montrone

Production Controller: Nowell B. Grossman

Location Liaison: Julie Duvic

Post-production Co-ordinator: Elizabeth Fox

1st Assistant Director: Deepak Nayar

Script Supervisor: Cori Glazer

Casting by: Johanna Ray

Written by: David Lynch, Robert Engels

Director of Photography: Ron Garcia

Additional Photography: Sean Doyle

Steadicam Operators: Dan Kneece, Bruce Greene

Special Effects Co-ordinator: Robert E. McCarthy

Edited by: Mary Sweeney

Production Designed by: Patricia Norris

Costumes Designed by: Patricia Norris

Key Make-up Artist: Katharina Hirsch-Smith

Hair Stylist: Brent Lavett

Titles/Opticals: Pacific Title, CFI

Music Composed and Conducted by: Angelo Badalamenti

Sound Designer: David Lynch

Sound Mixer: Jon Huck

Re-recording Mixers: David Parker, Michael Semanick, David Lynch

Supervising Sound Editor: Douglas Murray

Stunt Co-ordinator: Jeff Smolek

Cast

Sheryl Lee (*Laura Palmer*)

Ray Wise (*Leland Palmer*)

Mädchen Amick (*Shelly Johnson*)

Dana Ashbrook (*Bobby Briggs*)

Phoebe Augustine (*Ronette Pulaski*)

David Bowie (*Phillip Jeffries*)

Eric DaRe (*Leo Johnson*)

Miguel Ferrer (*Albert Rosenfeld*)

Pamela Gidley (*Teresa Banks*)

Heather Graham (*Annie Blackburn*)

Chris Isaak (*Special Agent Chester Desmond*)

Moira Kelly (*Donna Hayward*)

Peggy Lipton (*Norma Jennings*)

David Lynch (*Gordon Cole*)

James Marshall (*James Hurley*)

Jürgen Prochnow (*woodsman*)

Harry Dean Stanton (*Carl Rodd*)

Kiefer Sutherland (*Sam Stanley*)

Lenny Von Dohlen (*Harold Smith*)

Grace Zabriskie (*Sarah Palmer*)

Kyle MacLachlan (*Special Agent Dale Cooper*)

Frances Bay (*Mrs Tremond (Chalfont)*)

Catherine E. Coulson (*the log lady*)

Michael J. Anderson (*Man From Another Place*)

Frank Silva (*Bob*)

Walter Olkewicz (*Jacques Renault*)

Al Strobel (*Philip Gerard, the one armed man*)

Gary Hershberger (*Mike Nelson*)

Sandra Kinder (*Irene at Hap's*)

Chris Pedersen (*Tommy*)

Victor Rivers (*Buck*)

Rick Aiello (*Cliff Howard*)

Gary Bullock (*Sheriff Cable*)

Kimberly Ann Cole (*Lil the dancer*)

Julee Cruise (*roadhouse singer*)

USA/France 1992©

134 mins

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