



NEW RELEASES

Lynch/Oz

A fascinating, multi-perspective documentary that looks at the influence of *The Wizard of Oz* on the thoughts and working methodology of David Lynch. From *The Alphabet* to *Twin Peaks: The Return* the themes, images and cultural vernacular of Fleming's *The Wizard of Oz* have haunted David Lynch's art and filmmaking. Alexandre O Philippe posits the theory that the filmmaker may himself be trapped forever in the land of Oz, searching for his own way home.

Drawing extensively on clips from his work, with specific attention to *Mulholland Drive*, *Lost Highway* and *Wild at Heart*, and exploring the intersection of Lynch and Fleming from multiple perspectives, including those of Karyn Kusama, John Waters, David Lowery, Rodney Ascher, Amy Nicholson, and Justin Benson and Aaron Moorhead, *Lynch/Oz* lifts the (blue) velvet curtain on an obsession with a foundational text to deliver a whole new appreciation for Lynch's symbolism through the lens of his greatest influence. Given Lynch's notoriously reticence in talking about the subtext of his films, this remarkable look at intersectionality is also likely to be the most comprehensive director profile we can expect.

Jason Wood, Executive Director of Public Programmes and Audiences

Alexandre O. Philippe has previously directed essayistic documentaries about *Psycho* (1960), *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *The Exorcist* (1973) and *Alien* (1979). He turns now to two cinematic subjects that aren't particularly associated with the horror genre but are both distinctly and distinctively nightmarish: Victor Fleming's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and the works of David Lynch. In *Lynch/Oz*, Philippe coordinates six video essays, narrated by critics and filmmakers, attempting to unpack the links between Victor Fleming's seminal musical fantasy odyssey and Lynch's 'populist surrealist' works, which include *Blue Velvet* (1986), the *Twin Peaks* cycle (1990-2017) and *Lost Highway* (1997). Touching on resonances and motifs both broad (heroes' journeys, parallel worlds, uncanny opulence) and specific (curtains, lingering cross-fades, boldly coloured make-up), it makes for a potent dialectical brew, even if some elements land more convincingly than others.

The format brings to mind the online video essay mode of film criticism, where chatty engagement, critical insight, poetic expression and personal memoir are literally or associatively illustrated with shrewdly selected clips and images. There are nods here not only to the key texts but to proposed analogues to *The Wizard of Oz* as various as *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and *Back to the Future* (1985); *The Brain from Planet Arous* (1957) is referenced twice. On the Lynch side, there's a pervasive inference around the presumably seismic impression made by childhood TV viewings of Fleming's film, positioning young David as a kind of Dorothy, nudged from Midwestern childhood down the yellow brick road of artistic expression.

Each section offers its own take, in complementary, sometimes overlapping ways. Critic Amy Nicholson is alive to the ways wind figures in the works in question, relating the narrative uses of meteorology to more expressionistic

atmospheric intentions. The tornado-battered context of Dorothy's adventures in Oz, she suggests, frames it as a psychosomatic fugue of the kind Lynch often portrays, a form of personal psychological rupture that opens the door to a more cosmic understanding that 'nothing is exactly what it is'. Meanwhile, Rodney Ascher – whose 2012 documentary *Room 237*, about the semiotics of *The Shining* (1980), is a key recent cinematic essay film – zeroes in on the potent strains of archetypal Americana connecting Oz and Lynch.

The section by John Waters is great fun. Baby-boomers of the same age, Waters and Lynch both grew up with *Oz* on TV and came up as filmmakers on the midnight movie circuit – there's an adorable archive photo of them looking young together against a kitsch fast-food backdrop. Both filmmakers' sensibilities are shaped by deeply ambivalent attachments to 1950s American culture and the understanding – informed, Waters suggests, by Margaret Hamilton's wicked witch – that villainy is charismatic and heroism a matter of perspective.

Ambivalence is central to Karyn Kusama's contribution, which focuses on the slipperiness and multiplicity of both personal identity and structures of reality, as expressed in Lynch's *Mulholland Dr.* (2001). Kusama highlights in this context the lip-synch motif running through Lynch's work, provocatively suggesting it might have been inspired by an intuition he had when watching Dorothy launch into 'Somewhere over the Rainbow' that here was an instance of a performer miming to a pre-recorded track – which, of course, it was.

This opens up consideration of how understandings of the real-life conditions of the production of *The Wizard of Oz* and the life of Judy Garland might inflect darkly the meanings available from a feature that superficially presents as a candy-coloured children's adventure. Justin Benson and Aaron Moorhead bring the real Judy to the fore, noting the peculiar frequency of the name (along with 'Garland' and 'Dorothy') in Lynch's screenplays. They also unpack the explicit references to *Oz* running through *Wild at Heart* (1990).

Finally, David Lowery ponders the discontentment at entering adulthood implicit in Dorothy's journey and some of Lynch's work – the idea that this transition simultaneously implies leaving the home forever and realising it can never truly be left behind – and the related notion that filmmakers tend to remake a beloved source text over and over again.

It's a rich mix even if there are overlaps in these arguments, and more than one struggles to fix specifically to Fleming's film ideas that really refer to the broad and ancient schema of the hero's journey. An observation from Lynch himself is the most telling. *The Wizard of Oz*, he says, has 'caused people to dream now for decades' – in ways both deeply heartening and utterly terrifying. Lynchian indeed.

Ben Walters, 13 October 2022, [bfi.org.uk](https://www.bfi.org.uk)

Director's Statement

The Wizard of Oz is the first wholly American fantasy for children, America's foundational and most beloved home-grown fairy-tale. As such, it has engendered a long series of sequels, stage plays, musicals, and, of course, movies and television shows. Victor Fleming's 1939 Hollywood adaptation has embedded itself in the American psyche, arguably like no other film prior or since. Two years ago, researchers at the University of Turin analysed 47,000 films across 26 genres, focusing on data that specifically showed

references to films or subsequent movies. They determined that *The Wizard of Oz* is the most influential movie ever made – ahead of *Star Wars*, *Psycho*, *King Kong*, and *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Joel Coen once quipped that ‘every movie ever made is an attempt to remake *The Wizard of Oz*, and there’s little doubt that the most enigmatic of contemporary American auteur filmmakers, David Lynch, keeps tapping into themes, images, motifs, and ideas stemming from that land somewhere over the rainbow. If Joel Coen’s statement sounds like hyperbole, there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that every David Lynch film is a retelling of *The Wizard of Oz* – sometimes overtly (*Wild at Heart*, *Twin Peaks: The Return*) and other times more cryptically (*Lost Highway*, *Mulholland Dr.*).

The long-standing symbiosis between America’s primordial fairy-tale and its greatest, most popular surrealist is not only a Hollywood phenomenon without precedent; it stands as one of the most fascinating puzzles in the history of cinema. Indeed, if the Land of Oz obsessively informs David Lynch’s filmmaking, Lynch’s movies, in turn, hold a dark hall of mirrors to *The Wizard of Oz*. If Lynch keeps consciously and subconsciously returning to that well (through process, intuition, and/or transcendental meditation), tapping into his surrealist visual language and leitmotifs may be our key to cracking the code of that singular fairytale’s hold on the American psyche, and the resonance and significance of a classic that has much to say about America’s dreams, aspirations and fears.

‘It makes me uncomfortable to talk about meanings and things,’ says David Lynch. ‘It’s better not to know so much about what things mean.’ Great mysteries can never be resolved, but they are capable of revealing truths that can only be conjectured or felt. Far from an exegetic deconstruction, *Lynch/Oz* cedes the stage to some of contemporary cinema’s most exciting voices, giving each one their own chapter to develop deeply personal interpretations and theories. As each chapter opens new doors, ideas and possibilities, *Lynch/Oz* will elucidate, point the way, connect the dots, take us down the proverbial rabbit hole, help us re-experience and re-interpret *The Wizard of Oz* by way of David Lynch; and deliver a whole new appreciation for Lynch’s symbolism through the lens of his greatest influence to bring us ever closer to that quintessential American dreamland we’ve all heard of more than once in a lullaby...

Production notes

LYNCH/OZ

Director: Alexandre O. Philippe

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Production Company: Exhibit A Pictures

In association with: Dogwoof

Executive Producers: Oli Harbottle, Anna Godas

Produced by: Kerry Deignan

Co-producers: David Lawrence, Robert Muratore

Dogwoof (Founder): Andy Whittaker

Dogwoof (CEO): Anna Godas

Dogwoof (Head of Distribution & Acquisitions): Oli Harbottle

Dogwoof (Head of Sales): Ana Vicente

Dogwoof (Festivals Manager): Luke Brawley

Dogwoof (Sales Manager): Cleo Veger

Post Coordinator: Cathy Trekloff

Written by: Alexandre O. Philippe

Director of Photography: Robert Muratore

Drone Operator (Opening Sequence – Central City): David Quint

Visual Effects Supervisor (Opening Sequence – Arvada):

Chad Herschberger

Editor: David Lawrence

Art Director (Opening Sequence – Central City): Katie Walsh

Title Animation: James Durée

Original Music/Original Music by: Aaron Lawrence

Sound Design/Sound Design by: Phillip Lloyd Hegel

Re-recording Mixer: Phillip Lloyd Hegel

Supervising Sound Editor: Phillip Lloyd Hegel

With:

Amy Nicholson (chapter 1 host)

Sid Pink (opening sequence lounge wizard)

Rodney Ascher (chapter 2 host)

John Waters (chapter 3 host)

Karyn Kusama (chapter 4 host)

Justin Benson, Aaron Moorhead (chapter 5 hosts)

David Lowery (chapter 6 host)

USA 2022

109 mins

A Dogwoof release

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Lynch/Oz

From Fri 2 Dec

Bones and All

From Fri 2 Dec

Corsage

From Tue 27 Dec

RE-RELEASES

Fanny and Alexander (Fanny och Alexander)

From Fri 2 Dec

The Queen of Spades

From Fri 23 Dec

OVER THE RAINBOW

Mulholland Drive

Thu 1 Dec 20:15; Sun 11 Dec 17:45; Mon 19 Dec 20:15; Fri 30 Dec 20:15

Blue Velvet

Sat 3 Dec 20:40; Fri 9 Dec 20:40; Wed 21 Dec 20:40; Tue 27 Dec 15:00

The Wizard of Oz

Sun 4 Dec 11:30; Fri 16 Dec 20:30; Sun 18 Dec 15:15

The Elephant Man

Mon 5 Dec 20:30; Sat 10 Dec 20:30; Thu 15 Dec 20:40; Fri 23 Dec 20:40

Wild at Heart

Wed 7 Dec 18:10; Thu 22 Dec 20:35; Fri 30 Dec 17:50

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