



MARK JENKIN'S THE CINEMATIC DNA OF ENYS MEN

Lost Highway

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

I came to this one late, as I'd always been led to believe that it was one of David Lynch's lesser works. Maybe it was the lack of expectation. But when I did finally see it, the film completely bowled me over. It's predictably uncompromising, gloriously evoking the nightmare state, featuring *that* phone call – perhaps Lynch's most unnerving sequence – and with a final shot that maybe holds the key to the entire mystery of the narrative.

Mark Jenkin

The legend of Luis Buñuel's collaboration with Salvador Dalí is that if either included an image or incident open to rational explanation or interpretation, it would be dropped. Yet *Un chien andalou* (1928) and *L'Age d'or* (1930) afford many meaningful readings. It may well be that with *Lost Highway*, director David Lynch and co-screenwriter Barry Gifford – author of the novel *Wild at Heart* – have succeeded where Buñuel and Dalí failed, creating an almost entirely meaningless, or perhaps senseless, film.

A synopsis can only be tentative, since the film delights in contradictory or unexplained events, fracturing narrative logic at every turn. While in Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986) and *Twin Peaks* (1989-90) the *noir* plots are surprisingly worked through and explained, *Lost Highway* goes out of its way to be inexplicable. The twinning of Fred's wife Renee and Mr Eddy's moll Alice is impossible to rationalise as a *Vertigo* (1958) imposture, a *High Plains Drifter* (1972) resurrection or a *Mirror Images* (1991) twin-sister exchange. As a photograph at one point demonstrates, Renee and Alice are sometimes separate and sometimes one. If this bothers you, then there is no way into or out of *Lost Highway* for you.

The opening 'Fred Madison' section of the film is so powerful that the 'Pete Dayton' sequence inevitably disappoints. Fred and Renee receive the videocassettes, each showing more as the camera gets closer to them. Then Fred encounters the mystery man – Robert Blake in Bela Lugosi make-up, delivering arguably the most frightening performance in 90s cinema – and by this point Lynch fulfils his declared intention to fashion 'a 21st-century *noir* horror film'. He invests the Madisons' house with shadows that, in Raymond Chandler's phrase, betoken 'something more than the night.' Lynch has always excelled at sidesteps into pocket-sized universes – behind the radiator in *Eraserhead*, within the Black Lodge in *Twin Peaks* – but here he makes the simple shadowed corner into which Fred fades the most dreadful place his cinema has ever taken us.

Though the film slackens off when Balthazar Getty takes over the lead, Bill Pullman, an older version of the characters previously played by Kyle MacLachlan, represents Lynchian Man at his most susceptible to the forces of darkness, as demonstrated in the astonishing first encounter with the mystery man. More significant, perhaps, is Fred's explanation to the cops that he hates video cameras because 'I like to remember things my own way ... how I remember them, not necessarily the way they happened'. This whole film is not necessarily the way things happened. The Fred/Pete transformation just about makes emotional sense in terms of the entrapment of the *noir* hero within the

narrative and the wiles of an eternally reborn *femme fatale*; while the twinning and melding of Alice and Renee play perfectly, thanks to Patricia Arquette's mastery of the art of holding back. But the 'Pete Dayton' section of *Lost Highway* founders a little on its lack of specificity. Have Fred and Pete exchanged bodies, with Pete coming out of some limbo to usurp Fred's place in the world (as Bob did with Agent Cooper in the last episode of *Twin Peaks*?) Or has Fred transformed only into a *physical* likeness of Pete, retaining his own memories and personality? Pete has his own skills at intuitive engine tuning – 'The best goddamn ears in town', Mr Eddy comments, patting the film on the back for its consistently superb soundtrack, designed by Lynch himself – but he seems disturbed by Alice's resemblance to Renee.

Fred Madison lives in a horror story where an ordinary life can be pulled apart because of a stray thought and none of the trappings of American success can offer more than illusory comfort. But Pete Dayton's world is culled from the *noirs* Gifford extemporises on in his distinctive book of movie reviews, *The Devil Thumbs a Ride and Other Unforgettable Films*. The Pete scenes trot out *noir* motifs – fleeing lovers, double crosses, a fall-guy protagonist – as landmarks rather than events, but the potency of the Fred scenes is never entirely dissipated. Among the most disturbing moments in the film are a terrifying phone call from Mr Eddy and the mystery man (lying together in suggestive darkness) to Pete, and later Alice's reminiscence of being forced at gunpoint to strip for Mr Eddy (with Marilyn Manson proving against the odds that it is possible to outdo Screamin' Jay Hawkins with a more demented rendition of 'I Put a Spell on You'). Fred returns at a desert site where time has run backwards, so that the mystery man's shack is first seen in flames and then de-explodes to wholeness. The last section of the film, which jumbles elements from all that has gone before, is all momentum where most movies would be all explanation, fading out with the lost highway of the title (a stray phrase from Gifford's novel *Night People*, not a reference to Hank Williams) and a high-speed car chase into a desert darkness.

As always with Lynch, it is hard to distinguish between a fictional universe created to force a reassessment of your relationship with the real one, and a personal world that suggests an unsympathetic interpretation of its creator's feelings. The abused and murdered women of *Blue Velvet* and *Twin Peaks* are again featured, though there is more eroticising here of living bodies than of dead ones. However, when it comes to genuine film fear – as opposed to Wes Craven's rollercoaster scariness with pop-culture footnotes – Lynch's is the only game in town. This is post-genre horror: playing down explicit shock, it works on the evocation of unease through subtle sounds and blaring doom metal, offering blurred moments that resolve briefly into dreadful clarity. After 100 years of cinema, it is still possible to make a truly terrifying picture.

Kim Newman, *Sight & Sound*, September 1997

Jaunt

Andrew is a constant influence and inspiration. This film stands for all his work and is a distillation of everything I love about it; the exploitation of the creative potential of sound, the playful approach to reality and, above all, the joy and mischievousness that run through all his films. I'm very proud to have been labelled a fellow 'shoddyist' by the man himself.

Mark Jenkin

LOST HIGHWAY

Director: David Lynch
©: Lost Highway Productions, Inc.
Production Companies: CiBy 2000, Asymmetrical Productions
Producers: Deepak Nayar, Tom Sternberg, Mary Sweeney
Unit Production Manager: Deepak Nayar
Production Supervisor: Sabrina S. Sutherland
Production Co-ordinator: Karen R. Sachs
Location Manager: Julie Duvic
Post-production Supervisor: Desmond Cannon
1st Assistant Director: Scott Cameron
2nd Assistant Director: Simone Farber
Script Supervisor: Cori Glazer
Casting: Johanna Ray, Elaine J. Huzzar
Written by: David Lynch, Barry Gifford
Director of Photography: Peter Deming
Camera Operator: Paul Hughen
Aerial Camera Operator: Stan McClain
1st Assistant Camera: Scott Ressler
Steadicam Operator: Dan Kneece
Gaffer: Michael Laviolette
Co-ordinator Special Effects: Gary P. D'Amico
Editor: Mary Sweeney
Production Designer/Costume Designer: Patricia Norris
Set Decorator: Leslie Morales
Production Illustrator: Russell McCarty-Smith
Costume Supervisor: Maurizio Bizzari
Set Costumer: Marisa Aboitiz
Make-up Artist: Debbie Zoller
Body Make-up Artist: Marlene Lipman
Special Effects Make-up Co-ordinator: Michael Burnett
Hair Stylists: Patty Miller, Toni-Ann Walker
Titles/Opticals: Pacific Title
Music Composer/Conductor: Angelo Badalamenti
Additional Music: Barry Adamson
Orchestra: The City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra
Conductor: Stepán Koníček
Recorded at: Studio Smecky (Prague)
[Music] Sound Engineer: Jiri Zobac
Orchestrations: Andy Barrett, Charles Samek, Angelo Badalamenti
Music Editor: Marc Vanocur
Sound Design: David Lynch
Sound Mixer: Susumu Tokunow
Boom Operator: Kevin Kubota
Re-recording Mixers: John Ross, Frank Gaeta, Derek Marcil, David Lynch
Supervising Sound Editor: Frank Gaeta
Supervising Dialogue Editor: Thomas Jones
Dialogue Editors: David Grant, Louis Creveling, Paul Longstaffe, Susan Shin
ADR Supervisor: Tim Boggs
ADR Mixer: Derek Marcil
Foley Mixer: Mary Erstad
Foley Editors: Lucy Sustar, Marilyn Graf, David Mann, Laura Laird, Joshua Schneider
Stunt Co-ordinator: Chris Howell
Executive Consultant: Ed Morris

Cast

Bill Pullman (*Fred Madison*)
Patricia Arquette (*Renee Madison/Alice Wakefield*)
Balthazar Getty (*Pete Raymond Dayton*)
Robert Blake (*mystery man*)
Natasha Gregson Wagner (*Sheila*)
Richard Pryor (*Arnie*)
Lucy Butler (*Candace Dayton*)
Michael Masseo (*Andy*)
Jack Nance (*Phil*)
Jack Kehler (*Johnny Mack, a guard*)
Henry Rollins (*Henry, a guard*)
Giovanni Ribisi (*Steve 'V'*)
Scott Coffey (*Teddy*)
Gary Busey (*Bill Dayton*)
Robert Loggia (*Mr Eddy/Dick Laurent*)
David Byrd (*Doctor Smordin*)
John Roselius (*Al*)
Lou Eppolito (*Ed*)
F. William Parker (*Captain Luneau*)
Gene Ross (*Warden Clements*)
Jenna Maetlind (*party girl*)
Michael Shamus Wiles (*Mike, a guard*)
Mink Stole (*voice of forewoman*)
Leonard Termo (*voice of judge*)
Ivory Ocean (*Ivory, a guard*)
Guy Siner (*prison official 1*)
Alexander Folk (*prison official 2*)
Carl Sundstrom (*Hank*)
John Solari (*Lou*)
Jack (*the dog*)
Al Garrett (*Carl*)
Heather Stephens (*Lanie*)
Amanda Anka (*girl 1*)
Jennifer Syme (*junkie girl*)
Matt Sigloch (*assistant 1*)
Gil Combs (*assistant 2*)
Greg Travis (*tail gate driver*)
Lisa Boyle (*Marian*)
Marilyn Manson (*porno star 1*)
Twiggy Ramirez (*porno star 2*)

USA/France 1996

134 mins

A Janus Films release

JAUNT

Director: Andrew Kötting
Production Company: London Production Fund
Commissioning Company: Carlton UK Productions
Sponsors: London Arts Board,
London Film and Video Development Agency
Super 8 Photography: Gary Parker
Editor: Cliff West
Music: John Wall, Andrew Kötting
UK 1995
6 mins

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