



David Lynch: The Dreamer

# Lost Highway

## 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 Kneeece

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 Konicek

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 Massee (*Andy*)

Jack Nance (*Phil*)

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

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  
Digital 4K

The screening on Thu 15 Jan will be introduced by  
Ben Tyrer, Lecturer in Film Theory, Middlesex  
University London

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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 and Sound*, September 1997