



David Lynch: The Dreamer

INLAND EMPIRE

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Directed by: David Lynch
©: Inland Empire Productions
Production/Presented by: StudioCanal
In association with: Camerimage Film, Asymmetrical Productions
Produced by: Mary Sweeney, David Lynch
Co-producers: Laura Dern, Jeremy Alter, Kazimierz Suwala, Janusz Hetman, Michal Stopowski
Associate Producers: Sabrina S. Sutherland, Erik Crary, Jay Aaseng
Production Supervisor: Erik Crary
Post-production Supervisor: Greg Spence
Casting by: Johanna Ray
Written by: David Lynch
Camera Operators: David Lynch, Erik Crary, Odd Geir Saether, Ole Johan Roska
Gaffer: Jonathan Wenstrup
Still Photographer: Michael Roberts
Special Physical Effects: Gary D'Amico
Editor: David Lynch *
Assistant Editor: Noriko Miyakawa
Art Director: Christina Wilson
Set Decorator: Melanie Rein
Costume Supervisor (Poland Unit): Paulina Polom
Wardrobe: Heidi Bivens, Karen Baird
Key Make-up: Michelle Clark
Special Effects Make-up: Duke Cullen
Key Hairdresser: Edward St. George
Main Title Design: Eric Ladd
End Title Design: Melissa Elliott
Mastering Colourist: George Koran
Music: Angelo Badalamenti
Music Consultant: Marek Zebrowski
Sound Designer: David Lynch
Sound Supervisors: Ronald Eng, Dean Hurley
Boom Operator: John Evans
Utility Sound: Sara Glaser
Production Sound Mixer: Dean Hurley
Sound Re-recording Mixers: Dean Hurley, Ronald Eng, David Lynch
Dialogue Editors: David Cohen, Robert Troy
Sound Effects Editor: Steve Tushar
Foley Mixer: Ryan Maguire
Foley Editor: Willard Overstreet
Special Consultant: Pierre Edelman
Stunt Co-ordinator: Garrett Warren
Animal Handling by: Working Wildlife
Cast:
Laura Dern (*Nikki Grace/Susan Blue*)
Jeremy Irons (*Kingsley Stewart*)
Justin Theroux (*Devon Berk/Billy Side*)
Karolina Gruszka (*lost girl*)
Jan Hench (*Janek*)
Krzysztof Majchrzak (*phantom*)
Grace Zabriskie (*visitor 1*)
Ian Abercrombie (*Henry the butler*)
Karen Baird (*servant*)
Bellina Logan (*Linda*)
Amanda Foreman (*Tracy*)
Peter J. Lucas (*Piotrek Krol*)
Harry Dean Stanton (*Freddie Howard*)
Cameron Daddo (*Devon Berk's manager*)
Jerry Stahl (*Devon Berk's agent*)
John T. Churchill (*1st A.D. Chuck Ross*)
Phil DeSanti (*2nd A.D. Tim Hurst*)
Chamonix Bosch (*3rd A.D. Sally Irwin*)
Sara Glaser (*script supervisor Ellen Thomas*)
Neil Dickson (*producer*)
Edward St. George (*hair stylist*)
Diane Ladd (*Marilyn Levens*)
Melissa Lowndes (*Marilyn Levens' assistant*)
Marsha Lewis (*Marilyn Levens' hair stylist*)

Whether or not such a thing as 'pure cinema' exists is an argument that will never cease – can movies attain essential 'movieness' by way of pure visual effect, associative or imagistic, without depending on the remnants of theatre and literature, namely language, character or drama? Should they? Can we separate form from content, or is form the content? Or should content be an integral factor in form? Is such a thing possible? Is Stan Brakhage 'pure' (or just 'abstract'?), and if so, what does that mean? Does 'pure' simply indicate a lack of coherent material ('material'? What's that?) and a surrender to impressions and subliminals, if not outright de-significance?

Over the years, critics have attached the 'pure' bumper sticker to everyone from Andrei Tarkovsky to Brian De Palma. But David Lynch's *INLAND EMPIRE* makes the argument new again: here is an undiluted, madcap splooge of purest grade-A cinema from our greatest and most uncompromising *sui generiste*, three aggressively nutsy hours long and so furiously self-involved, so hermetically sealed yet explosive and fascinating, so purely a movie and nothing else, that roping it into any category with other movies seems a dubious labour. Evoking it in a mere review is, in fact, a doomed enterprise; Lynch seems to have constructed the film deliberately to evade the butterfly nets of critical response altogether. If that's not 'pure', what is?

The arguments are still raging in the US about whether or not Lynch's uncompromising and demanding act of movie-movie defiance was the best American film of 2006 (it has, in any case, little significant competition). Which is to say, Lynch has finally and irrevocably wagon-trained deep into farthest Lynchistan without a map, and we can't expect to see him return to civilisation any time soon. Trapped in its own bell jar, *INLAND EMPIRE* – taking its title from the Southern California region not because it's set there, but simply because Lynch liked the name – summons the likes of Bergman's *Persona* and Fellini's *Juliet of the Spirits* in its allusive structure and suggestions of a fracturing female psyche, but only because the movie behaves like a narrative deprivation tank, forcing you to scramble for corollaries. There are no visible marks of influence, homage or even traditional psychology. It's one of the rare films that teaches you – obliquely – how to watch it.

In a real sense, Lynch's devotion to primitive digital video reflects his disregard for diegetic cohesion – the uglier and more fractured the film is, the more Lynch regards it as peculiarly beautiful and, vitally, exuding its own logic. It's difficult to deny, after seeing it, that he has a point. Certainly, often the sense of *INLAND EMPIRE*, as it jaggedly leaps from absurdist non sequitur to psychodramatic set-up to lurching creep-out, is that there's no orthodox there, just dreams within dreams within movies within nightmares. Laura Dern, stretched on the rack of being a crazy auteur's favourite go-to girl (a scouringly fearless performance, or performances), shows up in a variety of personae; it's symptomatic of Lynch's sensibility that we're never sure how many. Several could be contained within the movies-within-the-movie, or not, or both – as a roomful of prostitutes dance to 'The Loco-Motion', other figures float stories and notions of murder, movie sets open onto real homes and mysterious neighbourhoods, interviews are held with no clear purpose, and so spectacularly on.

Jeremy Alter (*stage manager*)
 William H. Macy (*announcer*)
 Austin Lynch (*Devon Berk's driver*)
 Jason Weinberg (*Nikki Grace's manager*)
 Heidi Bivens (*Devon Berk's wardrobe assistant*)
 Randy Johnson (*studio security guard 1*)
 Duncan K. Fraser (*studio security guard 2*)
 Stanislaw Kazimierz Cybulski (*Mr Zydowicz*)
 Henryka Cybulski (*Mrs Zydowicz*)
 Julia Ormond (*Doris Side*)
 Robert Charles Hunter (*Detective Hutchinson*)
 Ewa Jerzykowski (*head menervant*)
 Scott Ressler (*camera operator*)
 Emily Stofle (*Lanni*)
 Jordan Ladd (*Terri*)
 Kristen Kerr (*Lori*)
 Terryn Westbrook (*Chelsi*)
 Jamie Eifert (*Sandi*)
 Kathryn Turner (*Dori*)
 Michelle Renea (*Kari*)
 Adam Zdunek (*man on street*)
 Erik Cray (*Mr K*)
 Wendy Rhodes (*Salli*)
 Mikhaila Aaseng (*Tammi*)
 Stanley Kamel (*Koz Kakawski*)
 Marek Zydowicz (*Gordy*)
 Mary Steenburgen (*visitor 2*)
 Leon Niemczyk (*Marek*)
 Jozef Zbirog (*Darek*)
 Marian Stanislawski (*Franciszek*)
 Charlene Harding (*Roxi*)
 Suzette Belouin (*Mandi*)
 Lisa Dengler-Eaton (*club dancer*)
 Gail Greaves, Joseph Altruda (*bartenders*)
 Jay P. Work (*saxophonist*)
 William McNeil (*drummer*)
 Carolina Cerisola (*club backstage girl*)
 Leah Morelli (*Carolina*)
 Helen Chase (*street person 1*)
 Nae (*street person 2*)
 Terry Crews (*street person 3*)
 Kris Kane (*Nikki Grace's wardrobe assistant*)
 Michelle Clark (*make-up artist*)
 Brandon Reinhardt (*Smithy's son*)
 Tracy Ashton (*the marine's sister*)
 Masuimi Max (*Niko*)
 Dominique Vandenberg (*trainyard worker*)
 Penny Hintz (*teacher*)
 Nick 13 (*archaeologist*)
 Keith Kjarval (*lumberjack*)
Special appearances by:
 Nastassja Kinski
 Laura Harring
With voice performances by:
 Scott Coffey
 Laura Harring
 Naomi Watts
 USA-France-Poland 2006©
 180 mins
 Digital 4K

The screening on Thu 8 Jan will be introduced
 by Sam Wigley, BFI Digital Features Editor at
Sight and Sound

With thanks to
 Sabrina Sutherland
 Lindsey Bowden

INLAND EMPIRE is a cataract of anxiety, Lynch's semi-conscious menagerie unleashed. Think of it as an epic version of the Radiator scenes from *Eraserhead*, or the Tower Theatre scene in *Mulholland Dr.*, without those films' already semi-conscious contexts. Even so, reading the film's formal explosions as purely psychoanalytic – as the mental storms of a single character, in Lynch's words, 'a woman in trouble' – seems crashingly reductive, given its visual assault and, most importantly, the torque of it as an experience. Truly, the movie shares DNA not with traditional narrative cinema but with the legacy of confrontational underground montage (plus an injection of Lynchian *frisson*) exemplified by Kenneth Anger (another LA mythologiser), Jack Smith, Gregory Markopoulos and Abigail Child. Endurance of the film's length is pivotal: the free-associative chaos becomes its own context, and as a viewer you're living in a rule-free cinematic space, where film is merely another form of consciousness, not an alternate reality you can forget as you occupy it. Indeed, Lynch has tended to characterise the film as an 'experience' you have, not an entertainment product you consume, and though he would never dream of being programmatic, *INLAND EMPIRE* is a close cousin of Artaud's concept of a Theatre of Cruelty, intended to unravel complacent expectations and create a cathartic crisis in the very fact of spectatorship.

Or Lynch was just having fun with the new and inexpensive technology (he shot the film on an outmoded, five-year-old PD150 digital camera), without the Hollywood overhead. Either way, the surest way to find disappointment in Lynch's Byzantine, exhaustive howl is to hunt for codes and readings, while ignoring the sensual textures of life in the underlit corridors of his imaginary space. The familiar distance and omniscience of ordinary filmgoing are simply not factors in this hectic equation. From its very first, far-too-intimate close-up of Grace Zabriskie's Polish-accented gargoyle, *INLAND EMPIRE* appears to be a film that exists for itself and for its maker, not necessarily for us. Of course, you could say as much about any incoherent, gone-amok gout of cinematic self-indulgence, which is another way of saying 'pure' – but for Lynch's movie, it's the crucial truth.

Michael Atkinson, *Sight and Sound*, April 2007

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