



Twin Peaks – original US pilot episode

Director: David Lynch
Production Companies: Lynch/Frost Productions, Propaganda Films
Executive Producers: Mark Frost, David Lynch
Producer: David J. Latt
Associate Producer: Monty Montgomery
Unit Production Manager: Eugene Mazzola
Production Supervisor: Deborah Lefaise
Production Co-ordinator: Denyse Hurley
LA Co-ordinator: Joseph Montrone
Production Accountant: Nowell B. Grossman
Location Manager: Julie Duvic
Post-production Supervisor: Ute Leonhardt
Assistant to Mark Frost: Paula K. Shimatsu-U
1st Assistant Director: Margaux Mackay
2nd Assistant Director: Carol L. Vitkay
Assistant to David Lynch: Debby Trutnik
Script Supervisor: Sharon West
Casting: Johanna Ray
Casting (Seattle): Susan Dixon
Extra Casting: White Light Casting Inc
Written by: Mark Frost, David Lynch
Director of Photography: Ron Garcia
Camera Operator: Sean Doyle
1st Assistant Camera: Thomas Klines
Gaffer: James Blair
Key Grip: Mark Davis
Special Effects: Greg McMickle
Editor: Duwayne R. Dunham
Associate Editor: Jay Ignaszewski
Assistant Editors: Brian Berdan, Michael Altman
Production Designer: Patricia Norris
Set Decorator: Leslie Morales
On-set Dresser: Frank Silva
Scenic Artist: Gretchen Armstrong
Prop Master: Greg McMickle
Construction Co-ordinator: Charles Armstrong
Costume Designer: Patricia Norris
Key Costumer: Earl Lewis
Wardrobe Supervisor: Ron Leamon
Make-up Supervisor: Lizbeth Williamson
Hairstyles: Wayne Coker
Titles/Opticals: Pacific Title
Titles: Awes
Music: Angelo Badalamenti
Music Editor: David Slusser
Sound Design: Douglas Murray
Re-recording Mixers: Mark Berger, David Parker
Sound Mixer: James Pilcher
Sound Effects Recordist: John Wentworth
Stunt Co-ordinator: David Boushey
Cast:
Kyle MacLachlan (Agent Dale Cooper)
Michael Ontkean (Sheriff Harry S. Truman)
Mädchen Amick (Shelly Johnson)
Dana Ashbrook (Bobby Briggs)
Richard Beymer (Benjamin Horne)
Lara Flynn Boyle (Donna Hayward)
Sherilyn Fenn (Audrey Horne)
Warren Frost (William Hayward)
Peggy Lipton (Norma Jennings)
James Marshall (James Hurley)
Everett McGill (Ed Hurley)
Jack Nance (Pete Martell)
Ray Wise (Leland Palmer)
Joan Chen (Josie Packard)
Piper Laurie (Catherine Martell)
Russ Tamblyn (Dr Lawrence Jacoby)
Eric Da Re (Leo Johnson)

David Lynch: The Dreamer

Twin Peaks – original US pilot episode

+ intro by Lisa Kerrigan, Senior Curator of Television, BFI National Archive

A contemporary review

There's been a rush to proclaim the apocalypse in everything that has been written so far about *Twin Peaks*, as if one could expect nothing less bleak or damning about the human condition – or at least about what goes on in apparently quiet, respectable small towns – from the director of *Blue Velvet*. 'There is terror in sunlight, warmth in the darkness, and unspeakable muck just the other side of the white picket fence,' declared the American magazine *Connoisseur* (September 1989), and according to *The Independent* (November 24, 1989), the film lifts 'the rock off another mythical American town seething with adultery, corruption and deviance.' So eager are writers to see in Lynch the new prophet of doom, or the smiter of small-town, home-town and domestic values everywhere, so eager in fact to slot him into the horror-in-the-familiar and/or-the-family nexus that has become the critical cliché of the moment, that they are led into blatant mis-descriptions of the film's generally placid style. Thus *The Independent* talks of the initial corpse washed up on the shore of 'a blood-red river at dawn' (the scene's tones are actually more soothingly grey), and *Time Out* (Nov. 29-Dec. 6, 1989) sees 'the spiritual unease and corruption of the community' mirrored in 'bizarrely angled compositions, slow motion ...,' a description that only applies, in a limited way, to one short scene.

Twin Peaks is the pilot for an eight-part television series created by Lynch and *Hill Street Blues* writer Mark Frost. Lynch and Frost were slated to direct another episode apiece and other directors (Tim Hunter, Caleb Deschanel) to handle the rest. There may be irony in the creator of *Eraserhead* becoming a network TV director, or in the continuity between *Twin Peaks* and *Peyton Place* (ABC is the network behind both). But then it has been the brief of soap operas from *Peyton Place* onwards to lift rocks off hotbeds of adultery, corruption and deviance, which would make it neither a radical nor a particularly interesting thing for *Twin Peaks* to do. Hence the upping of the stakes by those commentators who claim that what Lynch and Frost have uncovered is even more deviated, or that they have done it by expressionistically flouting the rules of network TV. If this is misleading, it would make sense to see *Twin Peaks* following the 'deviance' of *Hill Street Blues* by including more than one plot per episode, and allowing some plots to meander through the whole series. Though the murder is the main preoccupation here, mini-plots are set up involving other characters (about 15, due to grow to 40, according to Frost, through the complete series).

Even so, far from outraging the precepts of network TV, and the procedures of soap operas, mini-series or multi-part dramas, what *Twin Peaks* may have done is to produce something that is more 'TV' than TV has ever dared to be. It's as if, through the show's strange, dislocated but immensely seductive mood, Lynch and Frost had planned a kind of reciprocal invasion, the community they have created through the programme reaching out and absorbing the community of TV viewers, and vice versa. So much is implied by Lynch's own declared aims: 'I couldn't care less about changing the conventions of mainstream television. We just wanted to make a story and to feel the mood of a town that seemed a good place to visit. There's a surface in a small town and a million different mysterious levels hiding beneath it' (*The Independent*, op. cit.). And to achieve this, the programme relies less on the agitations of plot to hook viewers' attention, or the suspense of who is doing what to whom, than a different layering of moods: 'We had these ideas, these feelings about a story with a background, a middle ground, and a foreground. The background was a crime. The middle ground was eight or ten characters in a small town. The foreground was an episode, kind of a moment or

Mary Jo Deschanel (*Eileen Hayward*)
Harry Goaz (*Andy Brennan*)
Gary Hershberger (*Mike*)
Michael Horse (*Tommy 'Hawk' Bill*)
Grace Zabriskie (*Sarah Palmer*)
Troy Evans (*George Wolchezk*)
John Boylan (*Dwayne Milford*)
Rodney Harvey (*Biker Scotty*)
Sheryl Lee (*Laura Palmer*)
Robert Davenport (*Johnny Horne*)
Jan D'Arcy (*Sylvia Horne*)
Kimmy Robertson (*Lucy Moran*)
Jessica Wallenfels (*Harriet Hayward*)
Wendy Robie (*Nadine Hurley*)
Don Davis (*Major Briggs*)
Charlotte Stewart (*Betty Briggs*)
Roberta Maguire (*Maria Pulaski*)
Phoebe Augustine (*Ronnette Pulaski*)
Frank Roberts (*Father Hutchings*)
Brett Vadset (*Joey*)
Davis Wasman (*Gilman White*)
Jane Jones (*Margaret Honeycutt*)
Tawnya Pettiford-Waites (*Dr Shelly*)
Shelly Henning (*Alice Brady*)
Dorothy Roberts (*Mrs Jackson*)
Julee Cruise (*girl singer*)
Armie Stenseth (*Sven Jorgenson*)
Andrea Hays (*Heidi*)
Rick Tutor (*Janek Pulaski*)
Marjorie Nelson (*Janice Hogan*)
Ben DiGregorio (*Max Hartman*)
Diane Caldwell (*hotel employee*)
Catherine Coulson (*log lady*)
Al Strobel (*one armed man*)
USA 1990
94 mins
35mm

A BFI National Archive print

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like a sequence of moments, not even a whole day maybe, with a beginning, a middle and an end' (*Connoisseur*, op. cit.).

Relegating plot and characters to the middle or background, and bringing into the foreground something which sounds vaguely like ambience or atmosphere, the 'community' of time and space within which the story takes place, is more radical as a narrative strategy than *Hill Street Blues*, and altogether lacking the thematic interest of the small-town exposé. If there's a reciprocal invasion taking place here, then it's no wonder the context feels more like science fiction than soap opera, or like a laboratory for forcing human behaviour into all sorts of weird and wonderful forms: the police photographer who weeps over his work; the station-house telephonist who lays out midnight 'snacks' of every imaginable kind of doughnut; the gas station owner's eye-patched wife, who nags to have drapes hung so that she can swish them back and forth as if on some mad piratical mission. Even the melodramatic steps by which the initial murder is revealed – the distraught mother on the phone to her husband about their missing daughter, just as the sheriff arrives to give him the news, the languid pans down the dangling phone as her sobs become more hysterical – have the chill of some slightly foreign rites, like those of dynastic slaughter and succession on the planet Dune.

Twin Peaks, film and town, is a laboratory not unlike the cosmic one of *Dune*, or the single room of *Eraserhead*, or even those constructions, sheds for storing things he had collected, 'textures' he was interested in studying and reproducing, to which Lynch was reputedly devoting his time in between *Eraserhead* and *Elephant Man*. Each film is its own little space-time continuum, and what it contains ('a sequence of moments', moments most perverse in their mingling of recognisable periods) might be answerable to little logic except that of the dream. If Henry Spencer was evidently the dreamer of *Eraserhead*, trying to imagine himself into being, it is less obvious but interesting to speculate that the dreamer of *Twin Peaks* might be FBI agent Dale Cooper.

A tightly groomed, tightly smiling Kyle MacLachlan, he is the very epitome of the kind of obsessive cop who often turns out to be the villain. But he also turns out to be sweetly reasonable, perspicacious, humorous in his fashion ('Do you know why I'm whittling this stick?', he confides to a fellow stakeout cop, 'because that's what you do in a town where a yellow light means slow down instead of speed up'), and quickly tuned into the secret circuits of this community. Along with every item of expenditure that is dictated into his pocket recorder, he waxes lyrical about the local flora and fauna (Douglas firs have a special tang for him), and enquires about all the local 'characters' assembled in the town hall to hear about the investigation ('Who's the lady with the log?', he asks of one woman indeed clutching a piece of tree as she frantically switches the lights on and off to call the meeting to order; 'We call her the Log Lady' comes the ineffable answer).

There is in *Twin Peaks* an anarchy of observation, of invention, of digging within the fascination of stories and 'secrets', that may not be quite the same as a fascination with the stories themselves. One wonders if all the half glimpses into the lives of the inhabitants of *Twin Peaks* – so many specimens in the laboratory – really have much life in them as stories. Inevitably, Lynch's melodrama has prompted comparison with Douglas Sirk, as a critical view of small-town life. But a truer comparison, in spirit if not in mood, might be with Preston Sturges, who took a more amoral delight in his characters' conniving, in the riot and inventiveness of their 'secret' lives. Like Lynch's, his life around and in-between his films also exhibited that odd, multi-faceted personality of the investigator, the tinkerer, the inventor. And there is in *Twin Peaks* one irresistible moment of Sturges comedy, when the daughter of local smoothie Benjamin Horne sabotages her father's promotion of the Ghostwood Country Club and Estates development by telling visiting businessmen about the recent murder. As the latter hurriedly depart their hotel, the incongruous cry goes up, 'The Norwegians are leaving! The Norwegians are leaving!'

Richard Combs, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, March 1990