

# David Lynch essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The recent production of David Lynch shows that the director does not create movies for wide audiences and does not take into account their tastes and prizes his independence above everything. This was emphasised in each of his films but in his recent film he surpassed himself and overstepped the limits. In my opinion, he played tricks on those viewers who every time make attempts to find logical meaning of the plot and every little piece of his films.

Lynch once again shows that the real world should be left behind. "Inland Empire" seems to be the most confusing of Lynch's films. It is a three-hour film of incoherent sequences, which provide the impression that we are in a psychopath's dream. Lynch constructed this film from elements which are well-known to those who have contact with his art.

He included in the film non-linear, complex structure and imagery hard to interpret. He blurred the boundaries between reality and dreamlike sequences, incorporated nightmarish visions, symbolic dreams, cryptic lines, that is to say, everything we can expect in David Lynch films. We can also find here states between dream and awakening, detours to subconscious and other worlds. It is hard to distinguish which events, centering around the leading character are real and which refer to delusions and dreams. There are recurring shots of red curtains, scenes with camera moving along dimly lit corridors or rooms strangely lit with bedside lamps. What is new about this film is the fact it was created in an unconventional way.

It was a great challenge for the actors, who did not have the complete version of the script, but single scenes. They were not familiarized with the story. Director only gave them hints to scenes created at the current

moment. The novelty about production of the film is the way of filming it. Lynch used a digital camera what resulted in uneven structure and unconventional frame of the film.

Pictures made with artistry and skills are mixed with ones make the impression as if made in amateurish manner. Experimental approach towards filming also resulted in hard perception of the film. Visually the film is challenging. This can be illustrated by close-ups of blurred, distorted faces in the sharp background and intensive, tiring light at parts. As to light the whole film seems to be plunged in darkness and faded.

The colours seems faded too, for instance red curtains are strangely faded.

All in all, the encounter with this film can be confusing and shocking.

Generally, the encounter with Lynch's films can be a problematic experience.

His over-expressive style, exaggerated details, surreal sequences and world balancing between the states of dream and awakening can be hard to watch and confusing for the viewer. Films of David Lynch Lynch show his sensitiveness to images, colours, sounds, music and the way actors speak and move.

It can be easily perceived that Lynch is relentless in using imagery in his films. Blue Velvet, Wild at Heart Twin Peaks fill the viewer with unforgettable images. David Lynch has his favourite themes, motives and shots, which he treats as his own means of expression. Thus it is easy to recognise his unique style and at the same time it is difficult to falsify it. Taking for instance ' Twin Peaks' series where some of the episodes were directed by invited directors. For those who ever have had contact with his art, it would

not be difficult to distinguish which episodes were directed by Lynch and which were not.

Although the invited directors tried to keep ‘ Lynchlike’ style and mood, it is simple to perceive differences in camera movements, shots, lighting, and dose of terror. When watching Lynch’s films, viewers should take into account that he is a painter and this fact should explain the qualities of his style. Lynch’s words might be helpful in understanding the qualities of his films: “ Because I wanted the paintings to make sound and move and that led to film”. Despite the above mentioned qualities of his films Lynch Has his fixed obsessions, which fascinate him and continuously appear in his films.

He incorporates in his films two parallel worlds, one of peace and one of nightmare, brutality, pervert love where people expose their dark faces and aim at fulfilling their hidden, pervert desires. Certain kind of lighting, strange threatening shadows and combination of light and shade are crucial to exploration of the recurrent, surrealistic motif of the duality of world, subconscious and dark things hidden within people. Lynch’s perception of world in light and darkness is exposed in decay and horror hidden under the surface of unnaturally bright colours of skies, flowers, and freshly trimmed grass. Such surrealistic vision of world has its roots in Lynch’s childhood discoveries about surroundings.

He mentions that his childhood was “ picket fences, blue skies, red flowers, and cherry trees – but then I would see millions of little ants swarming on the cherry tree, which had pitch oozing out of it. ” (Internet Source 1) In numerous interviews Lynch states that he never believed in the peaceful,

lovely world of these white picket fences and he shows what might happen beneath the surface and at his neighbours houses. As nobody believes him, he does that in a exaggerated form. Also, the great influence on Lynch's repetitive motif of darkness and horror had his encounters with big cities, what he mentions in a book "Widze siebie". He states that "Philadelphia, more than any filmmaker, influenced me.

It's the sickest, most corrupt, decaying, fear-ridden city imaginable. " or " Because I grew up in a perfect world, other things were a contrast. When I visited Brooklyn as a little kid, it scared the hell out of me. In the subway, I remember a wind from the approaching train, then a smell and sound.

I had a taste of horror every time I went to New York. " (Internet Source 1) Lynch points out on many occasions that the city of Philadelphia, where Lynch moved leaving the idyllic small town, influenced the production of ' Eraserhead' which, as Lynch states, " was born in Philadelphia" (Internet Source 1) The theme of duality, of light and darkness is prevalent in ' Blue Velvet' and ' Twin Peaks', where we have two peaceful small towns and dark secrets underneath. In ' Twin Peaks' for instance, we have Laura Palmer, whose death is central theme of the series, and which leads to exposure of her dark and troubled private life which centered around drugs, sex and men. The theme of duality in Lynch's films also revolves around dual identities or interchangeable identities.

Also, the brunette and blonde characters, played by the same actress.

Another specific feature of Lynch's style is repetitiveness, that is to say, his constant usage of his favourite images, themes, leitmotifs and numerous

connections to his earlier works. One of his favourite theme is fire. It is a dominant leitmotif in ' Wild at Heart', where we can find close-ups of burning cigarettes and lighted matches. The theme of fire is also visible in ' Twin Peaks', where the cryptic, hidden meaning under words " Fire walk with me" seems crucial in solving the mystery of murder of Laura Palmer. Lynch also has his favourite shots and sequences.

He most often places in his films night time shots of yellow lines on a highway, red curtains, elongated corridors, close-ups of red lips, crackling lamps and breathing out of smoke. Lynch also continuously returns to film noir styling. The influences of noir films are visible in number of elements - femme fatales and their 40s hairstyles, gangsters, detectives, jazz musicians. There are also numerous connections to his earlier works, for instance, the zig-zag pattern in Red Room scenes in ' Twin Peaks' is identical to that in the hall of Henry's flat building in ' Eraserhead' Adding to qualities of Lynch's style, it is also worth mentioning his exploration of eccentric characters, who say cryptic things and behave in a peculiar way. They appear in each of his films.

A wide range of such characters is explored in ' Twin Peaks'. We meet here for instance Log Lady who holds a small log close to her chest and communicates with it, Nadine Hurley whose obsessive illness becomes the aim of creating fully silent curtain drape, and Dwarfs from Dale's Cooper dream, who speaks in riddles in reversed voice and dances a strange dance. There are also unforgettable cryptic visuals of Bob, who appears in nightmarish visions of Laura's Palmer mother and dreams of Dale Cooper. Exploration of eccentric characters is also present in other films. In ' Blue

Velvet' Frank and his company, in Wild at Heart Juana with bleached blond hair and heavy dark eye brows, who plays sadistic mind games on one of the characters.

. When discussing features of Lynch's characters it is also worth to add that Lynch also shows in his films deformities and disabilities. Appearances of deformed and physically disabled people recur in many of his films including the deformed Baby in ' Eraserhead', disfigured Merrick in ' Elephant Man', One Armed Man with one amputated arm in ' Twin Peaks' and Juana with one shorter leg wearing leg braces in ' Wild at Heart'. Lynch's style also incorporates intertextuality, which plays an important role in his films.

His films include borrowings and quotations from other films and references to other artists. A good illustration are references to the ' The Wizard of Oz' film. In ' Blue Velvet' Dorothy Vallens and her pair of high-heeled shoes resemble magic ruby slippers of Dorothy, the leading character from ' The Wizard of Oz'. More visuals and quotations from the ' The Wizard of Oz' are incorporated in ' Wild at heart'. The list of references is long here.

We can find here observation of events in crystal ball, appearance of a Good Witch, images of Lula's mother on broomstick, which refer to the Wicked Witch. Also, the scene where Lula, after being abused by Bobby Peru, clicks her red shoes like Dorothy from ' The Wizard of Oz, who clicked her ruby slippers when she wanted to return home. Apart from obvious visual references, ' Wild at Heart' includes several quotations from ' The Wizard of Oz'. In one of the scenes Bobby Peru tells Sailor that plunders from the bank robbery will take him and Lula " a long way down that yellow brick road".

Also Lula refers to Dorothy's song and tells Sailor she wishes to be "somewhere over the rainbow".

In his art Lynch also refers to American painter Edward Hopper and his paintings of American landscapes. Lynch borrows from his paintings another recognizable quality of his style, small town locations and recurring scenes in diners, where we see his characters chat while sipping coffee. (Internet Source 2) Among all of the components of David Lynch style, music also plays an important role. When watching his films viewer may have impression that music, sounds and pictures seems to be inseparable in his films. Lynch has always said that music and sounds are key elements of his style of film-making and are fifty percent of each of his films.

Viewers may notice Lynch's skilfulness in using sounds and music in underlining scenes, building up atmosphere or altering mood. Overall, to understand Lynch's films viewers should be open to the subconscious, trust their intuition and try to read from the imagery employed in his films. Logical reasoning should be left behind. When watching his films, it can be clearly stated that he devotedly pursues his obsessions through his works, and that distinguishes him from other directors.