

David Lynch



at BFI Southbank

David Lynch has been responsible for some of the most innovative, daring and talked-about films in the last 40 years of American cinema. Throughout February, BFI Southbank will present all of his films in a complete retrospective that will include his early shorts and substantiate Lynch's reputation as a pioneer among contemporary American filmmakers.

Renowned Tweeter and latterly musician, David Lynch's career trajectory has taken him from an often challenging avant-garde director, with his surreal first shorts **The Alphabet** (1968) and **The Grandmother** (1970), to a thought-provoking auteur with films such as **Mullholland Drive** (2001) and **Inland Empire** (2006) – incorporating the seminal television series *Twin Peaks* along the way. Lynch began his creative career studying painting, but made the transition to filmmaking which took him to LA where he began the five-year process of making his first feature **Eraserhead** (1976). Starring **Jack Nance**, this disturbing debut became a cult classic and led way for a dip into the mainstream with his portrayal of **The Elephant Man** (1980), which also earned Lynch his first **Oscar** nomination for Best Director.

The sci-fi epic **Dune** (1984) was followed by Lynch's landmark film **Blue Velvet** (1986). This won him another nomination from the Academy and received critical acclaim for its tale of murder and sadomasochism behind the white picket fences of suburbia. With outstanding performances from **Dennis Hopper** and **Isabella Rossellini**, Lynch established himself as a leader in US independent filmmaking, appealing to both audiences and academia alike – the latter who would go on to coin the term 'Lynchian' to describe a surreal and uncanny tone that rippled through Hollywood titles. His star was on the ascent: his road movie **Wild at Heart** (1990) won the **Palme D'Or** at Cannes while from the cover of **Time** magazine he was dubbed a genius. Though press vilified **Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me** (1992), Lynch remained faithful to his vision and spirit of rebellion, presenting first the LA noir mystery **Lost Highway** (1996) and then, from the leftfield, the life-affirming story of a 73-year old man who travelled cross-country on a lawnmower to visit his brother in **The Straight Story** (1999). Each film restored his status as a truly remarkable director.

The last decade has seen Lynch make only two films, including **Mulholland Dr.** (2001) - widely regarded as a modern masterpiece. But he has also created a foundation of Transcendental Meditation for deprived children and collaborate with musicians such as **Danger Mouse** and **Angel Badalamenti**, and recently release a solo album. This season will provide a rare reminder of the creative genius of Lynch, on screen, and why he remains one of the most ground-breaking artists of his generation.

- End -

PRESS CONTACT:

BFI Southbank:

Ilona Cheshire Tel: 020 7957 8986 email: ilona.cheshire@bfi.org.uk

PROGRAMME INFORMATION

Study Day: David Lynch: In Dreams

An afternoon of exploration and discussion of the dream worlds of David Lynch, tracing their genesis in the surrealism of the early European avant-gardes and the New American Cinema, considering frameworks for their interpretation through psychoanalysis and neuroscience, and exploring their legacy for artists and popular culture. Includes a rare screening of the *Arena* documentary **Ruth Roses and Revolver** (BBC 1987, dir Helen Gallacher, 47min), in which Lynch discusses the work of the surrealists.

Sat 11 Feb 13:00 – 17:00 NFT3

Season Introduction: David Lynch – The First Coming

His films are testament to his status as a nonconformist. But Lynch found his niche *within the system* rather than independently of it. As such he was obligated to come forward as a public figure. Taking the period between *Eraserhead* and *Blue Velvet* (1977-1986), season curator Antony Todd discusses Lynch's passage from cult anonymity to the status of true auteur, and in doing so explores the emergence of 'Lynch as personality'.

Wed 1 Feb 18:10 NFT3 Tickets £5

Eraserhead + Early Shorts

USA 1976. With Jack Nance. 88min. 15 + **The Grandmother** (1970, 34min), + **The Amputee** (1973, 5min) + **The Alphabet** (1968, 4min)

Lynch's early films owe more to the traditions of the European avant-gardes than to the guerrilla style adopted by the American underground filmmakers of the 1960s. Having impressed with *The Grandmother*, Lynch joined the Centre for Advanced Film Studies in LA where he took five years to produce his legendary cult horror about an anxious young man struggling with his crushing industrial environment and the premature birth of his mutant child. As *MFB* put it, an 'absurdist, surrealist treat of repulsive beauty'.

Wed 1 Feb 20:10 NFT1 Introduced by Antony Todd, Tue 7 Feb 20:30 NFT1

The Elephant Man

USA 1980. With John Hurt, Anthony Hopkins, Anne Bancroft, John Gielgud. 123min. PG

The true story of John Merrick – a man with a congenital disease that covered his body with deforming tumors – is approached here with great respect for the subject matter. It is indeed the humanist element that triumphs, but Lynch again showed his skill for creating contained, expressionistic worlds. Through the black and white cinematography of Freddie Francis, the film superbly invokes the bleak mood of an industrial Victorian England.

Thu 2 Feb 18:15 NFT2, Sun 5 Feb 18:10 NFT3

Dune

USA 1984. With Kyle MacLachlan, Francesca Annis, Sting, Jurgen Prochnow. 136min. 70mm. PG

Given the producers' demands that he stay true to the spirit of Frank Herbert's 1960s million-selling novel, Lynch has all but disowned this medieval science fiction blockbuster. Yet the film retains something that is conspicuously Lynchian. Fans of the novel would agree that the story suffers from

the need for compression, but the look of the film is like nothing seen before or since in the science fiction genre.

Sat 4 Feb 17:40 NFT1, Fri 17 Feb 20:20 NFT1

Blue Velvet

USA 1986. With Kyle MacLachlan, Isabella Rossellini, Dennis Hopper, Dean Stockwell, Laura Dern. 120min
Kyle MacLachlan's discovery of an ant-infested human ear in the Lumberton undergrowth initiates the teenage sleuth's journey into the perilous unconscious of the suburban American dream – and 80s cinema is redefined. Lynch's ambiguous moral stance on murder, mutilation and sadomasochism would not meet with everyone's approval, but *Blue Velvet* was a bona fide cultural event and mainstream American cinema had a new auteur to celebrate.

Thu 2 Feb 20:40 NFT2, Sat 4 Feb 20:40 NFT1, Fri 24 Feb 20:40 NFT1

Wild at Heart

USA 1990. With Nicolas Cage, Laura Dern, Willem Dafoe, Diane Ladd, Harry Dean Stanton. 124min
Wild at Heart, adapted from Barry Gifford's book, stars Cage (Sailor Ripley) and Dern (Lula) as lovers on the run from a hit man enlisted to kill Sailor by Lula's 'wicked witch' mother. With liberal references to *The Wizard of Oz* and Elvis, and an iconic role for Sailor's treasured snakeskin jacket – which he believes symbolises his 'individuality and belief in personal freedom' – the film won the Palme d'Or for best film at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival.

Sun 5 Feb 20:30 NFT1, Sat 11 Feb 17:30 NFT1

Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me

USA 1992. With Kyle MacLachlan, Sheryl Lee, Kiefer Sutherland, Harry Dean Stanton, Chris Isaak. 134min
The prequel to the 1990s television event depicted the seven days leading up to the murder of homecoming queen Laura Palmer and, as an even more menacing affair than the TV show, divided critics over its alleged unpleasantness and self-indulgence. There is little doubt amongst his supporters, though, that *Fire Walk with Me* is an indispensable Lynch text.

Sat 11 Feb 20:00 NFT1 With illustrated introduction by Antony Todd, Sun 26 Feb 20:20 NFT1

Lost Highway

USA 1996. With Bill Pullman, Patricia Arquette, Balthazar Getty, Gary Busey. 134min
Lost Highway tells the story of jazz saxophonist Fred Madison (Pullman) who is found guilty of murdering his wife Renee (Arquette). On death row, Fred inexplicably morphs into a younger man, a car mechanic named Pete Dayton (Getty) and becomes involved with a gangster's moll, Alice Wakefield (also played by Arquette). Lynch's remarkable multi-faceted LA noir experiments with a narrative structure without obvious entry or exit points.

Sun 12 Feb 18:00 NFT2, Sat 18 Feb 20:20 NFT1

The Straight Story

USA 1999. With Richard Farnsworth, Sissy Spacek, Harry Dean Stanton. 111min. U
No one was surprised when word, reached the media that Lynch was planning to adapt the true story of a 73 year-old man, Alvin Straight (Farnsworth), who travelled across America on a lawnmower, in search of his estranged brother. Yet Lynch's slow, 'straight' treatment of this material wrong-footed most, even as it marked a return to the humanist qualities that had distinguished his handling of *The Elephant Man*.

Mon 6 Feb 17:40 NFT2, Wed 22 Feb 20:40 NFT2. Mon 27 Feb 20:45 NFT2

Mulholland Dr.

USA-France 2001. With Naomi Watts, Laura Elena Harring, Justin Theroux, Dan Hedaya. 146min. 15
After *The Straight Story*, Lynch returned to more familiar subject matter. Betty (Watts), a plucky aspiring actress, and Rita (Harring), a mysterious amnesiac who has stumbled from a car crash with several thousand dollars in her purse, search LA for clues to Rita's identity. Dense with his customary doppelgangers, dream imagery and loose ends, Lynch's film has an extra melancholic fascination with the destructive power of erotic desire.

Fri 10 Feb 20:10 NFT3, Sun 26 Feb 17:20 NFT1, Wed 29 Feb 20:10 NFT1

Inland Empire

France-USA-Poland 2006. With Laura Dern, Jeremy Irons, Justin Theroux, Diane Ladd. 180min. 15
Lynch's three-hour digital opus – composed on his 'unified force' principle, whereby 'the ocean is the unity' on which scenes 'float' – stars Dern as actress Nikki Grace, working on a remake of an unfinished Polish film called 47. Real and film worlds intersect and Lynch's audience is left to wonder if Nikki has succumbed to the curse that is thought to have stopped production of the original film.

Tue 21 Feb 19:40 NFT1, Sat 25 Feb 19:30 NFT1

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

Booking information

The BFI Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office tel: 020 7928 3232. Unless otherwise stated tickets are £9.00, concs £6.65 Members pay £1.40 less on any ticket. Website www.bfi.org.uk/southbank

Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment

BFI Filmstore

The BFI Filmstore is stocked and staffed by BFI experts with over 1,200 book titles and 1,000 DVDs to choose from, including hundreds of acclaimed books and DVDs produced by the BFI.

The benugo bar & kitchen

Eat, drink and be merry in panoramic daylight. benugo's décor is contemporary, brightly lit and playful with a lounge space, bar and dining area. The place to network, hang out, unpack a film, savour the best of Modern British or sip on a cocktail.

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archival collections, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

***** PICTURE DESK *****

A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank screenings can be found at www.image.net under BFI / BFI Southbank /February 2012