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Academy Awards, USA 2002:
Nominated Best Director David Lynch
Cannes Film Festival: Best Director

DIRECTOR David Lynch
WRITER David Lynch
PRODUCED BY Pierre Edelman, Neal Edelstein, Joyce Eliason, Tony Krantz, Michael Polaire, Alain Sarde, Mary Sweeney, John Wentworth, Angelo Badalamenti
CINEMATOGRAPHY Peter Deming
FILM EDITING Mary Sweeney

CAST
Naomi Watts…Betty / Diane Selwyn
Jeanne Bates…Irene
Dan Birnbaum   …Irene's Companion
Laura Elena Harring…Rita / Camilla Rhodes
Randall Wulff…Limo Driver
Robert Forster…Detective McKnight
Brent Briscoe…Detective Domgaard
Maya Bond…Aunt Ruth
Patrick Fischler…Dan
Michael Cooke…Herb
Bonnie Aarons…Bum
Michael J. Anderson…Mr. Roque
Joseph Kearney…Roque's Manservant
Enrique Buelna…Back of Head Man
Richard Mead…Hairy-Armed Man
Sean Everett…Cab Driver at LAX
Ann Miller…Coco
Angelo Badalamenti…Luigi Castigliane
Dan Hedaya…Vincenzo Castigliane
Daniel Rey…Valet Attendant
Justin Theroux   …Adam
David Schroeder…Robert Smith
Robert Katims   …Ray Hott
Marcus Graham…Mr. Darby
Tom Morris…Espresso Man
Melissa George…Camilla Rhodes
Mo Gallini…Castigliane Limo Driver

Mark Pellegrino…Joe
Vincent Castellanos…Ed
Diane Nelson…Heavy-Set Woman
Charles Croughwell…Vacuum Man
Rena Riffel…Laney
Michael Des Barres…Billy
Lori Heuring…Lorraine
Billy Ray Cyrus…Gene
Tad Horino…Taka
Missy Crider…Waitress at Winkies (as Melissa Crider)
Tony Longo…Kenny
Geno Silva…Hotel Manager / Emcee
Katharine Towne…Cynthia
Lee Grant…Louise Bonner
Monty Montgomery…Cowboy (as Lafayette Montgomery)
Kate Forster…Martha Johnson
James Karen…Wally Brown
Chad Everett…Jimmy Katz
Wayne Grace…Bob Booker
Rita Taggart…Linney James
Michele Hicks…Nicki Pelazza
Lisa K. Ferguson…1st AC (as Lisa Ferguson)
William Ostrander…2nd Assistant Director
Elizabeth Lackey…Carol

DAVID LYNCH (b. January 20, 1946 in Missoula, Montana) was born in precisely the kind of small-town American setting so familiar from his films. Lynch spent his childhood being shunted from one state to another as his research scientist father kept getting relocated. Lynch went to art school in a particularly violent and run-down area of Philadelphia which inspired *Eraserhead* (1977), a film that he began in the early 1970s (after a couple of shorts) and which he would work on obsessively for five years. The final film was initially judged to be almost unreleasably weird, but thanks to the efforts of distributor Ben Barenholtz, it secured a cult following and enabled Lynch to make his first mainstream film (in an unlikely alliance with Mel Brooks), though The *Elephant Man* (1980) was shot through with his unique sensibility. Its enormous critical and commercial success led to *Dune* (1984), a hugely expensive commercial disaster, but Lynch redeemed himself with the now classic *Blue Velvet* (1986). After the success of their TV show *Twin Peaks*, Lynch and his writing partner Mark Frost were shopping around a pilot called "Mulholland Drive" to ABC. It was extremely elaborate—having over 50 speaking parts—and many elements were similar to the film. The show was eventually rejected by the network, when an executive apparently told Lynch that he almost fell asleep while he was standing up and watching it. Eventually the French company Canal Plus bought the pilot as a film. It was then re-edited with 50 minutes of new footage. Many of the actors were lesser known because it was going to be a TV show. Most of the ideas for the film came from Lynch's transcendental meditation, which he describes as a way to "expand consciousness." When the film version of *Mulholland Drive* was finally greenlit, he had no ideas and hadn't even been thinking about it. The day that he needed to put ideas on pages, he meditated and that's when "all the ideas came, all at once." Lynch is notorious for his refusal to discuss interpretations of his films. For example, this is how he described *Mulholland Drive*: "Part one: she found herself inside the perfect mystery. Part two: a sad illusion. Part three: love." Lynch said, "It's strange how films unfold as they go. There may be a noir element in *Mulholland Drive*, and a couple of genres swimming around in there together. For me, it's a love story." While there's no real explanation for the film, there are a lot of cinematic references. Lynch used many elements of the notorious "Black Dahlia" case. In fact, the script for James Ellroy's novel about the famously unsolved murder of Elizabeth Short was in development for twenty years before it was finally made by Brian De Palma in 2006. Lynch was reportedly one of the filmmakers who flirted with adapting it, and while he ultimately passed, some have noted the similarities between that 1947 murder and the film he made in 2001. Short, like Betty, was a small-town girl who wanted to make it in the movies; her family and friends called her "Betty," and her body was discovered by a woman named Betty Bersinger. But on the other side of the coin, the hair, make-up, and costuming of Camilla/Rita bears a remarkable resemblance to Short. And one of the key clues in the LAPD's failed investigation of the murder was a stolen address book. Additionally, there are lots of references in tonight's film to *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), one of Lynch's favorite films. In *Mulholland Drive*, a "Sunset Boulevard" street sign can be seen in addition to a similar shot of the Paramount Gates that's in *Sunset Boulevard*. Lynch even tracked down the same car from *Sunset Boulevard* to include in the shot of the Paramount Gates. Plus, Lynch recognized that Norma Desmond and Betty are "both experiencing some of the negative sides of acting." However, even with these touchpoints, the film is ultimately a mystery. Or perhaps Roger Ebert summed it up best when he wrote "*Mulholland Drive* isn't like *Memento*, where if you watch closely enough you can hope to explain the mystery. There is no explanation. There may not even be a mystery."

MARY SWEENEY (b. January 1, 1953 in Madison, Wisconsin) wears multiple hats as a film director, producer, writer, and editor. She has a long history of creative collaboration with David Lynch, beginning with *Blue Velvet* in 1986. She also edited *Twin Peaks* (1990), *Fire Walk With Me* (1992), *Hotel Room* (1993), *Lost Highway* (1996), *The Straight Story* (2000) *and Mulholland Drive* (2001.) She was awarded a British Academy Award for Best Editing in 2001 for tonight's film. Sweeney wrote the screenplay for *The Straight Story* for which Richard Farnsworth received an Academy Award nomination. Her producing credits date to 1995 with Nadja, and include *Lost Highway*, *The Straight Story*, *Mulholland Drive* and Lynch's *Inland Empire* (2006), and *Baraboo* (2009) her directorial debut based on her original screenplay. Sweeney is the Dino and Martha De Laurentiis Endowed Professor of film at USC, where she teaches Graduate Screenwriting. Her relationship with Lynch even went so far as marriage, but it only lasted a year in 2006-2007. When asked about the advice she'd give to aspiring young filmmakers, Sweeney replied, "One piece of advice I give to people of both sexes in this business is don't let anyone abuse you—life is too short. I am frustrated at how poorly represented women are in the film industry. I don't know how to change that. Many more qualified and stronger women than I have tried and failed."

NAOMI WATTS (b. September 28, 1968 in Shoreham, Kent, England) is the daughter of Peter Watts, longtime road manager for Pink Floyd. Her father died when the actress was 7 and her mother moved the family from England to Australia. Naomi coaxed her mother into letting her take acting class and after bit parts in commercials, she landed her first role in *For Love Alone* (1986). Watts also met her best friend, Nicole Kidman, when they both auditioned for a bikini commercial and they shared a taxi ride home. Watts was relatively unknown when the casting for *Mulholland Drive* was being bandied about. In fact, had Lynch been planning to make a film for the entire process, Watts may have not even been considered for the lead role. Because *Mulholland Drive* was originally going to be a television series, Lynch and his casting directors had to pick actors and actresses who would sign contracts for a long-term television series as opposed to a shorter film job. In Lynch's words, "You swim in a different pool when you are picking actors or actresses for a TV series that may go on for a long time." Before being cast, Watts merely had a 30-minute conversation with Lynch, which is similar to how all of the leads were chosen. During a press conference in 2001, Lynch said, "When you meet the person, I don't know what it is. I never make anyone read a scene because then I want to start rehearsing—no matter who it is. I just get a feeling based on a conversation. It's something in the eyes. It's some sort of feeling in the air. And I know that this person can do that role." Her career soared after *Mulholland Drive.* From Wikipedia: " The following year, she enjoyed box-office success with her role as Rachel Keller in *The Ring* (2002), the remake of a successful Japanese horror film. She then received nominations at the Academy Awards and the Screen Actors' Guild Awards in the Best Actress categories for her portrayal of Cristina Peck in Alejandro González Iñárritu's neo-noir *21 Grams* (2003). Her subsequent films include David O. Russell's comedy *I Heart Huckabees* (2004), the 2005 remake of *King Kong*, the crime-thriller *Eastern Promises* (2007) and the Tom Tykwer-directed thriller *The International* (2009). Since then, Watts has portrayed Valerie Plame Wilson in the biographical drama *Fair Game* (2010) and Helen Gandy in Clint Eastwood's biographical drama *J. Edgar* (2011). For her leading role as Maria Bennett in the disaster film *The Impossible* (2012), she received second nominations for the Academy Award and Screen Actors Guild Award for Best Actress and a nomination for the Golden Globe Award for Best Actress."

JEANNE BATES (b. May 21, 1918 in Berkeley, CA—d. November 28, 2007, age 89, in Woodland Hills, CA) began her acting career while a student at San Mateo Junior College, appearing on radio soap operas in San Francisco. She played the lead in an airwave mystery series, Lew X. Lansworth's "Whodunit" (Bates' scream was the show's "signature"), which became so successful that the show (and Bates) moved to Hollywood in 1941. After performing in radio serials, she signed a contract with Columbia Pictures in 1942. She performed mostly in a series of horror films and noirs, including Bela Lugosi's first victim in *The Return of the Vampire (*1943) and *Shadows in the Night* (1946). In her later career, Bates would collaborate with David Lynch on his films *Eraserhead* (1977) and *Mulholland Drive* (2001), the latter of which was her last film credit before her death in 2007. Some of her other cinematic work *Dream Lover* (1994), *The Commish* (1991), *Annette Atkins* (1991),

Emily Dwyer (1991), *Grand Canyon* (1991), *Silent Night, Deadly Night 4: Initiation* (1991), *Die Hard 2: Die Harder* (1990), *Wonder Woman* (TV Show, 1978), *Pot o' Gold* (1978), *Eraserhead* (1976), *The Streets of San Francisco* (TV, 1972), *Tower Beyond Tragedy* (1972), *Marcus Welby, M.D.* (1970), *Go Get 'Em Tiger* (1970), *Suppose They Gave A War And Nobody Came?* (1970), *Hawaii Five-0* (1970), *Ben Casey* (TV, 1961-1968), *The Strangler* (1964), *Vice Raid* (1959), *Timmy and Lassie* (TV, 1958), *Blood Arrow* (1958), *Back From The Dead* (1957), *Trooper Hook* (1957), *The Hindu* (1953), *Paula* (1952), *The Mask Of Diijon* (1946), *Sergeant Mike* (1945), *Tonight And Every Night* (1945), *The Black Parachute* (1944), *The Racket Man* (1944), *The Return Of The Vampire* (1944), *Shadows in the Night* (1944), *The Soul Of A Monster* (1944), *Sundown Valley* (1944), *She's A Soldier Too* (1944) and *The Chance Of A Lifetime* (1943).

LAURA ELENA HARRING (b. March 3, 1964 in Los Mochis, Sinaloa, Mexico) grew up in Mexico and at the age of 12 narrowly escaped death after being shot in the head when a gunfight broke out in a neighboring car. The bullet missed hitting her brain by one millimeter. After defying death, in 1985 she became the first Latina to win the Miss USA title. She was also the first of five consecutive Miss Texases who, from 1985 through 1989, went on to become Miss USA. Though Harring has worked steadily for over 30 years in the industry, it's the role of the dreamlike, troubled brunette Rita (or was it Camilla?) for which she is remembered. When Harring got the call that Lynch was interested in casting her, she was over the moon. Her excitement caused her to get into a car accident on the way to her meeting with Lynch. Luckily for Harring, it was the car of another actor who was also on the way to an audition. Both actors left the scene of the accident. Eerily, she learned at the meeting that her character gets into a car accident in one of the first scenes. Often asked how Lynch directed her without ever explaining the full meaning of tonight's movie, the actress said, "He was very mysterious…he directed me in metaphors and similes." A few examples she offers: "like a dark cloud hovering over you at all times and it's scary and it's creepy and you don't know what it is, but it makes you scared", "walk like a broken doll", and "walk like a kitty cat". Even though Lynch told her that the pilot for ABC was no longer happening, Harring held out hope. She once said, "I kept dreaming about *Mulholland Drive* becoming a movie. And I kept telling [Lynch] that I was seeing

omens: Rita, which is the character name, all over the place, and I just saw 'Mulholland' everywhere and I said, 'You know, I just feel that it's going to go forward." And she was right. Harring is also known for her roles in *The Forbidden Dance* (1990), *John Q* (2002), *Willard* (2003), *The Punisher* (2004), *The King* (2005), and *Love in the Time of Cholera* (2007).

ROBERT FORSTER (b. July 13, 1941 in Rochester, NY) grew up in a theatrical family with his father trailing the Ringling Bros. circus from city to city until they eventually hired him. It was this dogged tenacity that made an impression on the young Forster. After earning a BA in 1963, Forster took an apprenticeship at an East Rochester theatre. He spent the first few years commuting between Rochester and New York City, which was sort of like commuting between two different lives: upstate, he was a husband and father keeping afloat as a substitute teacher; in The Big Apple he was auditioning and performing on stages all over town. Even after a screen test in 1965 led him to 20th Century Fox, where he became one of the last contract players in the business, he didn't flee to Hollywood. His commute just changed. When he wasn't filming a picture, he was back in Rochester. His movie debut was a small part in the drama Reflections in a *Golden Eye* (1967) starring Elizabeth Taylor and Marlon Brando. Forster went on to appear in minor roles alongside some top Hollywood actors in *The Stalking Moon* (1968) and *Medium Cool* (1969), and a larger part in *Justine* (1969). Although he continued to act in feature films, he took the part of a hardboiled detective in the short-lived TV series *Banyon* (1971). Forster also appeared in notable parts in *The Black Hole* (1979), *Avalanche* (1978), the cult horror flick *Alligator* (1980) and played the part of a factory worker-turned-vigilante in the thriller *Vigilante* (1982). A series of action flicks followed, the most notable being *The Delta Force* (1986), starring Chuck Norris. By the late 1980s Forster's acting career had begun to slide, and he was getting less and less work; if there was any, he would be cast in small parts playing villains. Forster then began to work as a motivational speaker and an acting coach in Hollywood film schools. However, in the mid-'90s, Forster's career was resurrected by writer-director Quentin Tarantino. Forster was having breakfast at his usual spot and in walks Tarantino, who, at the time, was at the top of his game. "I had auditioned for *Reservoir Dogs* years before, so I called him over and we bullshit awhile. He mentions he's adapting a novel. We just talk," he says with a shrug. "Then, six months later I walk in and he's in my spot. My usual spot. He hands me a script and says read this, see if you like it." It was *Jackie Brown*, the

adaptation of *Rum Punch* that they had spoken about earlier. After a seven-hour audition, Tarantino cast Forster in the role of the tough but sympathetic bail bondsman Max Cherry in *Jackie Brown* (1997), which netted him an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor. After, Forster landed in tonight's film. In fact, Lynch had wanted Forester for his original *Twin Peaks* show as Harry S. Truman, but due to scheduling conflicts the actor declined the part. However, last year Lynch also cast Forester as Frank Truman in the revival of *Twin Peaks*.

DAN HEDAYA (b. July 24, 1940 in Brooklyn, NY) grew up in the tightly-knit Syrian-Jewish community of Bensonhurst in Brooklyn. His family expected him to enter the import-export business, but the young teen had other ideas. He first joined the Merchant Marines and later attended Tufts University where he studied theatre. "I had to get away from the Syrian community because it was asphyxiating to me," he said. "Had I stayed I probably would have become a wealthy but very unhappy business man." Although he worked steadily on such TV shows as *Cheers* and *NYPD Blue*, it wasn't until his role as Alicia Silverstone's no-nonsense father in *Clueless* that Hedaya began to get recognized. Known for playing villains, some of Hedaya's more famous roles were actually good guys. He was the detective in *The Usual Suspects* and Matt Dillion's father Gus Van Sant's black comedy *To Die For*. However, the part that drew Lynch's interest was Hedaya's turn as the husband who is buried alive in Joel and Ethan Coen's *Blood Simple* (1986). More recently Hedaya can be seen on the small screen in episodes of *Monk, The Mindy Project, Blue Bloods* as well as *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.

LEE GRANT (b. October 31, 1925 in NYC, NY) made her stage debut at age 4 at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. After graduating from high school, she won a scholarship to the Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre, where she studied acting with Sanford Meisner. During this time, Grant established herself as a formidable Broadway talent when she won The Critics' Circle Award for her portrayal of the shoplifter in "Detective Story". She reprised the role in the film version *Detective Story* (1951), a performance that garnered her first Academy Award Nomination. Immediately following her screen debut, however, Lee became a victim of the McCarthy-era blacklists by the House Un-American Activities Committee for refusing to testify against her husband playwright/ screenwriter Arnold Manoff. After this she did not work in film or television for 10 years. In 1966 Lee re-started her acting career in the TV series *Peyton Place* (1964), for which she won an Emmy and she later garnered her first Academy Award for *Shampoo* (1975), also receiving Academy Award nominations for *The Landlord* (1970) and *Voyage of the Damned* (1976). In 1987 she received an Academy Award for the HBO documentary, *Down and Out in America* (1986) and directed *Nobody's Child* (1986) for CBS, for which she received the Directors Guild Award. She was also the first choice to play wise-cracking Dorothy in *The Golden Girls*, but turned it down saying she didn't want to play a grandmother. Tonight's film was her penultimate acting credit with her final film being *Going Shopping* in 2005.

MONTY MONTGOMERY (b. July 4, 1963) made his debut as a producer at the tender age of 15 alongside independent director/

painter Marcus Reichert casting rock stars such as Mick Jagger, for the role of Antonin Artaud in *Wings of Ash: Pilot for a Dramatization of the Life of Antonin Artaud*, and Deborah Harry (Blondie), for a femme fatale role in *Union City*. In 1981, alongside Kathryn Bigelow, he co-wrote, co-directed and produced the independent film *The Loveless*, a dark story of a 1950s motorcycle gang, with Willem Dafoe starring in his first major film role. It wasn't long after when friend Isabella Rossellini tried to get David Lynch to meet the young producer. Sensing the two shared a similar sensibility, she arranged a meeting between the two. Montgomery recalls, "I went over to David's house and we chatted for a while. A week or two later; he called to ask if I would like to produce a short film The Cowboy and the Frenchman for French Television. I did; and so began our working relationship." In 1986, with partners Steve Golin and Joni Sighvattson, Montgomery founded Propaganda Films, which became a well-regarded independent production company known for Madonna's documentary *Truth or Dare* (1991), *Being John Malkovich* (1999) and the pilot for *Beverly Hills 90210*. In 1989, he was a producer on Lynch's *Twin Peaks* and worked with the director producing *Wild at Heart* as well as three television episodes of Lynch's *Hotel Room* (1993). In fact, it was Montgomery who bought the book rights to *Wild at Heart* with the intent of directing the film. He then sent the book over to Lynch asking if he'd sign on as executive producer. After two days, Lynch left a voicemail saying: "Monty, you are not going to direct this movie, because I am." Whether or not Montgomery harbors any ill-will about this arrangement is unclear; Lynch did go on to direct, while Monty opted to produce. It seems the two are still close as he said when asked about how he came to play the cowboy in tonight's film: "David wrote the part for me and would not take no for an answer when I tried to avoid playing the role up until the very last minute. David is a lifelong friend. We are regularly in touch." Tonight is Montgomery's only acting credit, billed as "Lafayette Montgomery," as the first cowboy. A cowboy shows up again at the later party scene, but it is not Montgomery. Curiouser and Curiouser….

Chris Rodley: "Lynch on Mulholland Dr." (Criterion Notes).
So how did you first pitch the idea to ABC as a potential TV series?

I just had two pages that were read to them, and then more pitch stuff to give them a mood and more of a thing. And at that point, they were all saying, "Sounds great. Let's do it."
But what was on those two pages?

A couple of things: a woman trying to become a star in Hollywood, and at the same time finding herself becoming a detective and possibly going into a dangerous world.

As the idea developed in your mind, what was it about Mulholland Dr. *that made you fall in love with it?*
If someone said to you, "What was it about that girl that really made you fall in love with her?" you couldn't say just one thing. It's so many things. It's everything. Same with this. You get an idea. A moment before, it wasn't there. And it comes SO FAST! And when you get the idea, it sometimes comes with an inspiration, an energy, that fires you up. Maybe the love is *in* the idea, and it just comes into you. I don't know. But the idea is really small, and then it expands and shows itself to you so you see it completely. And then it goes to the memory bank so that you can examine it some more. It's very complete. It's like a seed. The tree is really there, but it's not a tree yet. It wants to be a tree, but it's just a seed.

Sometimes an idea presents itself to you and you're just as surprised as anyone else. I remember when I was writing *Mulholland Dr.,* the character of the Cowboy just came walking in one night. I just started talking about this cowboy. That's what happens—something starts occurring, but it wasn't there a moment ago.

Do you then get anxious about how this idea is going to fit in with everything else?

No, because you're just in that world yourself. You're just going. There is no movie yet. Until the process completes itself, you're just going to carry on. Somewhere along the way, when it looks like it's taking some sort of shape, the rest of the ideas all gather around to see if they can fit into that shape. Maybe you'll find out that that thing isn't going to work, so you save it in a box for later.

You've got to be the audience for most of this trip. You can't second-guess them. If you did, you'd be removing yourself from yourself. Then you'd be out there in really dangerous territory, trying to build something for some abstract group that's always changing. I think you'd fail. You've got to do it from the inside first and hope for the best.

Tell me about the character of Diane—or Betty—as there are two differently named characters, both played by Naomi Watts. What do we call her?

This particular girl—Diane—sees things she wants, but she just can't get them. It's all there—the party—but she's not invited. And it gets to her. You could call it fate—if it doesn't smile on you, there's *nothing* you can do. You can have the greatest talent and the greatest ideas, but if that door doesn't open, you're fresh out of luck. It takes so many ingredients *and* the door opening to finally make it.

There are jokes about how in L.A. everyone is writing a script and everyone has got a résumé and a photo. So there's a *yearning* to get the chance to express yourself—a sort of

creativity in the air. Everyone is willing to go for broke and take a chance. It's a modern town in that way. It's like you want to go to Las Vegas and turn that one dollar into a million dollars. *Sunset Boulevard* says so much about that Hollywood dream thing to me.

Did you ever feel that way about this town yourself—that it was the place to make your career as a filmmaker?

No. I came in through a weird door, and I didn't really know about it. I arrived here in August 1970, at night, and I woke up in the morning, and I'd never seen the light so bright. A feeling comes with this light—a feeling of creative freedom. So for me it was almost an immediate full-tilt love affair from then on. Hopefully, everybody finds a place where they feel good about being where they are—a place that does something to them. That's L.A. to me.

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I'm always intrigued by the exact time frame in a lot of your films. [...] Mulholland Dr. is defiantly contemporary, and yet it has a feeling that it's happening in the past—the fifties or even the thirties and forties.

But that's so much like our actual lives. Many times during the day, we plan for the future, and many times in the day we think of the past. We're listening to retro radio and watching retro TV. There are all kinds of opportunities to relive the past, and there are new things coming up every second. There is some kind of present, but the present is the most elusive, because it's going real fast.

There are still many places you could go in L.A. to catch the drift of the old golden age, but they're getting fewer. It's like the old oil well that used to be where the Beverly Center is now. That was one of the locations we used for *Eraserhead,* and it was one of my favorite places in the whole world. You'd go over this doughnut of earth and down inside this place, and you'd be in a completely different world. There were these oil tanks and this working oil well just standing there. It was just incredible. There was a pony ride from the twenties or the thirties. And there was this little key shop that was like four feet by four feet, with a roof. And then there was the Tail o' the Pup hot dog stand, which has moved to another place now. And there was Hull Bros. Lumber, which was a working sawmill, I think, with a hundred-foot-tall mound of sawdust next to it. There was also a nursery. It was all, like, from the thirties— mostly dirt, with this stuff scattered around. The buildings were ancient, and guys wore those green-colored visors and armbands. They were old-timers who knew about wood and Hollywood and everything.

Why are you attracted to all of that?

For me, it's a thing that I felt as a kid in *Our Gang* comedies— *The Little Rascals*. It was *feeling* the thirties—a feeling of a place back in time, because it hadn't changed. It was like a set. This place just existed there. And then it was gone. It became the Beverly Center. Now it's just, like, a congestion of shops and parking and lights and signs. It's just a huge change.

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In its transition from TV pilot to feature film, did Mulholland Dr. *become more complicated?*

No, it got much simpler. It became obvious what it was. It was like the day I was in the food room at the stable in AFI when we were shooting *Eraserhead.* We'd been shooting for almost a year by then, and I was drawing the Lady in the Radiator. I tried to picture the radiator in Henry's room— which was twenty feet away—and I couldn't. So I went running into Henry's room, and I looked at the radiator, and I almost started weeping for joy. It was *perfect.* It was unique because it had a place built in it—for her. But she didn't exist when that radiator had been handpicked. So the Lady in the Radiator married with what had gone before. I knew it already, of course. It was the same kind of thing with *Mulholland Dr.*

But there were many more elements to mesh and narrative threads to tie up in Mulholland Dr.

Sure, but when you're working on something, you have strings that go out here and there, and they end. But one of those strings is going to continue, while others atrophy and fall away. You sometimes go in different directions to find your main path. And maybe one of those strings that were started comes back by surprise at the very end, in a different form, and you say, "*That's* how that thing fits in." All the threads in *Mulholland Dr.* are tied up.

The movie is full of obvious clues, but there are many other things that are important visual and audio indicators that are not obvious. So at times it does seem as if you're delighting in teasing or mystifying the viewer.

No, you *never* do that to an audience. An idea comes, and you make it the way the idea says it wants to be, and you just stay true to that. Clues are beautiful because I believe we're all detectives. We mull things over, and we figure things out. We're always working this way. People's minds hold things and form conclusions with indications. It's like music. Music starts, a theme comes in, it goes away, and when it comes back, it's so much greater because of what's gone before.

But audiences have struggled with trying to work the movie out and, at a certain point, they just want you to tell them what it all means—to you.

Yeah, and I always say the same thing: I think they really know for themselves what it's about. I think that intuition—the detective in us—puts things together in a way that makes sense for us. They say intuition gives you an inner knowing, but the weird thing about inner knowing is that it's really hard to communicate that to someone else. As soon as you try, you realize that you don't have the words, or the ability to say that inner knowing to your friend. But you still *know it*!
It's *really* frustrating. I think you can't communicate it because the knowing is too beautifully abstract. And yet poets can catch an abstraction in words and give you a feeling that you can't get any other way.

I think people know what *Mulholland Dr.* is to them, but they don't trust it. They want to have someone else tell them. I love people analyzing it, but they don't need me to help them out. That's the beautiful thing, to figure things out as a detective. Telling them robs them of the joy of thinking it through and feeling it through and coming to a conclusion.

And it doesn't matter if that conclusion isn't the same as yours?

Right, because even if you get the whole thing, there would still be some abstract elements in it that you'd have to kind of feel-think. You'd have to say, "I kind of understand that, but I don't know *exactly* what it is." Sort of. The frames are always the same on the film—it's always the same length, and the same soundtrack is always running along it. But the experience in the room changes depending on the audience. That's another reason why people shouldn't be told too much, because "knowing" putrefies that experience.
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What is it about women crying that fascinates you?

I don't know! What IS it? It's a lot of things swimming together, I guess. I've done that kind of scene a few times. Maybe I'll do it a bunch more. I don't want to say exactly what it is, because it won't be enough.
In Mulholland Dr., *both Diane and Rita sob uncontrollably while watching Rebekah Del Rio mime to her own performance of Roy Orbison's "Crying" at Club Silencio. How did the latter come about?*

That was an accident. My friend and former music agent at CAA, Brian Loucks, calls from time to time and says, "I want you to meet so-and-so, can we come over for a coffee?" One day he calls me and says, "I want you to meet Rebekah Del Rio." So Rebekah comes over with Brian at ten o'clock in the morning, and because I'd said to John Neff, "I think she's gonna sing," he'd set up the microphone—a very *beautiful* microphone—in one of the booths in my recording studio. Rebekah just wanted to come over for a coffee and sing in front of us. She didn't want to record anything, but she came in and four minutes later—I think *before* she'd had her coffee—she's in the booth. And the one take that she sang, four minutes off the street, is the vocal that's in the film. THE ACTUAL RECORDING!
        The weird thing is that she chose to sing that particular Roy Orbison song. I was about to start shooting *Blue Velvet,* and "Crying" came on the radio. I said, "Jeez! I've got to get that

song to see if it would work in the film." In the end, it wasn't quite right, but I started listening to other cuts, and "In Dreams" came up. It was destined to change things in the most beautiful ways after that. Rebekah knows Barbara Orbison, Roy's second wife, and she's the one who translated "Crying" into Spanish, but it's just so strange that that was the song that was almost in *Blue Velvet.*
        Rebekah's got one of the most beautiful voices in the world, so I said, "Damn, this is *unbelievable*!" And I start thinking about it. We listened to it after she left, and I said, "She's gonna be in the film." I'd had this other idea that I'd written down one night, so that jumped in and provided the slot for Rebekah.
        The lip sync that she did when we actually shot that scene much later was, like, the best I've ever seen. She's the original singer, of course, but even so, there are singers who can't do that—the lips and the tongue and the breaths don't work. But this was *perfect* in every way.

There seems to be a lot of miming in Mulholland Dr., *to music—at the auditions for Adam Kesher's movie—but also people "miming" entire lives. Is the character of Betty in some respects Diane's "mime"?*
[Long pause]
Someone who only becomes "real" when she plays someone else for that brilliant audition at Paramount Pictures?
[Pause continues]
Doing exactly the same scene we've already watched her rehearse rather badly with Rita? What was that all about?

It's like doing something twice—the same piece of material two different ways. It's always interesting. In *Blue Velvet,* the song "In Dreams" is played twice, and it's got a completely different feeling each time, and a different meaning. Or maybe it's the same meaning but you see it a different way. All the characters are dealing somewhat with a question of identity. Like everyone.

Lovorco Maric: "'Mulholland Drive': Reality is the True Nightmare" (Cinephilia & Beyond)
        David Lynch, a name that is for many film enthusiasts the epitome for weird, surreal, and bizarre, surprised many people when he had characterised himself as a Boy Scout from Missoula, Montana. He is also known as "Jimmy Stewart from Mars," or "Jimmy Stewart on acid"—a very polite, happy-go-

lucky, enthusiastic individual, who unironically uses words and phrases like "Golly!," "Holy jumping George!," "Howdy!" etc., and who just happens to have a vivid imagination that has been the basis of nightmares for many of his viewers. Contrary to popular belief, Lynch is not the type of a guy who, for instance, chops off his fingernails in his grandmother's basement and then puts them in his dinner salad, but is somebody who is actually trying, through foundations, meditation recommendations and charity work, to promote, and achieve without a hint of irony, peace and prosperity. But Lynch's worlds are full of such contradictions, full of idealists who also happen to be scoundrels below the surface, and Lynch is fascinated with the dark and perverse facet of the human condition, but also on the profound and gentle side of humanity, a soulful aspect of his work that doesn't get nearly mentioned as the former one. The oblique and mysterious nature of Lynch's work draws many to become obsessed with finding a universal explanation or an enlightened meaning to his films. But Lynch insists on never revealing what the abstractions in his films "mean," and he suggests to his viewers that they also try to find out for themselves more on an intuitive than a rational level as to what the disturbing visuals, the labyrinthian plots and the unreliable characters truly convey. Lynch claims that everybody is a detective, but it is also important to note that Lynch's movies are not merely a puzzle to be solved: they are to be experienced, after which a powerful cinema-going epiphany may come out of his best work. This set of essays will try and derive certain interpretations and explanations of Lynch's ideas, but they are in no way to be understood as definitive or let alone indicative of what the director himself was thinking. Every reader should be an autonomous detective indeed.

After an 11-year break from filmmaking, Lynch returns for, as he puts it, an 18-hour feature divided into 18 parts, called Twin Peaks, which sounds familiar to pretty much anyone remotely acquainted with the man's work. Lynch's cult television show that originally aired in 1990 and 1991 and revolutionized television storytelling returns, against all odds, for a special event series starring Kyle MacLachlan as Agent Dale Cooper. Very little is known about the plot or the characters, apart from the fact that it is indeed happening again, 25 years after the murder of Laura Palmer, the teenage homecoming queen whose death has set the plot of the old Twin Peaks into motion. A 200+ cast list has been released, including newcomers such as Naomi Watts, Laura Dern, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Tim Roth and Tom Sizemore. This mammoth project for a 71-year-old Lynch will, therefore, serve as a jumping point for Cinephilia & Beyond to go to the past and explore his ten feature films, starting from the debut film Eraserhead in 1977, all the way to Inland Empire in 2006. His short film, web, commercial and television work will not be included, with the clear and notable exception of Twin Peaks itself, which is an essential component for this retrospective.

After the frustrating fallout of Twin Peaks, the negative reception and subsequent cancellation of another Frost/Lynch TV project, a 1992 sitcom On the Air, David Lynch vowed never to do television again. Despite his promise, he was convinced seven years later to do a TV pilot for ABC by Tony Krantz, the same agent who had persuaded Lynch and Mark Frost to work and create Twin Peaks. Lynch had shot the 90-minute pilot called Mulholland Drive and showed it to the ABC producers who have—not surprisingly, since Lynch had already received countless notes during filming about, among other things, the moral implications of characters smoking cigarettes—discarded the project. Lynch amusingly tells the story of an ABC executive seeing the pilot at 6 a.m. in the morning, standing up and drinking coffee; practically the worst kind of a way to experience a David Lynch project. One year had passed, and after it seemed that the pilot would be thrown into oblivion, French producers came into play to finance the conversion of the TV pilot into a feature film. The deal was made, the cast and crew came back to finish the thing, certain props and costumes have been salvaged after the majority had been lost, and additional 45 minutes of footage were shot. After this seemingly torturous process, the film was released to become one of Lynch's most acclaimed films, and its reputation as a critical favorite was further asserted by a recent BBC poll of 177 critics from 36 countries that voted Mulholland Drive as the greatest film of the 21st century (so far).

The story of the filming went from a failure to a success. The story of the film arguably goes the other way around. Mulholland Drive indeed begins with success and recognition, derived from a dance of joy: a scene of a jitterbug contest, where the happy and fulfilled face of Naomi Watts is featured as the winner. After an unfocused camera hovers around the bed and zooms into a pillow, the dream begins: literal destruction and death follow with a car accident scene on the eponymous, mysterious road above Los Angeles. The thin line between accomplishment and failure is reflected in the journey of the main two (or is it four?) characters of Betty/Diane and Rita/Camilla, played by Watts and Laura Harring. Laura Harring's character of Rita is the archetype of somebody who is at the deep end, descending into the dark belly of L.A. from the site of the car accident, setting the plot (the word "plot" is used here very loosely) into motion. In the vein of Lynch's tributes to film noir, she passes under a Sunset Boulevard sign, and this reference might also be one of many clues in solving the mystery of the film. Billy Wilder's Sunset Boulevard, one of Lynch's favorite films of all time, is in many ways a sibling of Mulholland Drive: both movies are scathing criticisms of Hollywood and its destructive relationship toward talent, ambition, and enthusiasm. Sunset Boulevard has the iconic Gloria Swanson playing Norma Desmond (note that both "Norma" and "Desmond" are characters in Twin Peaks, while Lynch himself in the series plays the FBI Deputy Director Gordon Cole, a name taken from a small character in Sunset Boulevard—it is obvious that Wilder's work carries a huge

influence on the director), an aging movie star of the silent era, neglected and abandoned by the film industry, where many of her peers and creative minds have long since moved on to the era of "talkies" (the famous quote from Norma: "We didn't need dialogue, we had faces!"), mimicking Swanson's own career as a silent movie star, although the irony now is that this talkie became with time Swanson's most famous role. Norma is desperate to retake the old limelight and to possess the role of a lead thespian once more, not only for vanity, but for a sense of purpose. Her possession is not limited to that aspect alone: Norma's increasingly destructive and obsessive relationship with the writer she hired to polish her screenplay that she believes will bring her back to the heights of Hollywood ends very badly, and the ending of the story has Norma still trapped in delusions of grandeur, pinned to long gone days of fame, ready in a farcical manner for her close-up which had her expressive, unforgettable face on tens of thousands of screens around the globe.

The tragedy of the main heroine in Mulholland Drive is greater because there never was a close-up to begin with.

Sunset Boulevard may have its share of similarities with Lynch's nightmarish version of Hollywood, but there are also many differences. Wilder's themes revolve around a character who is not being able to let go, on the seductive dangers of nostalgia, on the cruel certitude of aging, on the fact that the glory days are over and there is nothing left in one's life that could make up for those old times, resulting in bitterness and loneliness. The main protagonist of Mulholland Drive shares those nasty character traits, but what makes Lynch's story more tragic and desperate is that there are no memories of past triumphs to cling to, no achieved heights to look up to even if they were long buried in the past, no glimpses of ambitions once accomplished. What is left is the monster behind the diner, carrying a blue box of illusion, penetrating the dreams of others when its own were not fulfilled.

This particular demonic apparition appears in one of Lynch's more disturbing, anxiety-causing sequences, taking place in a diner called Winkie's of all places. Patrick Fischler, the memorable character actor, is convincingly frightened of a creature lingering behind Winkie's, who is haunting his dreams, and is there a worse nightmare than fear of failure and unfulfillment? The dreamy and unnerving floating feel of the camera while filming Fischler's face telling the story of his nightmares is only increasing the agitation, making the viewer sense how it feels in the skin of this petrified, poor soul. The scene ends in one of Lynch's rare uses of jump scares, where the creature almost nonchalantly reveals itself to the dreamer who wanted to make sure that the nightmare isn't there, except that it will always be present: reality is the true nightmare, and one should not face it with fear. A similar thing happens to Kyle MacLachlan's Agent Cooper in the finale of the original series of Twin Peaks; the valiant hero succumbing to his fears in the Black Lodge and becoming the figure he wanted to annihilate, that being the dark mirror version of himself. Evil is a force in Lynch's worlds, but it materializes in his protagonists, not outside of them.

The illusion of Mulholland Drive comes from the cynical disillusion of Diane Selwyn, the character Naomi Watts plays in the third act of the film. It is precisely in Winkie's where Diane's illusion is being created; Betty, her saintly mirror version of the first two acts sees a waitress carrying the name of Diane, and it is behind that center of creativity where the true Diane truly lies, in the shadows, behind the diner. Betty is talented, adorable, optimistic and eager to help a stricken and confused Rita, battered and amnesiac, literally mind-wiped by the mechanizations of Hollywood, personified through Michael J. Anderson's (the dancing man from another place in Twin Peaks) omnipotent Mr. Roque. With Roque, Lynch creates the illusion of having a man of a huge body and proportionally small head, physically threatening but mindfully sparse, possibly reflecting Lynch's opinion on certain film executives, ruling from a darkened, macabre studio which seems like a descendant of the Red Room from Twin Peaks with more office décor in a cold but colourful Edward Hopper/Francis Bacon fashion, supported by a creepy, motionless valet.

Lynch does not have time for subtle digs at those who impeach creative freedom and inventiveness, instead going right for the jugular: the story of the film director Adam Kesher, played with vigorous energy and a unique sense of self-deprecating humour by Justin Theroux, goes to darkly comic and deeply calamitous places, where the director loses the creative control over his film, his life consequently turning into a living hell because of his opposition and rebellion towards the studio executives, this time personified through two gangster-like brothers, one of whom—played by the great Angelo Badalamenti—is also notoriously picky about his coffee. After meeting the sinister, eyebrow-free and no-nonsense Cowboy, the Hollywood version of a fixer, Kesher decides to compromise in order to save what is left of his project; he capitulates to the greed, blackmail and intimidation of powerful forces within the land of dreams, casting a girl named Camilla Rhodes in his movie, despite his wishes.

Camilla Rhodes is another symbol of compromise and a sell-out, yielding idealism to greedy satiation of glamor, but also the main culprit of Diane Selwyn's hopeless frustrations. The first two acts of the movie show through Kesher's perspective how the system forces Camilla down the throat of creative minds, while Betty is discovered as being a fantastic acting talent, mesmerizing agents, fellow narcissistic actors and Kesher himself, who seems enamored purely by seeing Betty for a short period of time. The third act of the film offers a different perspective: Camilla is indeed talented, and she has beaten Diane for a very important, career-making role. Most importantly, Diane is tragically in love with Camilla, and Camilla very cruelly

does not reciprocate that feeling beyond sexual desire, humiliating her in the process in various awkward occasions.

The third act of Mulholland Drive, the so-called "reality" section of the film by the most popular interpretation (while the most common explanation for the first two acts is that it represents Diane's dream, or purgatorial realm gone wrong as in the case of Lost Highway, or a heightened reality that cherry-picks certain real events from Diane's life and wraps them around a biased and subjective interpretation of those events), may be Lynch at his most skilled, disciplined, emotionally resonant and fiercely dedicated. The anchor for this is Naomi Watts, delivering a performance that is still being talked and discussed among many Lynch fans and cinephiles in general, as one of the definitive female performances of the last twenty years. Ironically enough, it had helped that the majority of the first 100 minutes has been filmed as a TV pilot in one sequence, while the entirety of the final 45 minutes was completed a year later, since in the third act Watts seems not only emotionally but physically different—paler, gaunter, more ragged and completely cheerless. The transformation is as impressive as it is daunting, and Watts readily carries the baggage of Diane's complete mental breakdown of somebody who was once innocent, charming and radiant. Matching the challenges of what Sheryl Lee had to face in Fire Walk with Me, Watts goes through the ordeals of desperation (the powerful scene of her crying to a vision of Camilla, cutting to a shot of herself at the same place looking exhausted and worn down), disgrace (the real masturbation sequence where Watts was somewhat justifiably screaming "Fuck you!" to David Lynch on set as a reaction to what he had asked the actress to do, to which the transcendental meditation—raised director only replied with "OK, Naomi!") and humiliation (the Adam Kesher party sequence where Diane has to face a cruel and indignant break-up from Camilla). This last one is where stars align for Lynch to achieve an emotionally visceral sequence where Diane tells her story of failures, underachievements and missed opportunities, followed by a familiar visual motif of a condescending tap on the hand (remember Patricia Arquette tapping Bill Pullman's shoulder in Lost Highway?) from Adam Kesher's mother and a tear falling from Watts' eye in the exact moment the announcement of Camilla/Kesher engagement is being made.

The critics of bifurcated dream/reality interpretation note that this may be an oversimplification of Lynch's ideas. But the question which brings further compelling analyses in Mulholland Drive isn't if the first 100 minutes is a dream, but why Diane dreams that which she dreams, and which parts of the illusion are more "real" than others. Take the hitman for instance. In the first, lighter half of the film, the hitman serves as a comic relief, being buffoonishly inept. In the second, "reality" part, the hitman is ruthless and competent. The first part has an old couple welcoming Betty to the heavenly Los Angeles almost as guardian angels; the second part has that same old couple as diabolical avenging angels, products of her own subconscious and dark id (the monster behind the diner creates them out of the blue box which creates the fantasy of the first two acts)—symbols of conscience leading Diane to her suicide. The mysteries of the film are summarized in one of the most indelible set pieces of Lynch's career—the Club Silencio sequence, where masterful, hypnotic Badalamenti score (Badalamenti, in general, is in amazing form here, both in the ominous main synth score and in the harrowing orchestral themes in the second half of the movie) accompanies a flamboyant performance by Richard Green as the Magician, the presenter at the club, explaining in enigmatic exposition (a true oxymoron) that it is "all an illusion" and signifying in that exact moment, where Betty/Diane starts shaking and Rita/Camilla holds her, two main characters switching places between the observer and the observed: where Betty was the stable anchor before in their relationship, Diane is now the victim. This is followed by another one of Lynch's memorable musical sections, where Rebekah Del Rio sings the Spanish-language cover of Roy Orbison's Crying, epitomizing the central theme of unrequited love. For Diane, trust was put in a parasitic system of greed-driven Hollywood that is consistent only in its treachery, while a loving person in the meantime yields and becomes part of that same parasite.

Lynch had called the movie a love story and a story of finding one's identity. This is one of Lynch's darkest stories; even Laura Palmer in Fire Walk with Me gets her angel in the end, while Diane Selwyn finds out who she is after a failed identity switch (akin to Fred Madison in Lost Highway) and finds no consolation in that. But despite the characters' tribulations and the film's cynical tone of Hollywood, the exceptional filmmaking, the evolving and never creepier sound design, and a combination of the surreal, bizarre elements of Blue Velvet and human resonance of The Straight Story make Mulholland Drive one of the most rewarding Lynchian experiences. Lynch often says that his films tend to be full of questions and not offering answers because life itself is like that. Mulholland Drive has a lot to offer with its unsolvable mysteries, providing a perspective on life and the human condition, the biggest mystery of them all.

Roger Ebert: "Mulholland Drive" (2001)

David Lynch has been working toward "Mulholland Drive" all of his career, and now that he's arrived there I forgive him "Wild at Heart" and even "Lost Highway." At last his experiment doesn't shatter the test tubes. The movie is a surrealist dreamscape in the form of a Hollywood film noir, and the less sense it makes, the more we can't stop watching it.

It tells the story of . . . well, there's no way to finish that sentence. There are two characters named Betty and Rita who the movie follows through mysterious plot loops, but by the end of the film we aren't even sure they're different characters, and Rita (an amnesiac who lifted the name from a "Gilda" poster) wonders if she's really Diane Selwyn, a name from a waitress' name tag.

Betty ([Naomi Watts](#)) is a perky blond, [Sandra Dee](#) crossed with a Hitchcock heroine, who has arrived in town to stay in her absent Aunt Ruth's apartment and audition for the movies. Rita ([Laura Elena Harring](#)) is a voluptuous brunet who is about to be murdered when her limousine is front-ended by drag racers. She crawls out of the wreckage on Mulholland Drive, stumbles down the hill, and is taking a shower in the aunt's apartment when Betty arrives.

Rita doesn't remember anything, even her name. Betty decides to help her. As they try to piece her life back together, the movie introduces other characters. A movie director ([Justin Theroux](#)) is told to cast an actress in his movie or be murdered; a dwarf in a wheelchair (Michael J. Anderson) gives instructions by cell phone; two detectives turn up, speak standard TV cop show dialogue, and disappear; a landlady (Ann Miller--yes, Ann Miller) wonders who the other girl is in Aunt Ruth's apartment; Betty auditions; the two girls climb in through a bedroom window, Nancy Drew style; a rotting corpse materializes, and Betty and Rita have two lesbian love scenes so sexy you'd swear this was a 1970s movie, made when movie audiences liked sex. One of the scenes also contains the funniest example of pure logic in the history of sex scenes.

Having told you all of that, I've basically explained nothing. The movie is hypnotic; we're drawn along as if one thing leads to another--but nothing leads anywhere, and that's even before the characters start to fracture and recombine like flesh caught in a kaleidoscope. "Mulholland Drive" isn't like "[Memento,](#)" where if you watch it closely enough, you can hope to explain the mystery. There is no explanation. There may not even be a mystery.

There have been countless dream sequences in the movies, almost all of them conceived with Freudian literalism to show the characters having nightmares about the plot.

"Mulholland Drive" is all dream. There is nothing that is intended to be a waking moment. Like real dreams, it does not explain, does not complete its sequences, lingers over what it finds fascinating, dismisses unpromising plotlines. If you want an explanation for the last half hour of the film, think of it as the dreamer rising slowly to consciousness, as threads from the dream fight for space with recent memories from real life, and with fragments of other dreams--old ones and those still in development.

This works because Lynch is absolutely uncompromising. He takes what was frustrating in some of his earlier films, and instead of backing away from it, he charges right through. "Mulholland Drive" is said to have been assembled from scenes that he shot for a 1999 ABC television pilot, but no network would air (or understand) this material, and Lynch knew it. He takes his financing where he can find it and directs as fancy dictates. This movie doesn't feel incomplete because it could never be complete--closure is not a goal.

Laura Elena Harring and Naomi Watts take the risk of embodying Hollywood archetypes, and get away with it because they are archetypes. Not many actresses would be bold enough to name themselves after [Rita Hayworth](#), but Harring does, because she can. Slinky and voluptuous in clinging gowns, all she has to do is stand there and she's the first good argument in 55 years for a "Gilda" remake. Naomi Watts is bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, a plucky girl detective. Like a dream, the movie shifts easily between tones; there's an audition where a girl singer performs

"Sixteen Reasons" and "I Told Every Little Star," and the movie isn't satirizing "American Bandstand," it's channeling it.

This is a movie to surrender yourself to. If you require logic, see something else. "Mulholland Drive" works directly on the emotions, like music. Individual scenes play well by themselves, as they do in dreams, but they don't connect in a way that makes sense--again, like dreams. The way you know the movie is over is that it ends. And then you tell a friend, "I saw the weirdest movie last night." Just like you tell them you had the weirdest dream.

And here he is on the same film a decade later:

Roger Ebert: "Mulholland Dr" (2011)
It's well known that [David Lynch](#)'s "Mulholland Dr." was assembled from the remains of a cancelled TV series, with the addition of some additional footage filmed later. That may be taken by some viewers as a way to explain the film's fractured structure and lack of continuity. I think it's a delusion to imagine a "complete" film lurking somewhere in Lynch's mind — a ghostly Director's Cut that exists only in his original intentions. The film is openly dreamlike, and like most dreams it moves uncertainly down a path with many turnings.

It seems to be the dream of Betty ([Naomi Watts](#)), seen in the first shots sprawled on a bed. It continues with the story of how Betty came to Hollywood and how she ended up staying in the apartment of her aunt, but if we are within a dream there is no reason to believe that on a literal level. It's as likely she only dreams of getting off a flight from Ontario to Los Angeles, being wished good luck by the cackling old couple who met her on the plane, and arriving by taxi at the apartment. Dreams cobble their contents from the materials at hand, and although the old folks turn up again at the end of the film their actual existence may be problematic.

The movie seems seductively realistic in several opening scenes however, as an ominous film noir sequence shows a beautiful woman in the back seat of a limousine on Mulholland Drive — that serpentine road that coils along the spine of the hills separating the city from the San Fernando Valley. The limo pulls over, the driver pulls a gun and orders his passenger out of the car, and just then two drag-racing hot rods hurtle into view and one of them strikes the limo, killing the driver and his partner. The stunned woman (Laura Elena Herring) staggers into some shrubbery and starts to climb down the hill — first crossing Franklin Dr., finally arriving at Sunset. Still hiding in shrubbery, she sees a woman leaving an apartment

to get into a taxi, and she sneaks into the apartment and hides under a table.

Who is she? Let's not get ahead of her. The very first moments of the film seemed like a bizarre montage from a jitterbug contest on a 1950s TV show, and the hotrods and their passengers visually link with that. But people don't dress like jitterbuggers and drag race on Mulholland at the time of the film (the 1990s), not in now-priceless antique hot rods, and the crash seems to have elements imported from an audition, perhaps, that will later be made much of.

I won't further try your patience with more of this mix-and-match. Dreams need not make sense, I am not Freud, and at this point in the film it's working perfectly well as a film noir. They need not make sense, either. Conventional movie cops turn up, investigate, and disappear for the rest of the film. Betty discovers the woman from Mulholland taking a shower in her aunt's apartment and demands to know who she is. The woman sees a poster of [Rita Hayworth] in "Gilda" on the wall and replies, "Rita." She claims to have amnesia. Betty now responds with almost startling generosity, deciding to help "Rita" discover her identity, and in a smooth segue the two women bond. Indeed, before long they're helping each other sneak into apartment #17. Lynch has shifted gears from a film noir to a much more innocent kind of crime story, a Nancy Drew mystery. When they find the decomposing corpse in #17, however, that's a little more detailed than Nancy Drew's typical discoveries.

What I've been doing is demonstrating the way "Mulholland Dr." affects a lot of viewers. They start rehearsing the plot to themselves, hoping that if they retrace their steps they can determine where they are and how they got there. This movie doesn't work that way. Each step has a way of being like an open elevator door with no elevator inside.

Unsatisfied by my understanding of the film, I took it to an audience that hadn't failed me for 30 years. At the Conference on World Affairs at the University of Colorado at Boulder, I did my annual routine: Showing a title on Monday afternoon, and then sifting through it a scene at a time, sometimes a shot at a time, for the next four afternoons. It drew a full house, and predictably a lot of readings and interpretations. Yet even my old friend who was forever finding everything to be a version of Homer's *Odyssey* was uncertain this time.

I gave my usual speech about how you can't take an interpretation to a movie. You have to find it there already. No consensus emerged about what we had found. It was a tribute to Lynch that the movie remained compulsively watchable while refusing to yield to interpretation. The most promising direction we tried was to delineate the boundaries of the dreams(s) and the identities of the dreamer(s).

That was an absorbing exercise, but then consider the series of shots in which the film loses focus and then the women's faces begin to merge. I was reminded of Bergman's "[Persona]," also a film about two women. At a point when one deliberately causes an injury to the other, the film seems to catch on fire in the projector. The screen goes black, and then the film starts again with images from the earliest days of silent film. What is Bergman telling us? Best to start over again? What is Lynch telling us? Best to abandon the illusion that all of this happens to two women, or within two heads?

What about the much-cited lesbian scenes? Dreams? We all have erotic dreams, but they are more likely inspired by

desires than experiences, and the people in them may be making unpaid guest appearances. What about the film's material involving auditions? Those could be stock footage in any dream by an actor. The command about which actress to cast? That leads us around to the strange little man in the wheelchair, issuing commands. Would anyone in the film's mainstream have a way of knowing such a figure existed?

And what about the whatever-he-is who lurks behind the diner? He fulfills the underlying purpose of Lynch's most consistent visual strategy in the film. He loves to use slow, sinister sideways tracking shots to gradually peek around corners. There are a lot of those shots in the aunt's apartment. That's also the way we sneak up to peek around the back corner of the diner. When that figure pops into view, the timing is such that you'd swear he knew someone — or the camera — was coming. It's a classic BOO! moment and need not have the slightest relationship to anything else in the film.

David Lynch loves movies, genres, archetypes and obligatory shots. "[Mulholland Drive]" employs the conventions of film noir in a pure form. One useful definition of noirs is that they're about characters who have committed a crime or a sin, are immersed with guilt, and fear they're getting what they deserve. Another is that they've done nothing wrong, but it nevertheless certainly appears as if they have.

The second describes Hitchcock's favorite plot, the Innocent Man Wrongly Accused. The first describes the central dilemma of "Mulholland Dr." Yet it floats in an uneasy psychic space, never defining who sinned. The film evokes the feeling of noir guilt while never attaching to anything specific. A neat trick. Pure cinema.

[David Lynch's screenplay for *Mulholland Drive*]:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/9biatxty76fwv6y/Mulholland%20Drive.pdf?raw=1

From *David Lynch Interviews.* Edited by Richard A. Barney. University of Mississippi, Jackson, 2009. "*Mulholland Drive,* Dreams, and Wrangling with the Hollywood Corral." Richard A. Barney/ 2001.

RB: …C*olor: as always, there's a rich palette of color here, but I was struck by the warm browns, greens and yellows in Aunt Ruth's old Hollywood apartment, which gives a kind of distinction from the rest of the environments that we see in the film. It seem almost organic, with a kind of safety that Aunt Ruth herself might represent. What were you after with those warm colors?*

DL: Like you say, it's a place where, because it feels safe, many things can happen, and certain types of things can happen. And because it's wrapped inside a courtyard, which is even more protection, characters like Rita and Betty have that feeling there.

RB: *There are other strong colors that run throughout the film, appearing in all sorts of places—pink, red, and blue—pink, for instance, in Betty's sweater, the paint that Kesher pours on his wife's jewelry, and so on. How did you work out those color schemes?*

DL: Every single thing in the film is based on the ideas. If you could get the whole film as an idea at once, you'd be watching the film from start to finish. But unfortunately ideas come in fragments. Each fragment, though, is full, and plays in your mind as it comes into you. But it comes in fast, like a spark, and then you want to start to see it after the light of the spark settles down—there's the idea. And it's known to you: it plays way too fast, but it seems the right speed. You sort of know it, you just know it, and it's there. A millisecond before it wasn't there, now it sparks in and you know it. The rest of the job is staying true to those ideas. And that seems to be the trick, to translate those ideas to film and stay true to them. I's just as simple as that.

RB: *How did the color pink first show up with the ideas that arrived?*

DL: The pink—there wasn't any conscious pink-thought. Yet there's the place called Pink's, and that scene came complete with pink color, and Betty's blouse could have been a happy accident. I don't remember, I don't remember my choices. And a lot of clothes are talked about, but [pause] it's one area—if something is really wrong, you see it right away. But there's something about costumes so that it's one area where I really like to be surprised. And you get a lot of fuel from the way people look. More often than not, I've worked with people like Peggy Norris [costume designer for several Lynch films] and many others, who were really tuned in at the beginning, and brought fantastic things.

RB: *Did you have any specific surprises in the making of* Mulholland Drive?

DL: Well, let's see. You mean bad surprises or good surprises?—they're all good surprises, I think. For instance, Ann Miller in real life likes to dress up, so Coco was a perfect character for her. And what she would come out looking like was pretty fantastic, and it fit in her world so beautifully. You know, the costumes have to marry the character and can't go against that, and that all comes from the ideas. So if they are marrying to the character, you go happily forward.

RB: *The camera work in this movie felt like it had a lot more moving shots than I can remember in your previous films.*

DL: Yes, maybe so. There's a thing we got into which was this "floating" camera, and this was pretty important at the scene at Winkie's [when Dan and Herb discuss a dream]. And again, based on the ideas, this floating camera adds to the fear.

RB: *It often felt as though the camera took on a mind of its own.*
DL: Yeah, it's a third person.

RB: *There's another thing I noticed, not quite the same thing, but there are moments when the moving camera will join up and then separate from a third point of view perspective.*
DL: Give me an example of that.

RB: *When Betty is on the phone talking to her aunt Ruth in the living room of the apartment, the camera shows her lying on the couch, and while she is still speaking, the camera tracks away and leaves her behind, going up the hallway to the bedroom door. But strangely, when the camera reaches the door, suddenly Betty is actually right there. melded, in a way, with the camera…*
DL: That's exactly right.

RB: *So the camera separates off from characters and then rejoins them in very intriguing ways, and there are other instances life that in the film.*
DL: You know a lot of film is action and reaction. So when you have action, and then you react to that action, you learn things, and you find that a lot of film is experimenting. It's experimenting at the same time that you are being true to the original ideas. The reason that you are experimenting is so that you don't leave a golden possibility uncaptured. And so every rehearsal is a kind of experiment and in the editing there's a lot of experimenting. With all the stages or elements, there's an element of experimentation in order to get things to feel correct. And it goes like that….

RB: *I wanted to ask you about the music. The Latina singer Rebekah del Rio plays herself in an arresting Spanish version of Roy Orbison's "Crying." How did it become part of the film?*
DL: By a happy accident. I have a friend who is also my music agent named Brian Loucks. And I have a recording studio, and I love music. I always say that Angelo [Badalamenti], bless his heart, was the one who got me really into the world of music. So I'm in the world of music to a certain degree, and then Brian sometimes calls and wants to bring people over for me to meet, or we have a project going together. He called up and said he wants me to meet someone who was really great, and so they came up to the house. When they got here I said, "Rebekah, why don't you go into the booth and sing into the microphone?" and she said, "Fine." So she went into the booth, and what she sang is the exact track that we used for the film. At first, before she sang, there was no thought that Rebekah del Rio or the song would be in the film—it was just so beautiful. And I started thinking about it, and it became part of [Club} Silencio. One thing leads to another that way sometimes. So it was a happy accident.

RB: *So Spanish wasn't originally conceived as an important part...*
DL: Well, you know, there was another happy accident: Laura Herring is half Spanish, and L.A. is half Spanish, and so Spanish started working its way into the film. It just happened. There are feelings with words, and a lot of times, even when you don't understand a word, you get this feeling, and it's almost better sometimes if you don't understand a word, in a strange way. It's the feeling of mystery, or just—a thing.

RB: *The critics have liked the movie overwhelmingly, but even many who liked it have said that it creates a lot of loose ends, and that you'll never know what they mean My own experience—I've seen the film three times—was not that at all.. The first time, I was dazzled. I wasn't quite sure all that I'd seen, and I knew I'd seen something that had impressed me emotionally and visually, but I didn't quite know how it all fit. The second time, I had a kind of intellectual exhilaration, since I saw pieces falling into place. And the third time, since that had*

happened, I felt the film more. Do you now just count on the probability that your viewers will re-view your films?
DL: It would be a beautiful world if people liked the world inside the film so much that they would go back and be in it again. That's the way it is for me in a film like *Sunset Boulevard*. We all have favorite films. For me, it's just a world that I would like to visit again and again. It seems real and I like being inside that world. And I think a lot of times we rely on a film to explain itself completely, and so part of us is —not asleep exactly, but we are not *heightened.* We do not realize that there may be clues there that are important. It's a sort of laziness, in a weird way. Though seeing a film shouldn't be work. But there are different depths of getting into it. So it's interesting how much I think is missed the first time around, just because you are not aware you are supposed to pay attention to certain things. And intuition, to me, is a thing that goes to work when you watch a film. There are so many clues in all films that we just pick up on, so that you sense things and know them internally as you go. You can still miss things, but I just think that intuition is the key to so many things.

ONLY TWO MORE IN THE SPRING 2018 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS XXXVI
May 1 Martin McDonagh, *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* 2017
May 8 Jacques Demy, *The Young Girls of Rochefort* 1967