

Rolling Stone

Faith
No More

*Most Unlikely
to Succeed*

David
Lynch

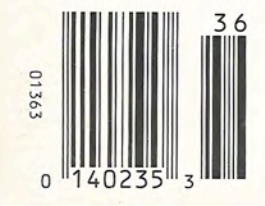
*The Rolling
Stone
Interview*

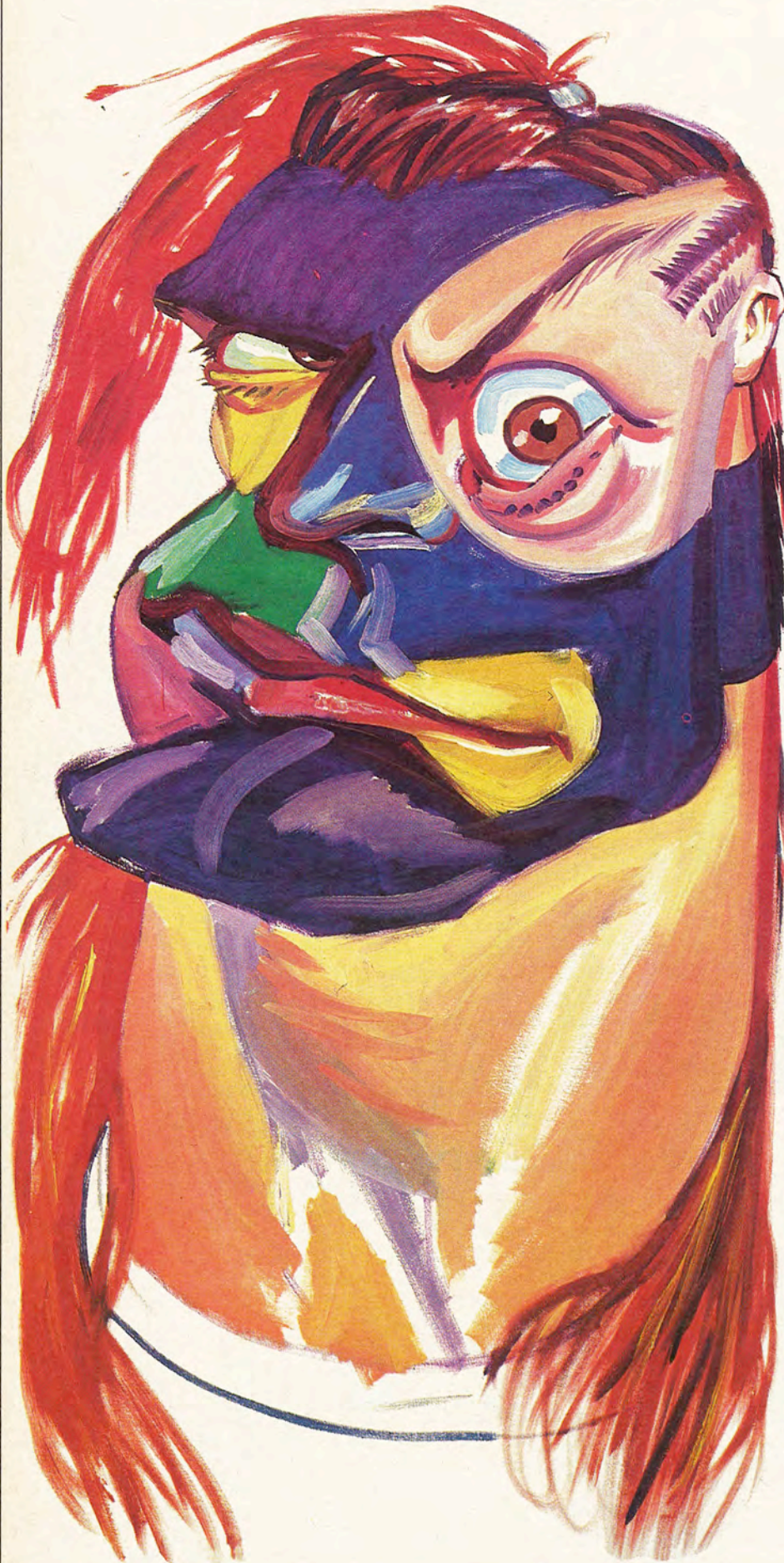
It's M.C.
Hammer
Time

*Nailing Down
Number One*

Living
Colour

*Their
Bold New
Album*





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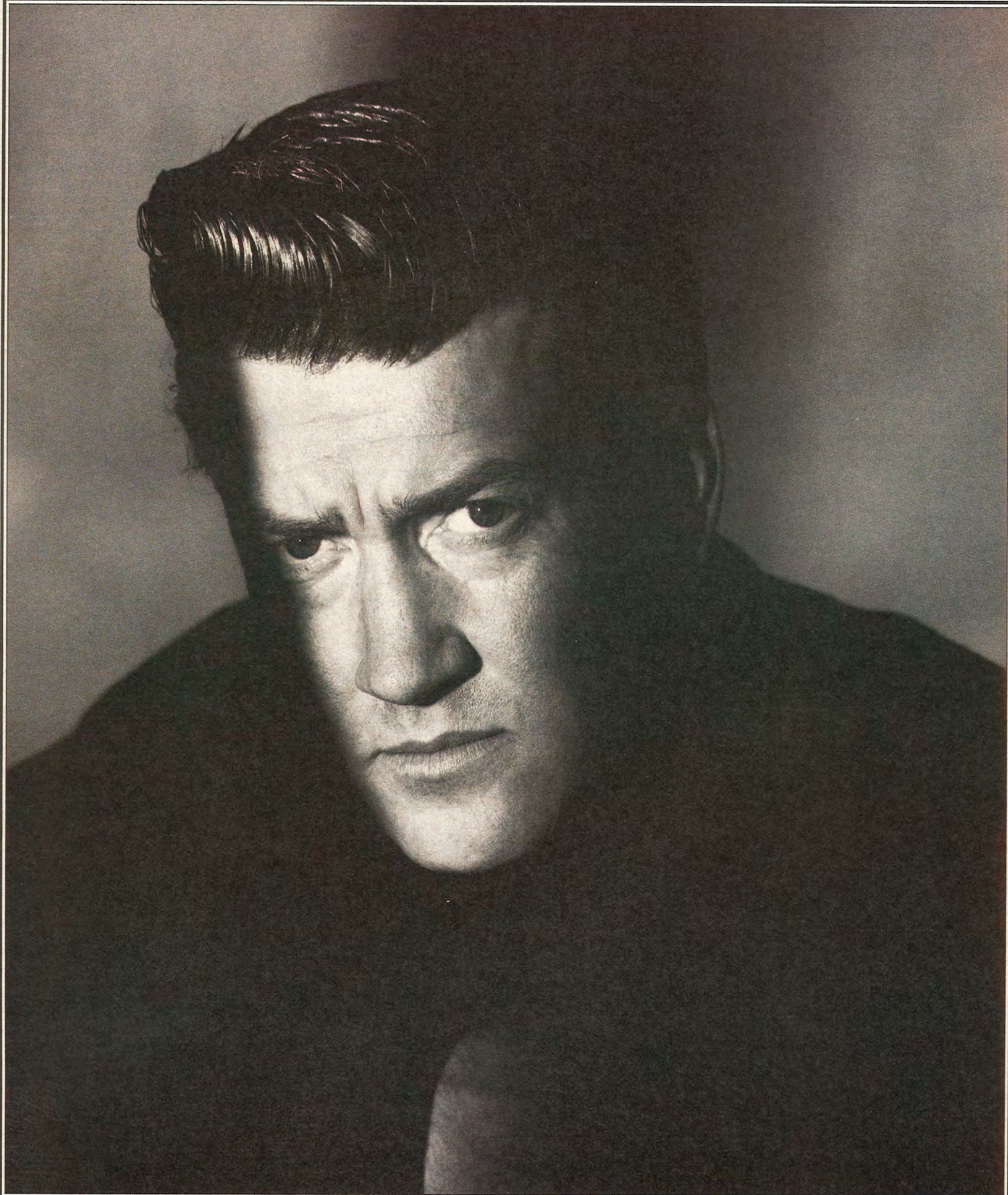
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COVER: Photograph of M.C. Hammer by Frank W. Ockenfels 3, New York City, July 1990. Grooming by Helena Occhipinti for Oribe at Parachute.

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DAVID LY
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HAIR BY KERRY WARN; MAKEUP BY MARK HAYLES; STYLING BY JESSE RODRIGUEZ; FOR KRAMER + KRAMER; CHAIR COURTESY OF NEWEL ART GALLERIES, INC.



P H O T O G R A P H B Y A L B E R T W A T S O N

"I WAS SORT OF EMBARRASSED THAT MY PARENTS WERE SO NORMAL."

David Lynch was born in Missoula, Montana, in 1946. His father worked in the woods as a government research scientist; his mother worked at home, raising David, his brother and his sister. The family made stops in Spokane, Washington, and in Sandpoint and Boise, Idaho, before settling in Alexandria, Virginia, where Lynch went unhappily to high school. (He ran for class treasurer; his slogan was Save with Dave. He lost.)

After attending art schools in Washington, D.C., and Boston, Lynch wandered through a series of sad jobs, marked only by his talent for being fired quickly. He retreated again to art school, this time in Philadelphia, where he began by studying painting but ended four years later by making his first live-action movie, *The Grandmother*, in which a distraught bed-wetting boy, abused by his parents, secretly grows a benevolent grandma from a seed.

In 1970, he enrolled at the American Film Institute in Los Angeles as a fellow in the Center for Advanced Film Studies. His first feature-length film, *Eraserhead*, wasn't released until 1977, because Lynch took a lot of time off to paint, deliver the *Wall Street Journal*, collect garbage, dissect animals, get divorced, smoke cigarettes, slurp shakes and sit in a chair thinking.

Eraserhead, a blackly comic, pleausurably disgusting feast of anxiety, became a midnight-movie hit and will be re-released next year. *The Elephant Man* (1980) was refined and subtle, if not sentimental, by comparison. A tone poem on Victorian England — a place where the beast was the beauty — it won eight Oscar nominations and commercial legitimacy for Lynch, which he bastardized on his next outing, *Dune* (1984). His only commercial and critical bomb, *Dune* was a science-fiction accident waiting to happen: Lynch tried bravely to thread its gigantic narrative through the eye of his trancelike moods and methods, and failed, spectacularly.

Blue Velvet (1986) was a return to form, scale and intuition. A wickedly funny, overripe orchestration of all of Lynch's obsessions, set in small-town U.S.A., *Blue Velvet* was the most original, powerful movie of the 1980s and put Lynch at the forefront of American directors. *Twin Peaks*, a savage subversion of TV's codes, exploited his position this past spring by serving up that slice of American pie where distortion meets recognition: It filled you up, gave you a sugar high and tasted funny going down.

Lynch's current film, *Wild at Heart*, goes even further with the kind of surreal, psychosexual slapstick that's become his "name brand." Despite the Palme d'Or prize it won at Cannes, it is not the masterwork *Blue Velvet* was, but it's still a hokey, jokey joy ride through the bottom lands of Lynch's own imagination.

David Lynch also takes pictures, paints, makes commercials, writes lyrics, produces albums and an "industrial symphony," draws the cartoon *The Angriest Dog in the World* for the *L.A. Reader* and is preparing a coffee-table book of his collected work for next fall, featuring his fascination with dental hygiene. But it's film he does best, and that's what we talked about — where he and his films come from — in two conversations in late June and early July. The first took place at the midtown-Manhattan studio of his music maven, Angelo Badalamenti; the second at the Studio Coffee Shop, in Hollywood.

When you've talked about your childhood, you've said it was filled with beatific moments but also with traumatic horror. Could you elaborate on this a bit?

I kept coming to Brooklyn to visit my grandparents, and that was part of the horror. In a large city I realized there was a large amount of fear. Coming from the Northwest, it kind of hits you like a train. Like a subway.

In fact, going into the subway, I felt I was really going down into hell. As I went down the steps — going deeper into it — I realized it was almost as difficult to go back up and get out of it than to go through with this ride. It was the total fear of the unknown: the wind from those trains, the sounds, the smells and the different light and mood of that was really special in a traumatic way.

It was a pretty normal scene at home — you say your parents didn't smoke or drink and never argued but that you were ashamed of them for that. You wanted them to carry on.

Yeah, it was like in the Fifties: There were a lot of advertisements in magazines where you see a well-dressed woman bringing a pie out of an oven — and a certain smile on her face — or a couple smiling, walking together up to their house with a picket fence. Those smiles were pretty much all I saw.

But you didn't believe them.

Well, they're a *strange* smile. It's the smile of the way the world *should* be or *could* be. They really made me dream like crazy. And I like that whole side of it a lot. But I longed for some sort of — not a catastrophe but something out of the ordinary to happen. Something so that everyone will feel sorry for you. And you'll be like a victim. You know, if there was a tremendous accident and you were left alone. It's kind of like a nice dream. But things kept on going normally, forward.

Did you secretly wish to be orphaned?

Well, I wished to be not orphaned, but I wanted to be special and set aside. Maybe it's an excuse for not having to do anything else. You're instantly important. You've kind of got it made in a certain way. I was thinking about things like that. I was sort of embarrassed that my parents were so normal.

The "smile" in those ads — were you feeling something akin to this smile inside, or were you feeling very different?

No, I had a *tremendous* smile. I have pictures of me underneath the Christmas tree with a smile that is like total and pure happiness. I sort of had a happiness.

But there was something about it you didn't trust.

You know, that's another thing: There are too many possibilities for something to go wrong — so you could always worry about that. And there's many things that are hidden and seeming like many, many secrets; and you don't know for sure whether you are being just paranoid or if there really are some secrets. You know little by little, just by studying science, that certain things are hidden — there are things you can't see. And your mind can begin to create many things to worry about. And then once you're exposed to fearful things, and you see that really and truly many, many, many things are wrong — and so many people are participating in strange and horrible things — you begin to worry that the peaceful, happy life could vanish or be threatened.

What were the things you thought were hateful or worrisome?

Just every sort of negative thing you feel in the air was bringing the situation down.

Let's try to be concrete.

Just like in Philadelphia, the fact that a family is going

to this christening. I happened to be upstairs painting the third floor black. And my wife at the time, Peggy, was taking my daughter, Jennifer, who was one, out in this perambulator. It was like the Cadillac of perambulators that we got at Goodwill for about a buck. It had springs — it had a ride like a giant Cadillac. Anyway, Peggy was taking this down the steps. And a large family across the street was going to a christening. And a gang came swooping down and attacked the family. And in the family there was a teenage son who tried to defend the whole bunch, and they beat him down, and they shot him in the back of the head. Those kind of things will spoil the atmosphere — *permanently* — and bring it way down.

But you've managed to survive things like that.

Well, you go along. But you realize that basically you're pretty lucky to be able to just go along.

You've said that as a kid you felt "a force, a sort of wild pain and decay accompanying everything." What did that pain feel like?

Whenever you finish something, it starts decaying. Instantly. Just like New York City. The roads, the buildings, the bridges are falling apart. New ones are going up, and they're not built the same way. This thing about decay and nothing remains constant is another thing to worry about.

Our bodies are like that, too.

They sure are. They grow, and then they start reversing themselves. And strange things happen. You say, "That won't ever happen to me. No way!" But then one day you look in the mirror and it's happening.

What have you seen in the mirror that was traumatic for you?

Well, right above my ears there are these kind of silver — these fish-scale silver hairs.

And when you first saw them?

I couldn't really believe it.

That "wild pain" you talked about — what makes it wild?

Because it's not able to be controlled. See, a small world like a painting or a film gives you the illusion that you're more or less under control. Or that you're in control, rather. So I guess the smaller the world, the more safe you feel and in control.

So you build a world.

You build it, yeah. I love going into another world, and film provides that opportunity. *Eraserhead* way more than any other film, because I really did live in that world.

You lived on the set.

I lived on the set, and in my mind I lived in that world. And the sets, the lighting, the mood of it helped. And since it took so much time, I really sank into it.

But now films go so fast: You go into a set, you check and make sure the mood is correct, and the next moment you're shooting it. And moments later it's being bulldozed.

You don't feel you're getting to inhabit your own films the same way you used to?

No. It's not as long and as satisfying.

Would anyone have looked at you on your fifteenth birthday, this little worried Eagle Scout, in uniform, down at the White House seating VIPs for JFK's inauguration parade — would anyone have thought you were different or had some different ideas?

No. I was like a regular person. There wasn't much happening upstairs. I didn't really *think* at all — not that I can remember — until I was about nineteen.

Your parents were supportive of your early work?

Oh, very supportive. My mother probably saved me: She refused to give me coloring books. Which is pretty interesting, because there was lots of pressure to color —

"THE IDEA OF BIRTH WAS JUST PURE MEAT AND BLOOD AND HAIR."

and once you have that coloring book, the whole idea is to stay between the lines. Not having that restriction . . . and paper! My father would bring home lots and lots of graph paper, so I was able to draw whatever I wanted all the time. He also helped pay rent on a painting studio when I was in high school and helped pay for my first film.

Yet you were rebelling like crazy at the time.

Yes, I was.

From about age fourteen to about age thirty?

Yes, and my theory is that most people rebel that long these days, because, not counting accidents or strange diseases, we're built to live longer. And so all the stages consequently last longer. And so you're going to find people living at home, going through these strange rebellions. And maybe they'll be sixty before they realize they're an adult and get serious about things.

What were you rebelling from?

I never really thought about it. They call it rebellion. I just didn't want anything to do with anything except painting and living the Art Life. Nothing else was fun.

You didn't want them to know about what you were doing?

I was doing many things that I figured they would not enjoy knowing about. So I was forced to live a secret life.

Now there's a kind of power in having a secret.

There's a horror in secrets, too.

What's the horror?

You know, trying to keep it secret.

What's a secret? A secret is something you absolutely have to tell someone!

Well, yeah. There's that problem, too.

What was sex like as a teenager?

I tell you what: Sex was like a dream. It was like a world that was so mysterious to me, I really couldn't believe there was this fantastic texture to life that I was getting to do. It was so fantastic, and I could see a world opening — this sexual dream. It was another great indication that life was really great and worth living. And it kept on going, because I see the vast realm of sex — that it has all these different levels, from lust and fearful, violent sex to the real spiritual thing at the other end. It's the key to some fantastic mystery of life.

But there's a sense in your films that the flesh is not to be trusted.

Well, I think until a person has reached a certain degree of evolution there's no such thing as trust.

What stage of evolution would that be?

If you were to believe in evolution, you would see that there are different levels of human growth. Degrees of awareness or consciousness. You could see a person being totally aware and totally conscious at the end of this evolutionary trail. And dealing with a full deck. And if you're able to deal with a full deck, I think then you'd be pretty trustworthy.

How many cards are in yours?

I don't have any idea, but it's not fifty-two.

The Art Life means stay up late, smoke cigarettes, don't get married, don't have children, stay dedicated to seeing beneath the surface. And yet you got married and divorced, not once but twice, and had two children.

[Pause] These things happen.

Happen to you, or you make them happen?

Well, it's a two-way street. Nothing happens to you. It takes two to tango, and this is what happened to me.

How was it living inside those contradictions?

It was tough. But again, absolutely good and meant to

be. Sometimes a jolt of electricity at a certain point of your life is helpful. It forces you a little bit more awake.

'Eraserhead' seems to be on one level the work of a man completely unprepared for and terrified by fatherhood.

Eraserhead is an abstract film. It's hopefully not just about one thing. But that's definitely in there [smiles shyly].

Going to the morgue in Philadelphia was another turning point.

Well, Philadelphia itself was the turning point. Seeing a lot of different things. The morgue was kind of a clinical thing. It was very powerful, but it wasn't a twisted thing to me. It was more like seeing my neighbors Pop and Andy's dog. It was another image I'll never forget. Their dog, they fed it so much, it looked like a water balloon with little legs. Almost couldn't walk, this dog. Had a little bitty head. It was like a Mexican Chihuahua with a watermelon in the middle.

Was the dog your first link to surrealism or was it Dali and Buñuel?

I never saw, I still haven't seen a lot of Buñuel. I saw *An Andalusian Dog* a lot later. I don't even know that much about surrealism — I guess it's just my take on what's floating by.

It seems like your background as a painter led to a film style focused on texture and the single image — it demands real examination of the frame. Was that something that was conscious for you when you moved from the canvas to film?

No. I forget the word — oh, *composition*. This thing of composition is so abstract. It's so powerful where you place things and the relationships. But you don't work with any kind of intellectual thing. You just act and react. It's all intuition. It must obey rules, but these rules are not in any book. The basic rules of composition are a joke.

So you don't find particularly compelling parallels between your painting and filmmaking?

No. They obey some of the same rules, that's all. And these rules are abstract and found in nature. Like the duck. The duck is real good for many things — like textures, proportions, shapes. How a duck is made and where the different things are on a duck can give you a clue to a more or less perfect composition for a painting. If you could interpret a duck, if you could work with the rules of a duck, you could get something close to a well-composed painting that had neat things happening.

I'd like to talk about some elements of your work that seem to be present pretty much in all your films, despite the differences between them. First, you have an obsession with obsession.

Yeah, I got that.

During 'Blue Velvet,' when you were filming the scenes of Frank abusing and raping Dorothy, apparently you were beside yourself with laughter. You thought this was funny on some level?

I'm sure pretty near every psychiatrist could tell me right now why I was laughing, but I don't know. It was hysterically funny to me. Frank was completely obsessed. He was like a dog in a chocolate store. He could not help himself. He was completely into it. But because I was laughing and I am a human being, there must be some logical reason why. It has something to do with the fact that it was so horrible and so frightening and so intense and violent, that there was also this layer of humor. It has to do with the degree of obsession where people cannot help themselves.

Are you obsessive?

Yeah, I'm sure I am. Habits are obsessive things. Having things a certain way. This is sometimes humorous.

That can come from feeling out of control, using habits as centering devices —

Oh, absolutely. I must be completely out of control.

Do you really feel out of control?

Yeah. There are certain times when it's an illusion that you have some sort of control. It's a gift just to get a little bit of that feeling. There are so many things that can come in and pull the rug out from under you so fast.

Is it scary to feel out of control?

Very scary. And there's nothing you can do about it.

Let's look at something else that seems central to your work: the presence of cruelty and physical and mental abuse. Where does it come from?

Beats me.

I'm not denying it's not out there on Thirty-fourth Street, but it's very much there — specifically — in your vision of the world.

It could be a lot of different things. It could be partly what I feel is out there, partly the stories that attract me. That tension. I see films more and more as separate from whatever kind of reality there is anywhere else. And that they are more like fairy tales or dreams. They are not, to me, political or like any kind of commentary or any kind of teaching device. They're just *things*. But they should obey certain rules.

And one of them is Contrast. It can't just be a flat, straight line of pure happiness. People fall asleep. So there are conflicts and life-and-death struggles. I like murder mysteries. They get me completely, because they are mysteries and deal with life and death. If you throw in the word *hotel* or *factory*, I get even more involved.

So you don't know where this predilection for cruelty comes from?

No. I was not tortured as a child, and I didn't ever see anybody get tortured. So it's either a coincidence that this is all through there or the reason lies beyond, somewhere else.

Okay, let's look at one aspect of "Contrast." In your work there's a constant dichotomy between Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, Innocence and Knowledge — where knowledge is aligned with guilt, danger, horror — knowledge as a kind of sickness.

Uh-huh. Knowing the wrong thing, like the man who knew too much, is sometimes a real drag.

What I'm wondering is whether, outside the films, you see the world as having these very strong dichotomies between Good and Evil as opposed to a kind of complex, integrated —

No, I know it's complex. Everybody's got many threads of both running through them. But I think in a film, white gets a little whiter, and black gets a little bit blacker, for the sake of the story. That's part of the beauty of it, that contrast, the power of it. Maybe it would be very beautiful to have a character that had an equal mixture of both. Where the forces were fighting equally. But maybe they would just stand still.

You mentioned life and death. It's compelling that all your movies have a birth scene — or some kind of abstracted birth scene — and also death scenes, scenes of murder or murderous intent. And now we get to 'Wild at Heart,' and the birth scene is a death scene — an abortion. How we start and how we finish seems the biggest subject on the table for you.

Absolutely. It's in interviews that you can sometimes see some sense to it. Most of the time the thinking exists on an abstract level. You don't worry about what things you've done before. You're just going along and catching this fantastic train that leads to a new world and another story.

What I'm saying is that the trains run to all kinds of desti-

"IT'S BETTER NOT TO KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT WHAT THINGS MEAN."

nations and through all sorts of scenery—

But might be going all to one place! [Laughs]

No — but wherever they're going, they're still in Lynchville! Even in 'The Alphabet,' your four-minute animated short, the capital letter 'A' gives bloody birth to little 'a's. 'The Grandmother' has an excruciating birth, 'Eraserhead' has any number of disturbing births, 'The Elephant Man' and so on — what gets you about it?

For a long time, and I suppose still, the idea of birth was a mysterious and fantastic thing, involving, again, like sex, just pure meat and blood and hair. And then at the same time, this feeling of life and the spiritual thing. There's too many things going on there not to be fascinated. And it's not so much what you see as it's an abstraction you feel. It's the weirdest thing.

Now, let me bring up a touchy subject: the position of women in your films. For 'Blue Velvet,' you took some abuse about —

Because people have an idea that Dorothy was Everywoman, instead of just being Dorothy. That's where the problem starts. If it's just Dorothy, and it's her story — which it is to me — then everything is fine. If Dorothy is Everywoman, it doesn't make any sense. It doesn't add up. It's completely false, and they'd be right to be upset.

Let's try to talk more specifically about women in your films — the "disease" that Dorothy has. There's a kind of physical threat that hangs over women in 'Twin Peaks' and 'Wild at Heart' and 'Blue Velvet.' And there's a certain amount of female complicity in it. Even in 'Twin Peaks,' Ronette Pulaski rates four red hearts in the department-store manager's secret book of call girls, and we know Laura Palmer was not Snow White. Are you ever afraid that you sidle up close to a sort of "blaming the victim"?

I know what you're talking about. Again, it goes to Ronette Pulaski not being Ronette Pulaski as Everywoman but just Ronette Pulaski. Everyone can picture in their mind a situation where the girl — for one reason or another — went along with the situation; and everyone can picture in their minds where the girl said, "I'm not into this one little bit!" and got out. And then there's a borderline where it's right on the edge for a person: Where it's interesting but it's sickening, or it's frightening, or it's too much, or almost, or not quite. There's every different combo in this world. When you start talking about "women" versus "a woman," then you're getting into this area of generalizations, and you can't win. There is no generalization. There's a billion different stories and possibilities —

In the naked city —

You betcha!

Well, let's talk about these women. Both Dorothy and Laura Palmer have the "disease." Laura gets off on a man almost killing her, because it makes sex great. What's the "disease" to you? Can you be more upfront about it?

Um, no.

Come on, David.

No, because just the word *disease* used in that way — it's so beautiful just to leave it abstract. Once it becomes specific, it's no longer true to a lot of people. Where if it's abstract, there could be some truth to it for everybody.

But come on, we know there's a kind of masochism at work —

But even that can be so complicated that even to start talking about it wouldn't do it justice. It would always make it be less than it really is, because it's so unbelievably complicated. And if it wasn't complicated, people could

be fixed and made perfect so easily.

How about *Lula*, though, in 'Wild at Heart'? *Lula* in the movie as compared with *Lula* in the book is certainly a step back in terms of her assertiveness, her aggressiveness, her control over the world around her. Haven't you made *Lula* less of a modern woman in the way you've channeled the book?

[Long pause] Well, I don't know about modern women. The thing that got me about *Lula* and *Sailor* is their relationship: They're so really good to each other and in love, and they treat each other with respect, in my opinion. I don't know about a modern man or a modern woman, but that's a modern romance. Because *Sailor* can be cool and masculine but still have tenderness toward *Lula* and treat her as an equal. Never talks down to her. One of the reasons I love this relationship and this book is them being equals.

But in the book she's sensitive to the fact that he might be talking down to her. She doesn't like being called *Peanut* all the time — she says, "I don't know that I completely enjoy you callin' me *Peanut* so much. . . . puts me so far down on the food chain."

Oh, I don't even remember that. No, she loves to be called *Peanut*.

It's in the book. Now, there's an Oedipal thing happening in your films. You either have a kind of mystical reunion with the lost mother —

Well, that's *The Elephant Man*. That's specific to that story. For the *Elephant Man*, his fondest memory was of his mother. His whole life was built trying to live up to something he imagined her wanting for him. So that when he died, it needed to be that way: with the mother. It felt right. What other films?

Or you have, in 'Blue Velvet' and elsewhere, a kind of "sex with Mom" thing going on.

How's that?

Frank is an infant, calls Dorothy Mommy and says at one point, "Baby wants to fuck."

He's either Daddy or he's Baby.

And in 'Wild at Heart,' *Lula's* mom comes on to her boyfriend, *Sailor* —

And that happens in *Eraserhead*, too!

Right, *Mary's* mom comes on to *Henry*. And this fall I suppose we'll see *Benjamin Horne* confront his daughter in a whorehouse bedroom on 'Twin Peaks.' There is a pattern here.

Well, yeah, the trouble is, if you do more than one of anything, then people start comparing. It could just be a coincidence. Ideas come along. How much is something inside me? I think the inside-you part dictates a lot, but then the idea part coming in from outside is a big part of it, too. There's a lot of things that human beings do that are completely fascinating, and at the same time, you think they are somewhat strange.

That seems to be the way we're built.

That's exactly right. And those are the things that are so interesting to work with in films. If things are real normal, you might as well just stay home — they're strange enough there. In film, things get heightened: You see things more and feel things more.

There's a sense, at the end of your films, in the redemptive power of fantasy, of the imagination itself. There's a — not childish, but maybe childlike — sense that you want to see or imagine something brand-new, that the possibilities of imagination is what saves you.

Yeah. It's tough, again, to talk about some general thing, but I guess I believe in this force of evolution. Be-

ing in darkness and confusion is really interesting to me, but behind it you can rise out of that and see things the way they really are. That there is some sort of truth to the whole thing if you could just get to that point where you could see it, and live it, and feel it. I think it's a long, long way off. In the meantime, there's suffering and darkness and confusion and absurdities, and it's people kind of going in circles. It's fantastic. It's like a strange carnival: It's a lot of fun, but it's a lot of pain.

Is it all darkness and confusion?

Everything is relative. I'd say this world is maybe not the brightest place one could hope to be.

One of the confusions seems to be over whether art has to mean anything. Let me quote you: "I don't know why people expect art to make sense when they accept the fact that life doesn't make sense." First off, I don't think people accept the fact that life doesn't make sense. I think it makes people terribly uncomfortable. It seems like religion and myth were invented against that, trying to make some sense out of it. Don't you think that's where art comes from, too?

Maybe some of it does. But for me, I'm of the Western Union school. If you want to send a message, go to Western Union. It's even a problem with responsibility. You have to be free to think up things. They come along, these ideas, and they hook themselves together, and the unifying thing is the euphoria they give you or the repulsion they give you — and you throw those ideas away. You have to just trust yourself.

If you have any sort of moral thing or boundaries you won't cross over, that's going to shape your story. But if you start worrying right away about the meaning of everything, chances are your poor intellect is only going to glean like a little portion of it.

So you don't resist the idea that your films mean something?

Not a bit. But they mean different things to different people. Some mean more or less the same things to a large number of people. It's okay. Just as long as there's not one message, spoon-fed. That's what films by committee end up being, and it's a real bummer to me.

So to say that art doesn't need to make sense because life doesn't make sense —

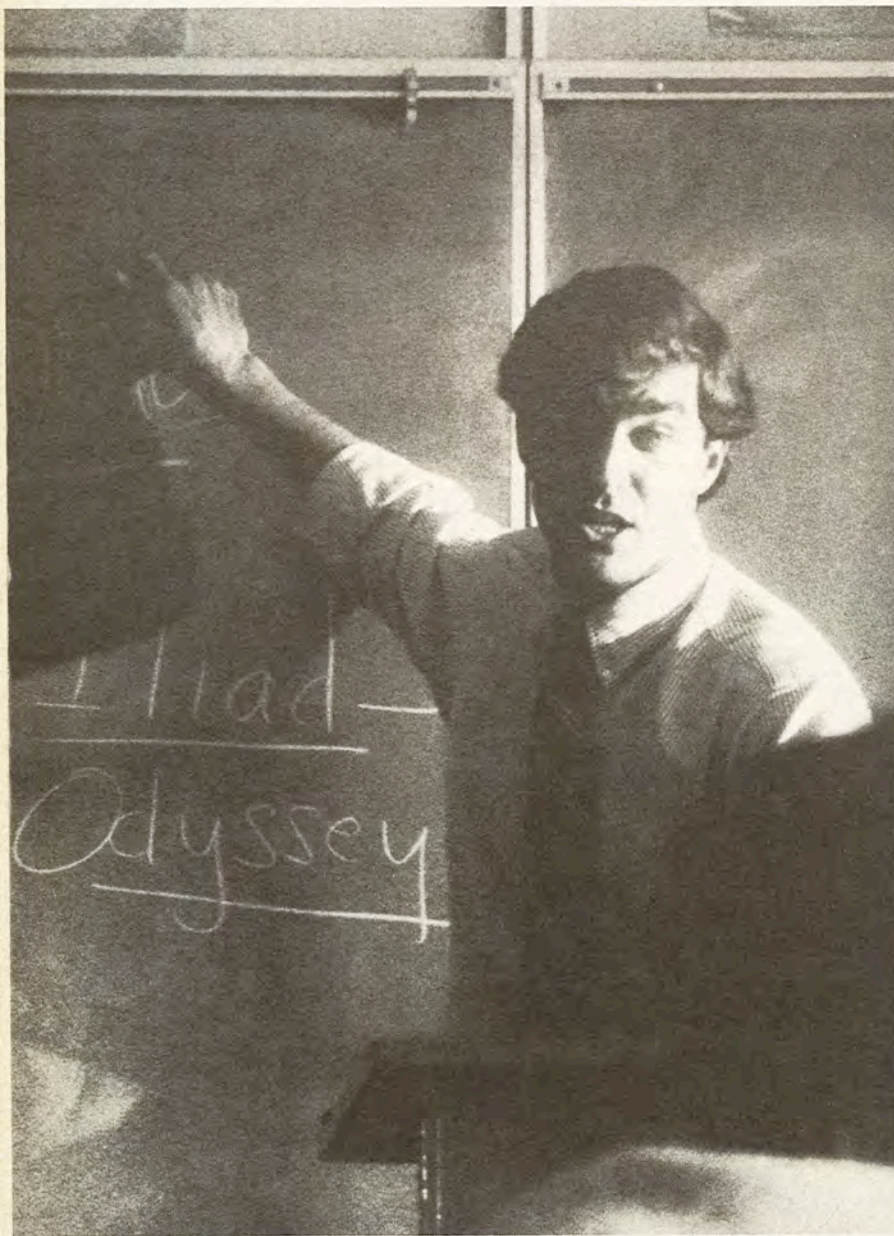
Life is very, very complicated, and so films should be allowed to be, too.

You mentioned boundaries. There's a sense on 'Twin Peaks' of a lack of respect for certain characters. There's a thin line between laughing at a character and making fun of them —

Who are we making fun of?

Maybe *Nadine* with her eye patch, or *Leland* in his grief, or *Johnny* in the headdress, banging his head up against the doll house. These are things I found spectacularly funny, but there's some part of me that isn't comfortable with my own laughter in some cases. Do you feel there's a danger here?

There's danger around every corner. I think . . . it's, uh . . . it depends. If *Johnny* had a disease or something that you were making fun of, that would be one thing. He could just have an emotional problem and could come out of it. He could be pretending this whole thing, too. It sort of depends on how you see it. It's not meant in my mind to be offensive or to make fun of anybody really. But at the same time, because he's the way he is, there's a humor side to it you can't avoid. A lot of times, someone who's in bad shape can do something fun — you laugh. At the same time, there can be a lot of compassion underneath that laugh. And yet it's the way the world is. It's so screwy — we're all kind of [Cont. on 98]



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David Lynch

[Cont. from 63] in this together, and there's got to be some room for a realistic attitude toward things. Otherwise, TV and all these things would be reduced down to Tarzan movies, and we'd have nothing more.

Is it true that when filming 'Eraserhead' in 1972, you looked at Catherine Coulson, who was playing the small role of the woman across the hall from Henry, and said, "I see a log in your arms. One day I'll do a series, and you'll be the Log Lady." It seems wildly impossible.

It's sort of true. I had an idea for a show. I wanted to call it *I'll Test My Log With Every Branch of Knowledge*. And I wanted her to be a woman who lived with a son or a daughter, single, because her husband was killed in a fire. She takes the log to various experts in various fields of science or whatever. Like, if she goes to the dentist, the log would get put into the chair. With a little bib on it. The dentist would X-ray the log, even to find out where its teeth were. So through the log, through this kind of absurdity, you would learn, you'd be gaining so much knowledge through the show.

So when it came time to shoot the *Twin Peaks* pilot, I called Catherine. And she got herself up to Seattle. And that was pretty much it. Except it was just one of those things that just *stuck*, so consequently it became more than that.

Let's talk about the psycho killer. In 'Blue Velvet,' 'Twin Peaks' and 'Wild at Heart,' you have characters who are very attractive — in an almost magnetic way — who are psychotic killers. What's the pull for you in using these characters?

I think it's the scariest thing. To know someone, or suspect someone, that has a very intelligent mind — really nothing is wrong with them in any way — but who is possessed by evil and who has dedicated themselves to doing evil. This is so unbelievable, so hard to figure.

You think it's just an act of volition?

No, I think it's a complicated thing. I think there is some disturbance — electrical or chemical — and some people might believe it is even beyond that. Some disturbance where they're smiling at you, but something you see in their eyes gives you the willies. And your smile back to them doesn't change their mind. The meals that you buy them, the schools they go to: None of that makes one bit of difference.

The public, obviously, has a great appetite for characters like this — not only in film and TV but on the news as well — as if they free us from the bounds of our own civility, and there's a kind of wild freedom in what they do that's attractive.

I don't think it's that at all. We don't want to do these things. We're fascinated only because — I've never exactly figured out what the fascination is — but I think we want to understand it, so we can conquer it. Pretty much that's it. First, we want to really see it, so we can see if it's true. And then we want to learn about it enough, so you

can do something about it. It's just too, too — there's something that captures our interest, but it's not in a sickness, I don't think.

You said 'Blue Velvet' was a moral picture — I did?

Yes, you said that Jeffrey learns about the world and helps Dorothy in the process. Would you say the same about *'Wild at Heart'*?

Well, like I always say, we're all coming at things from different angles. And I think that Sailor and Lula are trying to live properly. They're struggling in darkness and confusion, like everybody else. Sailor has this tender side, like a rebel with a tender side — that's sort of like a rock & roll concept. He sings and deals with emotion, but at the same time, a definite coolness and rebellious thing is running side by side it. The idea that there's some room for love in a really cool world is really interesting to me.

At the end of the picture, the Good Witch in a bubble tells us repeatedly, "Don't turn away from love." Might one accuse David Lynch of going to Western Union to send a message?

No. That's the Good Witch talking.

But you resolve the movie in such a way that seems to pull back from what's happened —

In a way. But not . . . see, I didn't buy the ending in the book. In the first script I wrote, the ending was true to the book. [Sailor and Lula go their separate ways.] But emotionally, it wasn't ringing true at all! I think they've learned a lot more, and grown more, even through fantasy, this way. The other way was a real . . . defeat.

Does the "happy ending" make you happy?

Um, well, the thing is . . . yeah, of course it does. And it rings true to me also. I think that Sailor and Lula are so fantastic a couple — I really like them a lot.

So you don't feel that you ducked on the harsh realities of love with —

With the happy ending? No. It was even the reverse of that. I almost wanted to do a miserable ending just to show that I wasn't trying to be commercial. And that's wrong — doubly wrong. And so, like I said, it's got to feel honest, and if it does, that's what you have to do.

'Blue Velvet' has a happy ending — with a twist.

There's the same . . . there's a resolution in both films. Both have happy endings.

They both rely — in the end — on the power of imagination to conjure up something. What happens, though, when you run out of fantasy?

Things get kind of boring.

I've not seen your first student film — the ten-second animated loop where some heads catch on fire and then they throw up — but 'Wild at Heart' is your most recent film and fire's the controlling image and vomit is a recurrent motif —

[Laughs] I can't get away from it!

There are not many movies where you get to see both a mother and a daughter throw up!

Yeah, it's a real thrill [laughs]. That alone is worth the price of a ticket.

And the flies on the vomit in the motel —

That's my favorite shot! When the door opens — they take off as Sailor comes in.

That's your favorite shot in the film?

It's one of several favorites. I do like it.

But it's interesting that these motifs are there

even in your earliest work.

Yeah, a lot of things. There are things in *The Alphabet* that keep coming back. And *The Grandmother*, too. Maybe you do keep doing the same thing over and over.

Years ago, you said your films both reveal and hide your fears. Do you still think it's true?

Yeah. Oh, yeah. When you go with intuition or subconscious or whatever, you can't really filter that stuff out. You kind of have to let it come out and happen, without interrupting it. Once you start intellectualizing too much – or talking to the doctor about it – you might say, "Oh, my God, man, that's very bad, I don't want people to think that!" So you start filtering, chopping off that little conduit. So it's better not to know so much, in a way, about what things mean or how they might be interpreted, or you'll be too afraid to let it keep happening.

But how do the films hide your fears?

Well, they hide them, because when they bob up, they may already be hidden. They don't come up and tell you so realistically. They're more like a dream thing. It might be one or two steps removed from a sentence describing your illness. So they're more like symbolic things that could be open for interpretation. Just like you talk about a piece of decaying meat. If you happen upon it in a certain setting, you could almost hear people oohing and aahing about its beauty. Until they realized what it was. Then they would not find it beautiful anymore. As soon as it had a name to it.

Sometimes there's no beauty in anything with a name attached. Isn't that feeling what kept you out of analysis?

Well, I went once. People have – at least I have – habit patterns, and I wanted to look into one particular one.

It was disturbing?

It was disturbing to me and others.

Self-destructive?

No. It was . . . yeah. In a way, yeah. So I decided I would go see this psychiatrist who was recommended by a friend. I liked this person, and we sat down in his office and talked for a little bit, and it was kind of interesting. I realized two things: one is that, so many times you want someone to talk to who isn't judging you. And that's kind of cool about it. I could see it would be very good for getting ideas. Just to pay someone to listen to you. But even more than listen, someone who is fascinated from a technical aspect – so they kind of egg you on.

Then I asked him if it could negatively affect my creativity – and he said, "Maybe." That was it. I could see how if you disturb the nest too much, you're liable to – you don't know what could happen.

You might not want to know so much.

I want to go about it in a different way.

Your own method of exploration?

Yeah.

Were you afraid that psychology barks up the tree you've so happily climbed?

What it does is, it destroys the mystery, this kind of magical quality. It can be re-

duced down to certain neuroses or certain things, and since it's now named and defined, it's lost its mystery and the potential for a vast, infinite experience.

And do you still have the same disturbing habit pattern?

Oh, yeah!

Would you like to share it with the class?

[Laughs] It wouldn't make any difference.

You used to have this kind of fear that dominated you, the fear of being restricted.

Yeah. Yeah, I guess I did.

How did you get over that?

I'm not over that. I think that's why I love money so much. I think that the freeing power of money is a very healing sort of thing. Because all we want to do is to be able to do what we want to do. And if we can do that, we get the sense of freedom. One of my frustrations, one of the limiting things, was the lack of money. And I still don't have enough to do all the things I want to do yet. But at least I have more than I had then.

There was a period when you were actually afraid to go out of your house.

Luckily, school came about. But I had a touch of that disease where you are afraid to go out.

And what makes you the angriest dog in the world?

Well, I had tremendous anger. When I began meditating [in 1973], one of the first things that left was a great chunk of that. I don't know how – it just evaporated.

Where did the anger come from?

I don't know where it came from. It was directed at those near and dear. So I made life kind of miserable for people around me at certain times. Even though I knew I was doing it, there wasn't much I could do about it when the thing comes over you. So, anger – the memory of the anger – is what does the Angriest Dog. Not the actual anger, anymore. It's sort of a bitter attitude toward life. I don't know where my anger came from, and I don't know where it went.

A few years ago, you described your life as split between innocence and naïveté and sickness and horror. Do you still feel that polarity?

Yeah. I think my father – he's in his seventies – but I see him as real innocent and a little bit naïve in the same way I am. I think it's good, up to a point, until you become a fool.

What are you innocent of?

Well [long pause]. Maybe it's not so much innocent as unsophisticated. More easily shocked or at least not afraid of showing shock at something. So certain things I still can't believe are happening.

That in Africa a few years back Bokassa threw his rivals into pits of crocodiles? Or he dined on the flesh of his enemies? That still shocks you?

You bet!

What's horrific and sick, on the other hand, about your own life?

No, you don't want to know all that.

[Laughs] I do, David, I do.

There are many things [Cont. on 100]

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David Lynch

[Cont. from 99] that swim together. There are all kind of things going on.

That are horrific and sick?

Yeah. You know, just ideas. Mainly, it's all on the idea level. I think that's the last frontier.

Anything disturb you these days?

Oh, yeah, a lot of things disturb me. I'll tell you what's disturbing me now. It's something in the air again. The decay I feel is, like, spreading faster than the building.

Well, the air itself is decaying.

Well, yeah, everything is falling faster than we can clean it or build it or make it right. So that side of nature is winning. And it's our own nature.

Let's go back to secrets. You wrote a line for Sailor that's not in the book: "We all got a secret side, baby." It's a constant in your work. I said there's a certain power in a secret, and you said there's a horror in it, too. Can you address yourself to both sides of that equation?

There are so many different kinds of secrets. Part of the thing about secrets is that they have a certain kind of mystery to me. A dark secret. Just the words *dark secret* are so beautiful. Again, for the same reason, I don't want to go back to Spokane. I don't want to see something so clearly that would destroy an imaginary picture. And I'm real thankful for secrets and mysteries, because they provide a pull to learn the secret and learn the mystery, and they provide a beautiful little corridor where you can float out and many, many wonderful things can happen. I hope in a way I don't ever get the total answer, unless it accompanies a tremendous rush of bliss. I love the process of going into a mystery.

You're secretive yourself, wouldn't you say?

Uh, that's a possibility, yeah.

Now it's come time to defuse the rumor or admit to all America that you've got a woman's uterus in a bottle somewhere.

What have you heard about this?

We know you're interested in body parts. We heard that a woman producer was having a hysterectomy and you asked her to save the tissue.

It wasn't that way at all! This woman was having this operation and asked the doctor to save it for me, as something she felt that I would want to have.

Sort of like a valentine.

A gift, yeah. It's like, there's many things I have in my house, right? But some things - like the Log Lady - have stuck with certain people as very interesting things. So I guess that could be one of them.

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