

A PINWOOD DIALOGUE WITH DAVID LYNCH

“Jimmy Stewart on Mars” was how Mel Brooks, who produced *The Elephant Man*, described David Lynch. The collision between the quotidian and the dreamlike has been Lynch's key theme, from the suburban nightmares of *Blue Velvet* and *Twin Peaks* to the *noir* netherworlds of *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*. In this discussion, just before the 1997 release of *Lost Highway*, Lynch demonstrates his aversion to interpretation, preferring to let viewers take what they will from the mood and texture of his films. He reveals his method of working by instinct and embracing the role of chance in his creative process.

A Pinewood Dialogue following a screening of *Lost Highway*, moderated by Chief Curator David Schwartz (February 16, 1997):

SCHWARTZ: And the moment you've been waiting for for months: David Lynch. (Applause)

LYNCH: Thank you.

SCHWARTZ: I have some questions prepared, but I thought, since we have just seen and experienced *Lost Highway*, if there is any raw reaction, or questions if anyone just wants to jump in and say something or ask something.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: First of all, I think you are a very creative man, and I'm a big fan, and...what just happened? (Laughter, applause)

LYNCH: You just saw *Lost Highway*. (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: You said that you started with the phrase “lost highway,” and the spark for making this movie was just those two words. Could you talk about that?

LYNCH: Well, there was an event before I heard those two words, but I didn't know how that event related to *Lost Highway*. But I read Barry Gifford's book *Night People*. And in it two characters were talking about going down a lost highway, and just a feeling came over me based on those two words. And I said, “Barry, I love these two words, ‘lost highway’.” And he said, “Well, let's write something.” So about a year or a year and a half later we got together.

SCHWARTZ: Now you have worked together, of course. *Wild at Heart* was a screenplay that you wrote based on his novel. But this is the first time that you have actually written the screenplay together and written it from scratch. Can you talk about what that was like, that actual working process with Barry?

LYNCH: I know we were doing that, but looking back, it's a magical process because you can't tell where ideas come from, and it seems like it's just both of us focusing on something. And it was a couple of ideas that were fragments, and those fragments focus you. And it seems that they release a little lock on a door and the door opens and more fragments start coming in—drawn by the first fragments. It's strange, because if any of you have ever written anything, you know that one day it's not there and then a month later or two months later it's there. And it's two people tuning into the same place, I think.

SCHWARTZ: Were you both pretty much seeing the same movie all the way along? Of course there is an aspect of this movie where it seems to be two very different things combining.

LYNCH: No. What happens is, when you get fragments, the whole is not revealed. It's just the fragments. And then the fragments seem to want to arrange themselves. And a little bit further down the line you begin to see what is forming. And it's as much a surprise to you as to anybody else.

SCHWARTZ: How much of it is trying to convey a mood versus telling a story?

LYNCH: Well, for me, ideas—even a fragment—convey everything. In a spark you see images, you hear sounds, you feel a mood. And it becomes complete, even if it is a fragment. The original idea comes with a lot of power, and you have to keep checking back all the way through the process to see if you are being true to it.

SCHWARTZ: There are sections of your movies where what you're mainly doing is creating an atmosphere, creating a mood between people. The whole first section—the kind of feeling between this couple. And the film takes a lot of time to let that happen. Also, in the beginning of *Twin Peaks*, in the pilot, (which we just showed), so much of that beginning is just the mood of the mother dealing with the fact that her daughter has been killed. So how do you allow yourself to take the time or to let that evolve during a film?

LYNCH: Things either feel correct or they feel incorrect. And every element that you are dealing with, you work with until it feels correct. And that's going back and checking with the original idea and how what is in front of you is striking you. And it's a feeling.

SCHWARTZ: Now, in reading the screenplay there are some scenes—what you've done with them when you're directing them—you've added so much more and emphasized so much more than what was on the written page. For example, when Balthazar Getty's character first sees Patricia Arquette in the car and you play "That Magic Moment," that's just a line of dialogue in the script. But it's such an overemphasized moment in the film, you take that beyond: you go into slow motion and you crank up that song. When does this emphasis happen? Is that in your mind when it is being written?

LYNCH: Yeah, the script is like a blueprint. So the house—you can see the house in the blueprint, but the house is much more. All those things are there, but the script sometimes can't be a thousand pages [long]. So, many things are done in shorthand. But the original idea again is what you follow, and it is more than maybe what is written in the script all the time. And then the process goes through the script, and you feel that the script is saying what you want it to, but the process continues, and it continues, and a film is never over

until it's over. And the last things you're doing are sometimes the most critical. Because then the thing locks and it becomes itself, and it's the only time that the process is over.

SCHWARTZ: How much mystery is there to you? We had a question saying, "What did we just see, what just happened?" Do you know all the answers yourself? Do you know what happened on the lawn that night that we never hear about?

LYNCH: Yes. (Laughter) But so does everybody. There are things in life that happen that are supposedly unexplainable. There are strange feelings that we have. Many, many things are communicated to us without words. And inside we have a mechanism—intuition—and sensing mechanisms. It kicks in and tries to make sense of the thing. And this thing is storing knowledge that's very difficult to speak about. But you can sense much more sometimes than you can talk about.

SCHWARTZ: Now, in the time before this film was made, there was a four-year period of projects that you were developing and then decided not to make. There was a film called *Mulholland Drive*; a comedy called *Dream of the Bovine*.

LYNCH: *Dream of the Bovine*, I wrote this with my friend Bob Ingalls, and Bob and I may be the only—maybe a few other people that appreciated this very, very bad, stupid comedy. Fate plays a huge part in our lives. And we may think something is correct, but many forces are telling us this is not the time for this particular thing. And you are sort of moved—it seems like forces outside of you are moving you. But when everything gets lined up, the lights start turning green, and you're suddenly—the barriers have been removed, and you're rolling.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm an avid laser disc collector. Do you intend to get involved in any of these future projects—releasing your movies the way that they should be released?

LYNCH: Yeah, it's a tricky business. I would like to see everything done letterboxed and with great sound. I'm not too interested in doing the commentary, you know, like a lot of people do. But in some strange way I kind of like pan-and-scan. Because you see things. It is a compromise, and in a couple of things you really say, "Why am I doing

it?" But it's just an interesting thing that happens—another composition. It's not so bad, but I wish really that people could see the thing in a theater and that laserdiscs and videos didn't exist. Because on the big screen with the sound, you become inside the film, and that's the beauty of cinema. And it never happens on video, and it doesn't happen on laserdisc, either.

SCHWARTZ: You pay more attention to sound than, I think, almost any other director working today. In your last few films, you have been credited as being the sound designer, which is rather unusual for a director. And this has been an emphasis from the very beginning, even before *Eraserhead*, in the short film *The Grandmother* that we showed here, which was sound designed by Alan Splet, who also did sound with you on *Eraserhead*. All through the years, sound has been a primary interest. Can you talk about it?

LYNCH: Well, cinema is sound and picture both, working together. And all the elements are so extremely important, so I don't know quite how it happened, but it's something that from the beginning I loved. And to see sound approach the abstraction of music and almost blend, obey some of the same rules as music, and—how important it is to complete the picture—and again, it's just a feeling. Alan and I—Alan Splet and I would always work side by side. And in those days before digital and everything we'd start with organic effects that we'd tape and then fiddle with it on now-prehistoric kind of equipment. But it's a whole world. It's a beautiful world.

SCHWARTZ: Sound editing is usually the last step in the process of postproduction. Does it start earlier for you?

LYNCH: I work with Angelo Badalamenti, writing things. Angelo writes a bunch of things for me up front that are mood things, and I listen to it in playback, or found music that Angelo didn't write. And sound effects, sometimes the location sound man will get raw things that we hear along the way, but it starts really the first day of postproduction. We have a big meeting with everybody and go through shot by shot and talk, and they record that and then go back and start getting raw materials together, and I listen to that, and we get down closer and closer. But a lot of things, as I said

before, [have to do with] the speed of digital—and a great, great engineer, John Ross, and he has fantastic people working for him at this place called Digital Sound & Picture in L.A. He really helps speed up the process because of his knowledge.

SCHWARTZ: But did you play music for actors before scenes to get them into moods? That whole first section, again, with the couple before the murder in this film, is a very particular mood.

LYNCH: We're always playing. Sometimes we play it in big speakers. It always comes through my headphones and maybe the [director of photography]'s headphones. And music is a great way to instill some kind of strange understanding of the atmosphere in a scene. So yeah, we play for the actors when it's right.

SCHWARTZ: How much are you inspired by place? In talking about tailgating made me think that this film seems very much like a Los Angeles film. And you said in the past that Philadelphia was the biggest influence in your life, just the experience of living there before you made *Eraserhead*. How much do you think place affects you, and can we see *Lost Highway* as sort of your reaction to Los Angeles?

LYNCH: No. Los Angeles is the city, but every time you show a city you never can show the whole or all the different feelings and different moods. Los Angeles has—and every city has—you go a few blocks, and you turn into another place, and it's a different mood. So you try to find the places that bring out the mood and the look. And again, it goes back to checking with the original ideas. The picture is there, and if you're not able to build it, you try to find it. And then sometimes in finding those things you get new ideas. So it is again, a total—just on a feel. And you look until it is the place.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah. You were speaking earlier about the process, the development of your films—creating a blueprint. Do you take a similar approach to paintings?

LYNCH: Painting is...I think everybody would have a different answer about painting, but for me it's just one idea that is strong enough to get me started. The final thing is not remotely like the original idea. And it's just an action and reaction with paint. And

you get a dialogue going with the paint, and you have the feeling that you almost wanted to stay out of the way of it. It sort of wants to be a certain way, and it's talking to you and you just keep on going, and it can almost be where time disappears. You're inside some beautiful place. It's just you and the paint.

Sometimes, when you finish a painting, looking at it, you start hearing sounds, or you can imagine sounds that would go beautifully with it. That's how I got into film. Seeing some part of the painting wanting to move and hearing maybe a little wind. So it just, sound and motion started becoming a thing that led to animation, pretty primitive and crude animation. But they were supposed to be moving paintings.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: When you were shooting [in LA], did you look around and realize that there are still places in Los Angeles that you've never seen and how incredible you felt about seeing them and how they work in films?

LYNCH: Yes and no. If you just went looking for the places that hadn't been used, they may be fine in and of themselves, but they may not be right for your film. And again, it's a process of talking to the location scouts, and in talking some pictures are forming in their minds. And they go out and take photos. And they bring the photos back, and you look at them, and they are not at all what you wanted. But there might be some aspect of one, and that narrows it down some more. So they go back out again. Pretty soon you have some places that are pretty good possibilities, and then you have to go look. And look and see what you can do, what they will allow you to do to change them. Finally, you get the places, and it doesn't really matter if they've been used a thousand times. If you see that you can alter them or the mood is correct, you have to go with it. It's better if they're not a location that kicks in a scene from a great film of the past and confuses your picture, but normally you change them, and just the angles, and people sometimes can't tell—the lighting and the scene, everything is so different.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: When you go out with this monster equipment and you start a new project, working on a film, does it ever come back like you didn't expect it to?

LYNCH: The first [director of photography] on *Eraserhead* said dailies should never have any surprises. It should come back the way you expect it to. And for me, you can tell by looking in front of you what you're going to be getting, way before video or playback. And it's right there, and you see it through the camera, and you can feel it and see it. But there are sometimes beautiful surprises in what the film and the developing and all of this can do. That's why it's very important to do some tests up front and see dailies every day, because sometimes strange accidents happen. Just at the end of a take, a camera's panned away and suddenly hit something; you see something, and you say, "Peter [Deming], what did I just see? How did that happen?" And you analyze it and you see that you could use it for something else. Always there are accidents, strange little things happening that you have to pay attention to.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Is that how it worked with the character Bob in *Twin Peaks*? He was a sound man?

LYNCH: No, he was a set dresser. That was a total accident, and it was an accident that, in looking back, had to happen. These things are so beautiful when they happen, and if you can follow them. It led to a huge part of *Twin Peaks*, and it was just an accident.

SCHWARTZ: The other night, when you were interviewed by Charlie Rose, he showed a clip and asked, "What was in your head when you shot that scene?" And you said, "That scene was in my head." Is that pretty much how you feel that the film is what you imagine?

LYNCH: It's always different than what you imagine because in the beginning these ideas you see and you feel, but in the process of translating the ideas, many, many, many things come in—new ideas. These particular actors or actresses, that particular location, these sounds, this music, this kind of light, and so subtly things are changing. You're feeling it as you go—and then there's a point, and Mary [Sweeney] can tell you—where we finally see a cut of the entire film together. And that usually is one of the most horrible days in the process because you see it doesn't work.

SCHWARTZ: Do you see it with other people?

LYNCH: You see it alone at first, but you know it doesn't work! So then you have another whole thing, it's an action and reaction with what you actually have, and to find the ways, through experimenting, how the whole can work together. And if you're lucky, it snaps together.

SCHWARTZ: What do you learn on the first viewings with an audience? One thing I'm thinking when I ask this: usually in your films, it seems like there is at least one scene that you know is going to shock an audience. I don't know if it's put there to shock them...

LYNCH: No, you never want to manipulate. The thing has to grow from a place, maybe outside of a person. It has to come, and you have to be true to the ideas, and it's not ever done, at least for me, to make a theme or a message come out, or a thing come out, or a shock thing. It's the way the ideas are talking to you and how they form themselves together the way they want to be. There's a point where you think the film is working, but you've lost a lot of objectivity in the process, seeing it so many times. So if you sit with other people, they don't have to say anything. You can feel what is wrong, just with their presence. And that's a bad feeling. But it's very important to do it. You can learn many things from that first screening or second screening with people.

SCHWARTZ: I wanted to ask you what role your meditation plays in your creative process, because you've talked about how you meditate every day. And it seems that you have this idea of being open or being in a different state, which must influence your creativity.

LYNCH: Well, I believe in this meditation. They say that the nervous system is the instrument of consciousness and if you can expand your consciousness you might be able to catch bigger ideas. You might be able to see more of the truth of situations, and understanding grows.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do you use other films as a creative springboard?

LYNCH: No. I think a film is digested ideas and processes. If you take from things that have gone through that process, you're further away from the source. Ideas are the most important things. And

they seem to be lying there in an ocean and available. So if you could go in and get your own idea—now, it may have similarities to many things that have gone before, but you feel it's yours, and you fall in love with it. And that's a very good feeling.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi. Jack Nance was a staple of your movies. I wonder if you could say a couple of words about him.

LYNCH: I could talk for several hours about Jack Nance. Jack I met in 1971, and he was the first person cast—the only one I saw—for *Eraserhead* for Henry. And again, fate is playing such a huge part. Because Jack—after working in film for maybe, I don't know, thirty years now, I've never run across anybody more perfect than Jack for Henry and for the roles that he's played. And there he was, just given to me. We became great friends. He's a very special person. As I've said before, he's totally unmotivated. So he didn't work that much! When he did work, he always brought something very special. He would sit at home in these little slippers and a robe and think. And he had the best stories and was a great storyteller. And had real insight into the human condition. He was a great guy.

SCHWARTZ: And how was the hairdo developed for *Eraserhead*?

LYNCH: Jack—there's fate again—had a particular type of hair, and I wanted his to be short on the sides, long on the top. And we had a barber come over to the American Film Institute in this place where we were working down in the stables, and the barber cut it short on the side and left just what was there, but it wasn't standing up. And as soon as Catherine Coulson, who later became the Log Lady [in *Twin Peaks*] but was his wife at the time, combed it, this stuff just stood up! And at first we were not sure that it wasn't too much. But we went with it and very quickly became used to it. And Jack had that haircut for maybe five or six years! (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: You spent five years on *Eraserhead*. I wonder if you can talk about how unique that experience remains to you.

LYNCH: Well, when you fall in love with ideas and in the process of making a film you are able to live inside that world, it's very special. And the more you can sink into that world and feel it, the better it is for the film and your own enjoyment. You want to stay on the set longer than the hours you shoot, just to feel it and to be there. And in *Eraserhead*, maybe we had even a little too much time feeling it, because we kept running out of money. But it was a beautiful world. And when we were in it, we could imagine the outside of it, even though it wasn't in reality there. And that's a great feeling, to feel you're in a different world and understand it and feel it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: One question is whether or not you used storyboards. And I'm wondering what your feelings are about the sexuality in cinema in general, specifically the use of male genitalia. There are a lot of women—I wonder if you have any feelings about it or if that concerns you.

LYNCH: Uh... (Laughter) Let's just talk about storyboards. Storyboards—they tend to lock people in. So, it's fine to do some storyboards maybe for yourself, but if other people see them, then they think that is exactly what you are going to do. Some sequences that involve cars, and the car chase with Mr. Eddy—those we talked about and maybe did drawings so that many, many people can understand what we are trying to do and get prepared. But for normal scenes, I never do any storyboards.

And sex is all dependent on the characters, and the characters tell you how that sex will be. So since there are so many possibilities of characters, the sex could be many, many different ways. And I think the rule is to figure out why you are doing this sex scene and how, then, is it supposed to be—to bring out these things. And it tells you, and away you go. So sex could go from the low, dark hell, and go all the way to spiritual. But it always comes down to two people, and they are a certain way, and so the sex follows.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do you play a large part in the casting of your movies, and how did you get Robert Blake?

LYNCH: Yes, what you try to do—it's a common-sense thing—is get the right person for the right

part. And again that is sort of a feeling. And you run different people's images through the film and see if they are saying those things and how it feels. And some make it all the way through, and then you meet with those people. And it's just, again, a process to get the right person for that part. And then the process continues by getting them to tune into the place where you are tuned into. And Robert Blake is a guy I have followed. I don't know if you saw, he was on Tom Snyder's show and talking about his life—he's got a million stories. Started acting when he was three. But I think what really did it for me—I saw him on the Johnny Carson show one time, and I'm sure he has fears, but he's a one-of-a-kind and not afraid to be himself. And he speaks his mind. And I got a respect for him after seeing him on this show. And the seed was planted that I wanted to work with him. But again, it was finding the right person for the right part. Finally, it came along. So we got together and talked about it, and he said he wanted to do it, but he said he didn't understand the script. (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: Richard Pryor was a very evocative piece of casting. How did that come about? What was he like?

LYNCH: Talk show did it with Richard Pryor, too. I had seen his standup routines. I had seen him in *Jo Dancer*. But I saw him on a talk show where he was talking about what a life he had been through and what he had come out of. I fell in love with the guy. He had so much wisdom and understanding, and such a good feeling came through from him. I said, "I wish I could work with Richard." And when this part came up—he has MS, and he's in a wheelchair, but he said he wanted to do it, and he came in. We had two scenes to shoot, and we finished those two scenes. And then we had some more time and put him in the garage, and a portion of that is in the film on the phone and gave him a premise, and he ad-libbed for over nine minutes. And it's incredible, what he came up with.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do you still find it difficult to get the financing for your films, because they are so un-mainstream?

LYNCH: I really have been lucky, and again, it's just a fate thing. I know there are people out in the world who have great ideas and tremendous talent, and they can't seem to find—the elements don't come

together. They don't get a way to go. I've just been lucky. There's no rhyme or reason to it.

I delivered *The Wall Street Journal* during *Eraserhead* for a couple of years. It took me an hour to do the route. The first night it took me about six hours. And it was a very dangerous one hour. Because you're flat out, you're throwing papers from the car. And *The Wall Street Journal* was shipped about 11:30 at night, and they had no name or address on them. I knew the route and would just give a paper to each place it was supposed to go. Then one night a couple of years later they started putting people's names and addresses. And I had to sync up these papers with that particular person. And I refused to do that! So the news seemed to be exactly the same for Tom as it did for Mary, but they had to let me go.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: At the end of the movie, I felt a little incomplete, and I wonder if that was an intention.

LYNCH: No. (Laughter) I want you to feel complete. (Laughter) Many mysteries, as you know, are solved with no room to dream. And the mystery being solved is much less than you wanted it to be somewhere during the beginning at the unfolding of the mystery. And it's a tremendous letdown. I really feel that many things should be understood, but there still has to be some room to think and dream.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Is there something in you that eventually, whatever you're trying to paint with music or work with film, that tries to resist the conclusion altogether?

LYNCH: No. The whole thing has to make sense to you, and it has to feel correct. And—but again, it's based on these ideas that have been forming and arranging and finally showing you what it is. And it's just focusing on those through the process. And if it makes sense, no matter how abstract a sense, again it goes back to intuition rather than just pure intellect, and something that can be so easily translated into words by, you know, everyone. Those are beautiful things to me, abstractions. And life is filled with them, and cinema can do abstractions.

SCHWARTZ: You've said that Frank Daniel at AFI was one of your first film teachers—he said that in

order to make a feature film you should take seventy index cards and have a scene for each index card, and then you have a feature film. It seems if you take that approach, that gives you a sort of freedom not to have to figure everything out. Do you...?

LYNCH: Well, I think it's everyone's experience that no matter what, things come to us in fragments. And, well, I have to say, Frank Daniel passed away about a year ago, I guess, and was one of the greatest film teachers that I think existed. And a beautiful person—so generous was Frank. And he believed in constructive criticism. And that's where you can actually criticize something, but at the same time—now the world is really into destructive criticism. And it's very bad for the person being destroyed, but it's bad for everyone. And so I wish that you all could have heard Frank Daniel speak and heard a bit of this wisdom that he had.

SCHWARTZ: What was some of the reaction like during the whole process of making *Eraserhead*, when it was taking so long?

LYNCH: Well, Frank left in the middle of this project. Many different regimes came in at the American Film Institute. But Frank was always a big supporter of my work and everyone's work. And stayed in touch through the years and gave his support.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You seem to use fire as an image a lot. I was wondering what the significance was for you.

LYNCH: Fire—well, as we all know, it's pretty magical. And it's so strange to see things in life that seem to be dense and concrete and maintain their form, and then suddenly see fire, which is ethereal and moving and has a magic. But when you are working sometimes the fire means this and sometimes it means this, and again it's just a feeling. So many things can be said with a picture and a sound that maybe a poet could translate into words, but I can't do it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was just wondering what films in particular by other directors you admire, and what directors you admire, and for what reasons.

LYNCH: And for what reasons? I admire—I won't be able to name all the people I really admire—but I

like, I love [Federico] Fellini and [Ingmar] Bergman, [Alfred] Hitchcock, Jacques Tati, Billy Wilder, Stanley Kubrick.

SCHWARTZ: Now I have to embarrass you and make you tell the Stanley Kubrick story.

LYNCH: Well, sometimes in life you get a thrill, and you get a thrill when you least expect it. I was in a place called Lee International Film Studios in Wembley, England, in pre-production for *The Elephant Man*. And George Lucas and a bunch of people on his team were over setting up, I think, the second *Star Wars* at Elstree Studios. And one day they were walking around, and they met Stanley Kubrick. And they got talking and Stanley said, "How would you fellows like to come up to my house tonight to see my favorite film?" And they said, "Great." And they went up, and he showed them *Eraserhead*. (Laughter)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can you expound a little bit more on your theory of coincidences and how you feel they can guide your life?

LYNCH: Coincidences and how they can guide one's life. Well, it happens, I'm sure, to everyone, but in film there are many, many things going on. And sometimes one thing will collide with another, and it wasn't meant to happen that way. But the things were all set in motion, and you see the collision. And sometimes nothing happens, but sometimes that supposed accident leads to many beautiful things. So all I can say is—they will occur, and the more elements in motion, the more chances of the occurrence. People should stay alert for those things. The tiniest indication can somehow spiral out and be a great, seemingly new thing.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Could you say something about the projects you have in the future that you're looking forward to doing, and is *Ronnie Rocket* one of them?

LYNCH: I don't know if *Ronnie Rocket*—*Ronnie Rocket* could be. Every time I have gotten close to making this film, *Ronnie Rocket*, for some reason it hasn't gone through, or I've backed away. But other than *Ronnie Rocket*, I don't have—I haven't caught the next idea, either through a book or from the ocean of ideas.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Which aspect of filmmaking as a creator do you enjoy the most?

LYNCH: From the very beginning through to the end I love. All of the process is so beautiful and so important to sink inside of. It's when the film is finished—as much as I like talking to you all, this is the hardest part: to introduce it out into the world, and have no control over how it's going to go.

SCHWARTZ: What has surprised you about reactions to previous films? How do you feel about *Lost Highway*? It hasn't been out that long, but what can you say so far?

LYNCH: It's not out till next week. But in France it came out. You know, I think the secret is to work until you feel good and then to let it go. Because, like I just said, you never can control how people will react, and you learn that sometimes it goes well, and sometimes it goes very poorly. And you don't want to be ruined by either a positive or a negative. And success can blow you into a strange area where it's detrimental for thinking. So it's better to concentrate on the next thing.

SCHWARTZ: How was *Blue Velvet* for you? How did that feel? After *Eraserhead* you made this incredible jump to doing a big-budget film, *The Elephant Man*, and then an even bigger-budget film, *Dune*, and then this very personal project, *Blue Velvet*? Can you talk about—because we'll see *Blue Velvet* later on—if you could just talk about that?

LYNCH: Well, I could say that Dino De Laurentiis cut my salary and cut the budget, and then gave me final cut. So he was into cutting! (Laughter) And *Dune* had been such a failure. We shot *Blue Velvet* in Wilmington, North Carolina, and Dino was on top of the world, had many things going on there in the studios, and we were the poor kids on the block. And it was a beautiful sense of freedom. And there was nowhere to go but up, and that's a great atmosphere to work inside of. So I look back on it as a very good time.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: While we're on the subject of *Blue Velvet*, what exactly is it that Frank Booth is inhaling?

LYNCH: Well, Dennis [Hopper]—the other night I was on Charlie Rose. Dennis had been on and they

showed a clip—and this is true, what Dennis said. I had written in the script “helium.” And the reason I wrote in helium is because it alters the voice and makes it more baby-like, and Frank needed that particular feeling. But Dennis had—and I think having heard it mentally is different than hearing it in reality. And Dennis had a problem with the helium. And he wanted to get there without that putting him there and talked about many nitrous oxides and a combo of drugs, and Dennis is a guy you listen to very carefully when he talks about drugs! (Laughter) You know, he had a mental story about what was in those canisters, and there were four or five canisters strapped together.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can you talk about your relationships with your different DPs through the films we've seen?

LYNCH: Yeah, again, I've been lucky with great DPs—I think all of them. You develop a friendship, number one, a dialogue with them—and you're talking about how this has to be. And I've never had problems. Again, everybody eventually comes to being tuned into a certain place. And you move—all of us in the crew—as one, eventually. Freddie

Francis, who shot *The Elephant Man*—the only problem I ever had with him is he always said I wanted it so dark you can't see it. So I had to work with Freddie a little bit for the darker scenes, but a great DP, Freddie Francis. All of them—Fred Elmes, and Ron García, Peter Deming on *Lost Highway*, and I'm missing somebody—Herbert Cardwell on *Eraserhead*.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Is it because of scheduling that you switch?

LYNCH: A lot of times people aren't available, but sometimes you meet somebody—like it happened this time with Peter Deming. I worked with him before, and I got with Peter a real joy in experimenting and pushing here or there. So I really like that a lot—just, again, a chemistry thing.

SCHWARTZ: Unfortunately, we are going to have to stop him here. But please join us in the next gallery for a book signing. And again, thanks to David Lynch. (Applause)

LYNCH: Thank you very much.

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