

# THE YEAR OF LYNCH

DAVID LYNCH GETS TRANSCENDENT, LAUNCHES HIS OWN COFFEE AND PICKS A PRESIDENT

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**David Lynch, clad in his signature high-waisted pants and white buttoned-to-the-top shirt, a big, blue mug of cappuccino in hand, is the picture of a happy man on a breezy July morning. Sitting back in his airy Hollywood Hills studio, a delicate marine layer just breaking in the sky outside his window, he sips his frothy cup of joe and smiles. Around his wrist is an orange bracelet reading, “The World Is My Family.”**

From the looks of Lynch, one wouldn't know how busy he's been. When asked for a timeline of the last seven months, he pauses and offers the succinct, “I don't even know.” But for a man famous for his elusiveness, Lynch has been very much on the radar lately. Since January, he's traveled the world promoting his most recent film, *INLAND EMPIRE*, held the first solo exhibition of his paintings at the Cartier Foundation in Paris, released the long-awaited second season of *Twin Peaks* on DVD and published a bestseller about Transcendental Meditation (*Catching the Big Fish*). Add to that a new namesake line of coffees, a planned reality show and an executive-producer role on an upcoming documentary and it's shaping up to be an eventful year for the director.

This year alone, his foundation, the David Lynch Foundation for Consciousness-Based Education and World Peace, now in its second year, hosted sold-out benefits at Lincoln Center in New York City and Kennedy Center in Washington and a concert with Donovan at the Kodak Theatre in Hollywood. Sixty-five schools now boast Transcendental Meditation programs because of the foundation's work.

*Catching the Big Fish* spent twelve weeks on the best-seller list and will soon be out in paperback; one-hundred percent of the book's proceeds go to the foundation.

“More and more hipsters are saying, ‘I want this.’ If your friend is in trouble, you give him the book, they say, ‘Wait a minute,’ and they get going on it,” he says. “Transcendental Meditation is not a religion. It's a mental technique that unfolds the human being's full potential. We have a full potential, and it's so gloriously huge. And when the penny drops and people realize that, then they say, ‘We want it, we gotta have it.’”

When Lynch speaks about TM, he does not hide his passion for the practice, raising his voice slightly and rattling his fingers, at times squinting hard to emphasize a point. He speaks with the same vigorous sincerity about nearly everything he's excited about, whether it's the last film he watched, *The Hustler*, (“It's really, really, good,” he says, with gravitas) or his coffee company, aptly named the David Lynch Signature Cup.

“I drink a lot of coffee,” he explains, grinning. “My friend Eric, he said, ‘You know, David, you should have your own coffee.’ That was the beginning of it. I blind-tasted all kinds of coffees, and I always picked this one. I picked it over Starbucks and all kinds of things. Starbucks I love; I don't put down Starbucks at all. Starbucks is so huge, but there's a flavor *above* it, and it's the David Lynch



Signature Cup.” He laughs and takes a drink. “It’s going in a lot of theaters and on Amazon, and right now it’s on davidlynch.com. It’s really good, and you can get beans or ground, decaf, house blend or espresso. I drink the espresso because I like cappuccinos.”

Lynch is routinely questioned about the conflicting realities of his persona: pompadour-sporting master of darkness and mystery and, by contrast, jolly java lover, self-proclaimed “biggest” fan of Au Revoir Simone and earnest advocate of world peace. In reply, insists that creativity is not reliant upon suffering, that suffering in fact hinders creativity. It’s clear that his interest in the depiction of despair onscreen is not a symptom of depression or morbidity, but rather the result of a genuine curiosity in the scope of human emotion, a curiosity long enlivened by his TM practice.

“Stories have contrast,” he says. “Human beings [have contrast] in suffering, in life and death situations, in relationships that go up and down, in the combo that can come out of, say, seven different kinds of characters all spinning their own desires and trying to do something. Stories. Trillions of possibilities. A good story has the highs and the lows and the contrast. It’s not like a good story is just sitting there, you know, in a happiness. It would be so boring. In the world you know there’s suffering, but then you start seeing and feeling other things with it. Pretty soon everything gets more and more beautiful.”

Indeed, Lynch’s films portray more than suffering and darkness. Why he’s known mostly for his mysteriousness, as opposed to his sense of humor, he says is a matter of perception. “If you’re wearing dark-green dirty-colored glasses, that’s the world you see. If you’re wearing those beautiful rose-colored glasses, that’s the world you see. If you see a film and you’re wearing the dark-green dirty glasses, you’re going to see suffering and anger, the dark side. If you’re wearing the rose-colored, you’ll see the dark side, but you’ll see it in relation to other things and other feelings,” he says. “The world is as you are.”

Before he began making films, Lynch was a painter. His spring exhibition in Paris, *The Air Is on Fire*, was the first time the artist saw so many of his works in one place. “What I discovered is that it’s important to see, from time to time, your past work. It fires you up. It might give you new ideas. It was really good in that way.” It’s no secret that Lynch is a veritable superstar in France, where it’s not uncommon to see his face on a billboard or the side of a building. “There’s a thing in America that’s sad,” he says. “The art houses are dying away. You can’t check off America yet, but in the last several years, Hollywood mainstream blockbusters have ruled the roost, whereas in France they support film, they honor the director, they support and fight for the director. They really appreciate cinema moving forward. It is an art form. It’s such a great language, and there’s so much that can be said.” He pauses, taking a drag off his American Spirit. “I like France a lot.”

Lynch also likes Los Angeles, a city whose light he’s often cited as a source of inspiration. It’s from this sunny hilltop studio that he delivers the L.A. weather report to viewers on his website and listeners on local station Indie 103.1. On one end of the room is an open-air patio filled with canvases, on the other is his desk, topped with, among other things, sculpture and pads of watercolor paper. On the concrete floor beneath his chair is a sprinkling of cigarette butts. A PJ Harvey album rests in the CD player beside his desk.

Fans of Lynch might soon have a chance to catch a more personal glimpse of the director’s life. In production now is a reality show that follows Lynch as he tours the country speaking about Transcendental Meditation. While it’s still in early stages, filming began last May during the annual Lynch Weekend at the Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield, Iowa. Lynch is also executive-producing a feature-length documentary about the science and benefits of TM entitled *The Square Root of One Percent*, tentatively set to be complete in the fall of 2008. One focus will be an advanced meditation practice known as “yogic flying,” which is said to intensify the effects of meditation. The documentary will highlight a 1993 experiment in which four thousand advanced meditation experts gathered in Washington, D.C., under the theory that their group practice would drop the city’s crime rate by twenty percent. After two months, according to the FBI uniform crime index, violent crime fell twenty-five percent. (The study was conducted in conjunction with the D.C. police department and published in the peer-reviewed journal *Social Indicators Research*.)

“If I was going to film it, I would start with a wide shot of the yogic flyers hopping and move in closer and closer, and find one of them, and move in and move in and move in close, see their face, and go inside them,” Lynch says. “Inside is where it’s happening. Bliss is going in them like nobody’s business. [The documentary] is about that phenomenon.”

The impact meditation has had on Lynch’s creative life cannot be underestimated, but beyond the personal effects, he sees it as a force for positive change in the larger world. And he’s nothing if not optimistic. “Maharishi has said that the collective consciousness of a country determines the type of leader the country gets,” he says. “So it doesn’t say so much about America when we get someone who kills people, shoots pieces of metal through their heads, rips out their brains, in the name of peace. It’s absolutely, totally wrong. Everybody knows it’s wrong, but they don’t know another way. Here’s the other way: Enliven the field of unity. It’s so unbelievable what’s going on, but that’s going to end. It’s a new thing coming. A beautiful, beautiful, beautiful world is coming.”

So has David Lynch decided on which American candidate he’s backing in 2008? He leans back in his chair and takes a few moments before answering. Outside, the marine layer is gone, and there’s a clear L.A. sky. “Obama. I think he’s a leader,” he replies. “I hope.” ■