

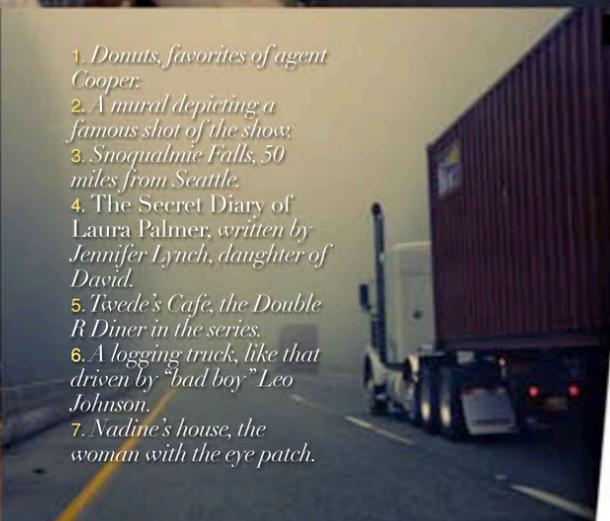
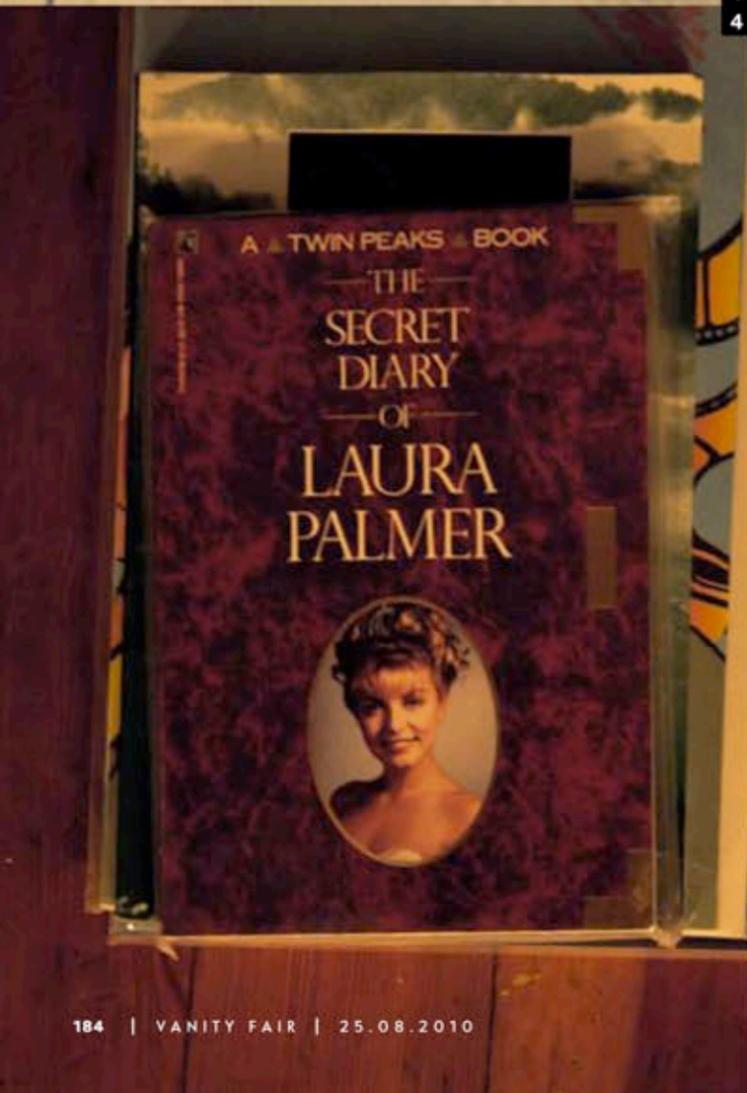
WELCOME TO  
**TWIN PEAKS**  
 POPULATION 51,201

# WHO KILLED LAURAWHO?



*A dancing dwarf who spoke backwards, damn fine coffee, a dead girl wrapped in plastic. Twenty years ago, the first episode of a TV series by David Lynch aired, and it changed the way we do TV forever. Even today, every summer, fans gather in the mountain town where it was filmed. But they must be careful: it's best to not ask locals that famous Twin Peaks question.*

BY ENRICA BROCARDO • PHOTOS NICOLÒ MINERBI  
 TRANSLATION FROM ORIGINAL ITALIAN ARTICLE BY JARED LYON (APOLOGIES FOR ITS SHORTCOMINGS)



1. Donuts, favorites of agent Cooper.
2. A mural depicting a famous shot of the show.
3. Snoqualmie Falls, 50 miles from Seattle.
4. The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer, written by Jennifer Lynch, daughter of David.
5. Twede's Cafe, the Double R Diner in the series.
6. A logging truck, like that driven by "bad boy" Leo Johnson.
7. Nadine's house, the woman with the eye patch.





1. The interior of Twede's Cafe, located in North Bend, was built in 1941 and was the filming location for the *Double R Diner* in the series. Front left, the current owner, Kyle Twede, 53. 2. The cherry pie, a specialty of the diner and one of the favorite dishes of special agent Dale Cooper; let alone everyone on the entire show. 3. The front side of Twede's Cafe. 4. A mug from Twede's Cafe, customized with references to the "damn fine coffee" as Cooper says often in the television series. 5. The sign outside the diner.

He was passing through the city. That he fell in love is certain, but he only remained a few days and then went away. Many spoke of that encounter, and he returned two years later. He stopped in a motel room. Laura Palmer was sitting on the bed, wearing only lingerie.

It was 1991. It was the end.

Since then, room number 6 at the Mt. Si Motel has remained virtually the same: same furniture, same green color on the walls, just a little "dirtier and scraped." On the wall, a sign indicates that there was a scene filmed here from *Fire Walk With Me*.

But, perhaps, it's there to remember a brief fling from twenty years ago.

#### BETWEEN OWLS AND MOUNTED DEER

Fifty miles east of Seattle, in the area where most exteriors were shot for the TV series *Twin Peaks* (and the film *Fire Walk With Me*, a prequel film with the same characters and mysteries), a fan festival was held from August 6-8. The event has happened every summer since 1993, but this year it is also celebrating twenty years since the show first aired on ABC (in Italy, it was broadcast

the next year on Channel 5). David Lynch, who along with Mark Frost conceived and directed parts of the series, was not in attendance.

And for a festival about *Twin Peaks*, even *Twin Peaks* was lacking. Granted, it is true, there are still owls (at least the plastic ones), restless crows, logs of wood, and that "mountain" style featuring mounted deer heads and embroidered cushions crocheted with scraps of wool, but if you decide to go around asking the locals who killed Laura Palmer, you would get the answer: "Who killed who?"

#### ALL IN ONE WEEK

It was the late eighties, David Lynch and Mark Frost had in mind a series similar to *Peyton Place*: a small town full of secrets and lies. They envisioned a dead girl, Laura Palmer, added a bunch of mystery, even the paranormal kind, a soap opera style, a federal agent named Dale Cooper (actor Kyle MacLachlan) equipped with psychical powers outside from the norm, and mix everything together. From that came a story of cocaine, prostitution, evil spirits, and betrayal, all covered with a sugary crust of apparent serenity. After searching a number of locations, they finally found

in Washington State (along the streets and surrounding towns of North Bend, Snoqualmie and Fall City) a sawmill, waterfalls, mountains and neverending forests, a hotel "clean, reasonably priced" as Cooper was trying to find in the first episode (the Salish Lodge has a view of Snoqualmie Falls), and a sufficiently dark and old-fashioned diner. Finally, they placed a sign along the road, with trees in the background: "Twin Peaks, Population 51,201".

Lynch filmed the pilot episode in the area, but in less than a week, the equipment and crew were all gone. Later in Los Angeles, the interiors were rebuilt in the studio where the rest of the series was shot.

#### IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS THE INTERNET

"At the time, people here had no idea what kind of story it would be," says Kyle Twede, 53, owner of the diner in North Bend that appeared in many scenes of the show. "The night the first episode aired, they saw the title with all the beautiful imagery, the waterfall, the bird and all the rest, then suddenly there's a dead girl wrapped in plastic. It was then that fifty percent of the locals



The welcome sign from *Twin Peaks* made specifically for the *Twin Peaks* Fest.

decided to turn off their TV."

In all the rest of the world, however, the public did not turn away. In 1991, *Twin Peaks* won a Golden Globe for Best Drama Series, Lynch's daughter, Jennifer, right away wrote *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* (a diary that was mentioned in the series), and Lynch

## THE MOTHER OF X-FILES AND LOST

BY GIUSEPPE GENNA



After a lava flow of declining images (like "The Softy" from the Italian TV show *Drive In*), the Eighties had to end in some way. The fake laughs at every pinch given to Arnold or the evolutions of space halberds were ingredients of an imaginary soup frozen deep and badly in our collective memory. This decade of manure television was interrupted by two American directors, of which the first is an absolute genius, David Lynch and Mark Frost. It could be just a TV series, but it is not. It is one of two works of art born explicitly on the small screen (the other is *The Decalogue* by Krzysztof Kieslowski).

*Twin Peaks* is the center of an hourglass, through which all must pass to be regenerated. Even the marketing: the entire West was obsessed for weeks by the viral question: "Who killed Laura Palmer?" When her face was finally unveiled (discolored, blue lips, her hair like seaweed, the onset of decomposition from the water), the tension was so high that the image of that corpse sticking out of its plastic coffin is printed in our memories. Welcome to *Twin Peaks*, a place of intellect and unconscious, the black hole of the American dream turned into a nightmare. *Twin Peaks*, county of the deep America, a revamped and corrected version of Peyton Place, television country of the hypocritical U.S. bourgeoisie "sinner", which in 1990 now only makes its face more demonic and surreal. Without *Twin Peaks* nothing would have happened on TV: no *X-Files*, no *Lost*, no *Dexter*. The epic dream series set up by Lynch is in fact an empty place of evil, the "ground zero" of the human apocalypse now, the disaster of an entire civilization (ours). Before you let loose a plot that would

confuse even Freud, signaling how much was about to happen in front of our eyes was the intro. A blanket of sweet and suspenseful music by Angelo Badalamenti, pictures of birds, firs, lakes, mountains - and sawmills, sparks, machinery. Not a single human is shown during the intro: the human being is secondary, terminate. Will the community of *Twin Peaks*, inspected by the FBI, reveal its secrets? Yes and no, more and better than *Lost*. Memorable characters were thrown from the screen. Even a dwarf dancer in the Red Room, who speaks backwards (Lynch forced the actor to really learn to talk like that and at the end of the series, NASA hired him because they needed this ability). Theological gossip, drinking endless cups of coffee anywhere, magically exotic games to determine the culprit: Lynch created our mental and television theater, putting an end to the unfortunate Eighties and ushering in a time that is still outstanding. Without *Twin Peaks* there would be no famous *Lost* island. It would be a mortal sin, which is the sense of both series: mortal sin.



1. Skeet Guidotti, 69, friend of the owner of the Mt. Si Motel, in room number 6, where they shot the scene of Laura Palmer on the bed in the movie *Fire Walk With Me* (1992, directed by David Lynch). 2. The screening of the *Twin Peaks* pilot at the Seattle Art Museum during the *Twin Peaks Fest*, a gathering of fans of the series that has run every year since 1993 and this year was held from August 6 to 8. 3-4. The exterior and the sign of the Mt. Si Motel. 5. Scott Valline, a fan dressed as antagonist Windom Earle during the contest for best costume inspired by the show.

himself with Frost had a lot of fun creating the city guide, *Twin Peaks: An Access Guide to the Town*, which was published in 1991. The actors ended up on magazine covers across the world, and merchandise arrived in stores. And then there was the variable of the Internet. Just twenty years ago, the Web had begun to spread: *Twin Peaks* was the first series where fans from all over the world were discussing all aspects of the show online.

#### STICKERS AND COFFEE (DAMN FINE)

On the table at the kick-off reception, name tags are laid out for attendees of the 2010 festival. There are about 150 attendees in all, including a good percentage from the West Coast, but at least a hundred from farther away, of which ten are from Europe.

**DAVID LYNCH  
HAS SENT  
A MESSAGE:  
«HAVE FUN»**

For \$200, they are able to attend a screening at the Seattle Art Museum of the first episode preceded by short films and unreleased footage, a tour of about three hours of *Twin Peaks* filming locations, a dinner with some of the actors from the series followed by a costume contest, a picnic near some other filming locations, and an untold number of donuts, cherry pie and “damn fine coffee” all of which Cooper never grew tired of and are signatures of the show.

Next there is the merchandise. Buy some stickers that says “Bob Made Me Do It” (Bob is the evil entity that takes possession of people and forces them to kill) and a silver necklace featuring a cup of coffee and the words ‘Damn Fine.’

Organizing the festival since 2004 are Amanda Hicks from California and Jared Lyon from New York. Jared is 32 years old and saw *Twin Peaks* when it aired for the first time. “I think it was memorable to me because it was incredibly different from all other TV shows at the time.”

Aside from David Lynch, who has never attended (“He’s too shy,” says his daughter Jennifer, who is attending for her third time. “But he sent me a message: ‘Tell everyone to have fun.’”), almost every other actor has attended at least one festival.

TWIN PEAKS  
TWENTY YEARS

At the 2010 dinner, Kimmy Robertson arrives with the same pig tails, voice and sweet demeanor of her character Lucy (the receptionist at the sheriff department in Twin Peaks). While on the face of Sherilyn Fenn, it takes only a moment to see the mischief and seduction in her eyes that the actress in the role of Audrey used to enveloped agent Cooper and landed her on the cover of *Playboy*.

While fans come and go with photo and video cameras, I ask Jennifer to tell me how Lynch had the idea for *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer*. “When I was 12 years old, we were in the car, and my father asked me what I was thinking. I told him I’d like to read another girl’s diary to find out if she had the same thoughts as me.” “I felt that in me there was something wrong.”

Then she jokes when I ask if she believes that small towns hide more secrets. “Well, everybody wants to know everything. ‘Hey, Jen bought condoms. I wonder what she’s up to?’ Everyone has their secrets, but in a small town you’re forced to conceal many things and put up a facade.”

#### BETWEEN FICTION AND REAL MURDERERS

Pat Cockwell, 80, was the owner of the diner when *Twin Peaks* was filmed. For years, she witnessed the arrival of “busloads of Japanese fans” (in Japan the series was so successful that Kyle MacLachlan did a series of commercials for a brand of coffee) and passion to the limits of the obsession. Along with her, she has a stack of photographs from the filming and from several festivals, and newspaper clippings with interviews from over the years that she has done with journalists from around the world: in the articles, Pat is smiling beside her cherry pie.

At the same time, however, some tabloid gossip began to describe the locals as “people who go around armed with guns and chainsaws,” and talk of satanic sects. Given that in this time between the Eighties and Nineties, a serial killer nicknamed “the Green River killer” had killed 48 prostitutes, and Ted Bundy, who committed several murders around Seattle, had just been

**«IN A SMALL  
TOWN YOU HAVE  
TO PUT UP  
A FACADE»**



1. The competition for the best costume. This year the winner was two Belgians dressed as a white horse from the show. 2. Jennifer Lynch, 42, daughter of the director. 3. Kamille Tzotzes, 25, gave herself a tattoo of Laura Palmer as an early graduation gift.

executed, the locals were food for gossip. So overexerted, souvenirs remained on the shelves, and everyone resumed their regular life.

In 2000, when a fire destroyed the diner, the new owner auctioned off a few stools that were saved from the fire on eBay and rebuilt the space in a completely different way. The home of Laura Palmer is not in town (“The family who lives there has never even heard of *Twin Peaks*,” says Jared), Big Ed Hurley’s fuel pumps have been replaced by a hydroponics store, the sawmill is closed, and one of the two chimneys has been demolished, the train car where Laura Palmer was tortured has been removed (there are still similar ones, though), and on the website of Snoqualmie Falls makes no mention of *Twin Peaks*. Farmers and foresters there are no more, the new residents work for Microsoft and are in residential areas nearby, and William Shaw, the editor of local newspaper *The Valley Record*, prefers to gloss over the twenty-year anniversary and speak about excursions in mountain instead.

And even room number 6 is about to disappear. “Many people still ask about being able to sleep there or even just beign able to see it,” says Marlo Vistrand, 63, who inherited the Mt. Si Motel from his parents, “but this winter I decided that I will have to repaint it. Twenty years have passed. Life goes on.”

(As I finished the article in a hotel in Santa Monica, two crows stopped at the window. Perhaps to remember that rare moment twenty years ago. Either way, it matters not in what bed you sleep.)

expected reading time: 12 minutes