

**An Analysis of *Twin Peaks* as a Television Innovator  
and its Pop Cultural Legacy**

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# DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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This dissertation is submitted by the undersigned to the Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dun Laoghaire in partial fulfilment of examination for the BA (Hons) in Animation. It is entirely the author's own work except where noted and has not been submitted for an award from this or any other educational institution.

Signed



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## Abstract

This thesis seeks to examine the tv series *Twin Peaks*, co-created by David Lynch and Mark Frost, as an innovator in the television landscape and an influence on a selection of media released in recent times, specifically through the lens of its uncanny and surreal treatment of its narrative, characters and visuals.

*Twin Peaks* serves as an early example of pushing and subverting the capabilities of television as a medium, which this thesis explores through examination of the series' relationship to the tv landscape of the early 1990s, and *Twin Peaks*' connection to surrealist cinema. This thesis will also focus on the uncanny disposition of *Twin Peaks*' setting, imagery and soundtrack, a trait that has been incorporated by media seeking to explore similar elements of horror, surrealism and the uncanny. Finally, this thesis will examine a selection of media which incorporates elements of *Twin Peaks*, with focus on setting and narrative complexity. Through extracting and observing the characteristics of *Twin Peaks* which have had a sustained influence on modern media, this thesis aims to clarify the series' pop cultural legacy.

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# Introduction

Television as a visual and narrative medium is constantly evolving and expanding, with modern series incorporating and adapting elements from a breadth of media such as films, music and video games, including the cycle of borrowing elements from preceding tv series. One such series that spurred audience and critical discussion, sustained interest, and inspired future media is *Twin Peaks*, co-created by Mark Frost and David Lynch, and first airing on ABC in 1990. This thesis seeks to examine *Twin Peaks* place in the continued evolution of modern television and more broadly the series' influence on succeeding media, specifically through the lens of its uncanny and surreal treatment of its narrative and visuals.

*Twin Peaks* began as a two-season surrealist detective drama centring on the mystery of Twin Peaks' murdered homecoming queen, Laura Palmer. What set the series apart from its peers in the detective drama genre was its' sustained focus on this central mystery over the course of the two seasons, its focus on the character relationships connecting the town of Twin Peaks, and its inclusion of surrealist and supernatural elements. With this in mind, I seek to analyse unique elements within the tv series *Twin Peaks* in relation to preceding tv series within the same genre and subsequently its legacy; exploring examples of contemporary media that have adopted unique elements of the series storytelling style. Through this exploration I hope to provide rationale for why *Twin Peaks* maintains popularity and continues to inspire other media.

Chapter One will examine the conception of *Twin Peaks* and the tv landscape which it was released into. A significant aspect of the series' creation is the partnership between executive producers Mark Frost and David Lynch, and how the differing elements of both creators' previous work combined to bring originality to the series. Particularly I wish to highlight *Twin Peaks*' relationship to surrealist cinema; a characteristic which informs the series' uniquely uncanny themes and visuals. I will examine how David Lynch's body of work incorporates and subverts surrealist themes and imagery, with the consideration that *Twin Peaks* was one of the first cinematic television releases.<sup>1</sup> *Twin Peaks* combines narrative and character elements of both the detective drama and soap opera genres in a novel way. This chapter will

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<sup>1</sup>Siobhan Lyons. Between Two Worlds: Twin Peaks and the Film/Television Divide. *Open Library of Humanities*, 3(1), 2017, Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.89> . Accessed 12 March 2025.

explore how the series does so, combining aspects of both genres into a piece of narratively complex television.<sup>2</sup>

Chapter Two will focus on the contents of *Twin Peaks*, specifically its setting, characters and surrealist imagery. The intentional uncanniness of Twin Peaks (the town and surrounding forest) is a key factor in the series' intrigue, as is the setting's function within the narrative. Protagonists Laura Palmer and Agent Dale Cooper are also cause for the sustained interest in *Twin Peaks*. This chapter will examine the duality of both characters and their subversion of the archetypal murder victim and detective respectively. Finally, the series' surrealist imagery, particularly that pertaining to the Black Lodge setting within the series, is a major facet of the series' recognisability and uniqueness. I will analyse select surreal elements and their function within *Twin Peaks*' narrative and world. The setting, characters and surreal elements are facets which subsequent media releases borrow from *Twin Peaks* and continue to innovate on – a point which I will further discuss in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three will explore some select facets of *Twin Peaks*' legacy, these being the soundtrack of the series and its unique characteristics, the series' influence on survival horror video games, and finally its' influence on modern narratively complex tv series. Both the creation and implementation of *Twin Peaks*' soundtrack saw new techniques being introduced to tv for the first time. This chapter will explore these as they serve as a precursor to the use of theme music in modern television. Next, expanding on the uncanny elements explored in Chapter 2, I will examine the relationship of *Twin Peaks*' setting and themes to the survival horror video game subgenre. I will explore how these elements of the series lend themselves to the medium of survival horror games, and how their incorporation is evidence of *Twin Peaks*' pop cultural influence. Finally, this chapter will look at select instances of modern tv series incorporating aspects of *Twin Peaks*' setting and narrative structure. In examining the elements carried over to modern tv series, I aim to demonstrate the long-term impact *Twin Peaks* is having on tv as a medium.

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<sup>2</sup> Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling*. New York University Press, 2015.

This thesis will not cover the various spin-off books in the *Twin Peaks* franchise, nor the third season *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017, Showtime). I intend to focus mainly on the cultural legacy of the original two-season run of the series over time as I consider this to be the most impactful release of the franchise, with regards to the series' novelty at the time of its release.

# CHAPTER ONE: The Conception of *Twin Peaks* – Cinematic Television and Genre Expansion

This chapter will discuss the television landscape prior to and up to the conception of *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-1991). Through an exploration of the surrealist elements that David Lynch brought from the medium of cinema to television, and the generic conventions of the television landscape that preceded *Twin Peaks*, this chapter will highlight the series' unique characteristics that set it apart from more mainstream tv series of the late '80s and early '90s. This chapter will highlight the elements of imagery and storytelling that spurred audience and critical interest as it hit the scene.

## 1.1 The arrival of *Twin Peaks*

A collaboration born off the back of the success of David Lynch's surrealist exploration of the seedy underbelly of small-town America: *Blue Velvet* (1986), Mark Frost and David Lynch were brought together by Warner Brothers. They were to produce a biographical film of the life of Marilyn Monroe, with both working together on the screenplay. Though this initial project fell through, Frost and Lynch had built up a friendly rapport and, through their various exchanges, landed on the idea for a television series - *Twin Peaks*.

*Twin Peaks* first aired on American television network ABC between 1990 and 1991. The series was a two-season surrealist detective drama spanning 30 episodes, following the lives and various story threads of residents of the fictitious rural small town Twin Peaks, with the central mystery of the narrative being the unsolved murder of homecoming queen Laura Palmer. The series garnered much attention and fanfare as it was released due to this intriguing mystery hook and its melodramatic storytelling, the combination of which was decidedly unconventional.

Mark Frost's experience in the field of television prior to the venture of *Twin Peaks*, where he worked as both a writer and editor on several episodes *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981-1987) – a police drama series noted for its gritty realism, complex narrative and innovative camera direction when compared to many of its peers<sup>3</sup>, would help ground and refine Lynch's lucid and intuition - led

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<sup>3</sup> Jason Mittell, "Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television," *The Velvet Light Trap* (Number 58, Fall 2006) p.30.

creative process; as discussed by Frost in interview when asked about his writing collaboration with Lynch: “you gotta have a formula for compromise that will get you out of those corners that you sometimes paint yourself into. And I think we managed to do that fairly well.”<sup>4</sup> This unique partnership allowed *Twin Peaks* to incorporate elements of the police drama and of ‘Lynchian’ cinema in a novel way for the medium of television.

*Twin Peaks*’ conception as a collaboration between Frost and Lynch allows the series to inhabit a unique state as a work of – what is described by Kirstin Thompson as – ‘art television’, or art cinema on the small screen<sup>5</sup>, and the series is decidedly one of the earliest entries into such a category of tv programme. Having explored the different strengths and experience both creators brought to the series, my aim in this chapter is to highlight how the series exists as one of the first instances to bridge the gap between cinema and television.

## **1.2 Surrealism, Lynchian Cinema, and the Television- Cinema divide**

Surrealism is an art and cultural movement established in Europe in 1924, with the aim of allowing the subconscious mind to express itself through the medium of art, including literature, photography and painting and expanding into areas of theatre, music and film. Surrealist works (see fig.1) tend to depict the subconscious through dreamlike and illogical imagery, incorporating juxtaposition and unexpected or surprising elements; the goal being to transcend the divide between reality and dream.

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<sup>4</sup> Pieter Dom, “Inside Twin Peaks: Mark Frost Interview Live After Episode 9 Aired In 1990 (Video),” Welcome to Twin Peaks, November 10, 2014. See: <https://welcometotwinpeaks.com/news/inside-twin-peaks-mark-frost/> . Accessed 25 October 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Kirstin Thompson via Jason Mittell, “Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television,” *The Velvet Light Trap*, Number 58, Fall 2006, 29.



Fig.1: Salvador Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory* (1931). Oil on canvas. 24.1 x 33 cm.

Lynch's use of surrealism inhabits a natural home in the medium of cinema; a setting who's darkened, sense-isolating nature accommodates the transition between and melding of reality and dream for the viewer by design.<sup>6</sup> Lynch was preceded by directors such as Luis Buñuel and Alfred Hitchcock, who's works in the medium demonstrated the capacity for film to blur the lines between the dream world and reality. Both directors' collaborations with famous surrealist artist Salvador Dalí – Buñuel and Dalí co-creating the short film *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), and later Hitchcock and Dalí's collaboration on the dream sequence within *Spellbound* (1945) – are rife with surrealist imagery and themes.

*Un Chien Andalou* is regarded as the first surrealist film<sup>7</sup>, operating on dream logic as opposed to presenting a coherent plot, and incorporates many bizarre images, particularly a striking scene of a

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<sup>6</sup> Barbara Creed, "The Untamed Eye and the Dark Side of Surrealism: Hitchcock, Lynch and Cronenberg," Graeme Harper & Robert Stone (eds), *The Unsilvered Screen: Surrealism on Film* (Wallflower Press, London & New York, 2007) p.199.

<sup>7</sup> Philip French, "L'Age d'Or/ Un Chien Andalou", *The Guardian* (29 May 2011). See: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/may/29/lage-dor-bunuel-chien-andalou-philip-french> Accessed 8 January 2026.

woman's eyeball being cut with a razor before being swarmed by ants (see fig.2). The surrealist elements found in Hitchcock's *Spellbound* take a lesser focus, with the film being a thriller following a central mystery of an amnesiac psychoanalyst. However, the mystery of the protagonist's missing memories is revealed through a surreal dream sequence designed by Dalí, taking place in a club adorned with eyeballs where the guests speak in riddles. The sequence serves as a visual manifestation of the subconscious mind and the secrets to be learned therein.

Lynch's work would continue to explore this relationship between the waking and unconscious mind that is central to the surrealist movement. We can draw similarities between style and content of early surrealist works of film and the succeeding entries of David Lynch, such as the visual parallel of an ant-riddled eyeball present in *Un Chien Andalou* visually resembling the dismembered ear, likewise crawling with ants, seen at the beginning of *Blue Velvet* (see fig.2 & 3).



Fig.2 & 3: Screenshot from *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) (left), and *Blue Velvet* (1986) (right) depicting a hand holding an eyeball, and an ear in a field, respectively, both crawling with ants.

Barbara Creed notes as much in “*The Untamed Eye and the Dark Side of Surrealism: Hitchcock, Lynch and Cronenberg,*”, as well as Lynch's tendency to incorporate a range of other classic surrealist images into his films such as “doubles, identity loss, the bizarre and unexpected, doomed lovers, the dream, the uncanny, decay and death”<sup>8</sup>. The significance of these surreal images within *Twin Peaks* will be further explored in Chapter 2.

Lynch's particular thematic and symbolic treatment of surrealist elements in his work, however,

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<sup>8</sup> Creed, 128.

deviates from the core philosophy of ‘the rejection of normalcy’ that the surrealist movement champions.<sup>9</sup> From his early work through to the creation of *Twin Peaks*, Lynch’s work has continuously concerned itself with normalcy, and the dark and dreamlike contained within. This thematic throughline led writer David Foster Wallace to coin the term “Lynchian”, defined by himself as “a particular kind of irony where the very macabre and the very mundane combine in such a way as to reveal the former’s perpetual containment within the latter.”<sup>10</sup> As much remains true of *Twin Peaks*’ narrative and central themes, to where the series is irrefutably the first of its kind in terms of bringing David Lynch’s unique brand of surrealism to television. This could well position it as the origin of ‘art television’ or cinematic television, succeeding which more “Lynchian” and cinematic tv programmes would follow.

This study demonstrates that the series’ marriage of cinematic qualities and surrealist characteristics in part spurred the interest of both critics and audiences as *Twin Peaks* began to air. Another factor that led to audience interest in the series, which I will examine next, is its’ use of long-form serial television storytelling and combination of multiple television genres.

### **1.3 *Twin Peaks* and evolving Genre Television**

*Twin Peaks* came to television in 1990, at a time where traditional genres and narrative forms within tv were just beginning to branch and merge in new and innovative ways. Among these were the detective drama and soap opera genres, both of which *Twin Peaks* incorporates elements of.

The American detective drama genre had long perpetuated the narrative conventions of the ‘whodunnit’, and ‘swift-justice’ models. This format discussed in depth by Mareike Jenner, the former following a classic three-act-structure of discovery-investigation-revelation employed by the genre’s literary predecessors (e.g. *Dragnet* 1967-70), while the latter is generally non-investigative and the criminal is known to us from the outset or a crime is prevented (e.g. *The Untouchables*

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<sup>9</sup>“David Lynch and Surrealism: Deconstruction of the ‘Lynchian’ Label”, *Facets Features* (September 2, 2017). See: <https://web.archive.org/web/20200322230627/http://facets.org/blog/exclusive/watch/essays/david-lynch-and-surrealism-deconstruction-of-the-lynchian-label/> . Accessed 29 October 2025.

<sup>10</sup> via “David Lynch and Surrealism: Deconstruction of the ‘Lynchian’ Label”

(1959-63).<sup>11</sup>

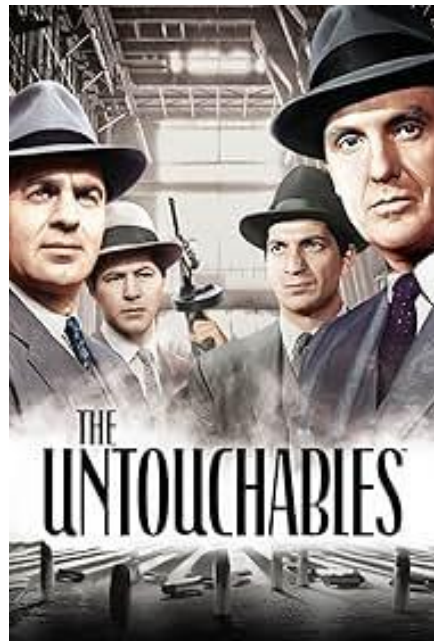
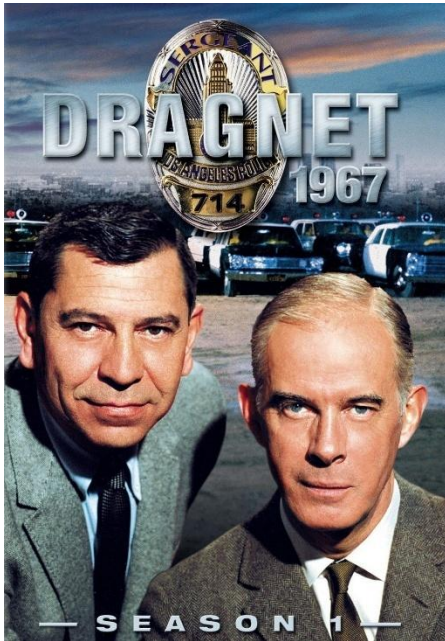


Fig.4 & 5: Posters for tv detective dramas *Dragnet* (1967-70) (left), and *The Untouchables* (1959-63) (right).

American television saw an uptick of series set outside of the police force for the first time in the '70s, with the neoliberal sensibilities of the 1980's giving rise to more and more series following P.I.s operating outside of the police force.<sup>12</sup> That is to say, detective dramas were beginning a trend of evolving beyond previously established archetypes to satisfy audiences' desire for more unique and liberal narratives.

Jenner observes the emergence of three narrative 'cycles' within the detective drama and police procedural genres in the '80s; namely the 'sunshine noir' cycle, the 'social realist' cycle and the 'quirky' cycle.<sup>13</sup> The 'sunshine noir' cycle is characterised by its combination of film noir's dark aesthetics and themes with contrastingly bright tone sunny locations such as Florida and Hawaii,<sup>14</sup> e.g. *Miami Vice* (1984-1989). The 'social realist' cycle contrasts the 'sunshine noir' cycle, focusing on social issues such as gang warfare and inequality in its narratives, and being shot with

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<sup>11</sup> Mareike Jenner, *American TV Detective Dramas: Serial Investigations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), p.56.

<sup>12</sup> Jenner, 102.

<sup>13</sup> Jenner, 103.

<sup>14</sup> Jenner, 104, 105.

documentary-style aesthetics, with *Hill Street Blues*, exemplifying these characteristics.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, Jenner presents the ‘quirky’ cycle as being a short-lived product of the ‘90s, but being complex in its genre hybridity, allowing it to transcend the detective genre and influence a range of texts,<sup>16</sup> and being characterised by “the general inclusion of otherness throughout the text, with characters accepting somewhat odd behaviour and events without comment”.<sup>17</sup>

Jenner notes *Twin Peaks* as an inciting release for the ‘quirky’ cycle and credits the expansion and innovation of such cycles within the genre with enabling the evolution beyond traditional conventions and narrative structures. Narrative structures began to wane away from being episodic, with more modern detective dramas allowing for plot threads to carry over an arc of multiple episodes while others would continue to resolve themselves within an episode. *Twin Peaks* continued to expand on this shift away from strictly episodic narratives, incorporating a serial narrative mode traditionally seen in the soap opera genre.

The soap opera usually follows a number of story threads selected at the beginning of an episode from various ongoing overarching storylines, and will swap between progressing each of these, generally leaving them open-ended come the end of an episode to perpetuate the soap’s serial form.<sup>18</sup>

By the 1960’s, prime-time programmes outside of daytime soap opera slots were beginning to incorporate serialisation, with early examples observed by Jason Mittell including *Peyton Palace* (1964-1969) and *Mary Hartman* (1976-1977).<sup>19</sup> These series serve as a precursor to *Twin Peaks*’ combination of the serial narrative, cliffhangers and overarching story threads of the soap opera genre with the central mystery and episodic elements of the detective drama genre.

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<sup>15</sup> Jenner, 114.

<sup>16</sup> Jenner, 117, 118.

<sup>17</sup> Jenner, 119.

<sup>18</sup> Mittell, *Complex TV*, 234.

<sup>19</sup> Mittell, *Complex TV*, 236, 237.

This combination of elements points to *Twin Peaks* as an early example of what Mittell calls narratively complex television. Mittell defines narrative complexity with regards to television as “redefin[ing] episodic forms under the influence of serial narration”<sup>20</sup>, proposing that narratively complex series are characterised by a shift in form between serial and episodic, resulting in unconventionally and complexly structured television series.

The late ‘80s and early ‘90s marked a shift in the tv landscape. *Twin Peaks*’ release brought with it a new style of television that was narratively complex, cinematic and surreal. I would accredit the creation of this style to the unique collaboration of Lynch and Frost as they brought elements of art cinema and multiple tv genres and narrative modes together, thus bridging the worlds of television and cinema.

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<sup>20</sup> Mittell, “Narrative Complexity”, 30.

# CHAPTER TWO: Breaking the Mold – An Exploration of the Setting, Characters and Visual Language of *Twin Peaks*

In this chapter I will examine various aspects of the content *Twin Peaks*– ranging from its setting and characters to its symbolism, aesthetics and visual language, and how their uncanny and unique qualities contribute to the allure of *Twin Peaks*. I will highlight examples within the production that contribute to the ongoing appeal and the originality of the series.

## 2.1 Entering *Twin Peaks* - The intrigue of the Uncanny Setting

Twin Peaks - both the town and the world - exude a timeless and isolated quality as though it exists beyond our reality, an assumption that is readily reinforced as the series progresses. The narrative borders between waking and dream, living and dead, mind and body and supernatural and scientific are blurred and traversed. Lena Ledwon notes the series' coupling of the familiar and unfamiliar as the source of its' uncanny disposition: "Twin Peaks can be seen as a twentieth-century reconciliation of common and uncommon, home-like and uncanny, domestic and Gothic."<sup>21</sup>

The small rural town of Twin Peaks is at once familiar to the audience. With its clichéd and nostalgic inhabitants and scenery seen in the opening titles and first scenes of the pilot –

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<sup>21</sup> Lenora Ledwon. "'Twin Peaks' and the Television Gothic." *Literature/Film Quarterly* (21, no. 4 (1993): 260–70,) p.268. See: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43798696>. Accessed 18 December 2025.



Fig.6: The iconic *Twin Peaks* title screen.

shots of scenic Douglas firs, The Great Northern hotel, Pete Martell as he heads out to go fishing. The inclusion of these mundane and non-threatening settings put the audience at ease before being staunchly juxtaposed. The setting becomes wholly unfamiliar as we then cut to the discovery of Laura Palmer's body at the lakeshore, wrapped in plastic, taking the audience immediately out of the quaint, cozy setting just established.

This trend of subversion will continue throughout *Twin Peaks* as a whole, where locations, characters and objects are not as they seem. Karra Shimabukuro writes on the ambiguous nature of the forest of Twin Peaks specifically, "the town and its boundaries provide an appearance of civilization, whereas the forest, lying beyond this boundary, represents possible danger and the unknown ... good does not necessarily equal civilization, and savage does not equal evil".<sup>22</sup>

The unease and intrigue of Twin Peaks as a setting can be largely attributed to its uncanny nature. The sensation of the uncanny was first described by Ernst Jentsch in his essay *On the Psychology of the Uncanny* as leaving a person feeling 'not quite 'at home' or 'at ease' in the situation concerned,

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<sup>22</sup> Karra Shimabukuro, 'The Mystery of the Woods: Twin Peaks and the Folkloric Forest', *Cinema Journal*, (55(3), pp 121–125) p.4.

that the thing is or at least seems to be foreign to him'.<sup>23</sup> This suggests that one is met with a feeling of the uncanny when details of an otherwise familiar situation or thing are slightly out of place. Using this interpretation, it can be said that much about *Twin Peaks* hides oddity in the familiar, thus eliciting a sense of uncanniness.

The uncanniness of *Twin Peaks*' setting is aided by its timelessness. Despite the pilot being set in 1989, the titular small town bears little indication of this, as seen through the styling of the series' locations, particularly the RR Diner, (see fig.7). The diner is styled in a distinctly retro manner, without signifiers of modern technology to date it, and the overwhelming use of wood in the interior reminds the viewer of the locations proximity to Twin Peaks' forest. The setting's unusual design is observed by Martha Nochimson, "[Production designer Richard Hoover] created a look for the show in which ... the concepts of inside and outside were conflated. A massive use of wood gives an outside feeling to the interiors. The interiors burgeon with dead animals and their parts-horns, shells- and nature drawings that are often photographed as if they were theatrical backdrops for the action"<sup>24</sup> (see fig.7), further adding to the feel of unfamiliar within the familiar.

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<sup>23</sup> Ernst Jentsch, *On the Psychology of the Uncanny*, (1906) p.2.

<sup>24</sup> Martha Nochimson, "Desire under the Douglas Firs Entering the Body of Reality "Twin Peaks"", *Film Quarterly*, *Winter*, (46, No. 2 (1992-1993)), p. 27.



Fig.7: Interior shot of the RR Diner.

Choices in character costuming also give series a more 1950's Americana feel, indicative of David Lynch's interest in the American small town - and its seedy underbelly - which we see as well in his other works such as his 1986 film, *Blue Velvet*.

Twin Peaks also possesses an isolated quality which further distances it from reality, as - excluding the events that transpire at casino One Eyed Jacks (which is located across the Canadian border from Twin Peaks and is first visited in Episode 8) - the audience hardly leaves the confines of the town. Many other real - world locations are mentioned but never shown, leading to a claustrophobic sense that the world may not exist outside of Twin Peaks. Shimabukuro observes the forest's function as a boundary in isolating Twin Peaks and the danger contained therein "One-Eyed Jack's is situated in the middle of the woods on the Canadian-US border, as is the train car that represents violence and darkness for Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) and Ronette Pulaski (Phoebe Augustine)."<sup>25</sup>

## 2.2 The unconventional Characters of *Twin Peaks*

As the setting of *Twin Peaks* at once embodies uncanny and subversive qualities, so too do the characters that inhabit it. A key facet of the cast's uniqueness and memorability is that characters

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<sup>25</sup> Shimabukuro, p. 4.

will embody an archetype when they are introduced, and as the story progresses, they will evolve beyond this initial characterisation in unexpected ways. The most nuanced and subversive of *Twin Peaks*' cast are naturally those at the centre of the narrative - Special Agent Dale Cooper and murdered Homecoming Queen Laura Palmer, both of whom I will examine.

The audience gains the most insight into the mind of *Twin Peaks*' protagonist, Dale Cooper. We are introduced to him in the pilot episode as the FBI Agent assigned to investigate Laura Palmer's murder case. Audiences may have expectations of an FBI Agent protagonist in a detective drama – such as being a strait-laced, no-nonsense type that places importance on deductive reasoning and scientific explanation above all else. However, these expectations are subverted almost immediately when Agent Cooper begins excitedly questioning Twin Peaks' Sheriff, Harry Truman, on the local fauna and foregoing asking about the murder case as soon as formalities are out of the way. With this scene occurring minutes into the pilot episode, the audience gets their first taste of the chipper, quirky and slightly left-of-field attitude of Agent Cooper.

Agent Cooper's approach to detection is unique in that he possesses the ability to both rationally infer and deduce new information from clues grounded in reality, while at the same time gleaning revelations from abstract and supernatural sources such as riddles hidden within dreams. "What makes Cooper such an interesting character, and his method of detection so compelling, is the fact that dreams appear to provide him with knowledge of the world outside of his mind. For it seems plausible that dreams might provide us with knowledge of ourselves, but how dreams are supposed to provide us with knowledge of the world external to our minds seems to be a genuine mystery."<sup>26</sup>

This supernatural effect can be seen when Cooper first visits the Red Room in Episode 2 - where Laura whispers the name of her killer into Cooper's ear before he wakes from his dream and forgets the name of the culprit. His subsequent enthusiastic discussion with the Sheriff's department at the beginning of Episode 3 where he announces, "Break the code, solve the crime." sets the precedent for the subconscious and emotions-based acquisition of clues that will steer the investigation for the story to come.

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<sup>26</sup> Shai Biderman and William J. Devlin, *The Philosophy of David Lynch* (The Philosophy of Popular Culture. University Press of Kentucky, 2011) p. 29.

Cooper's detection and personality are not confined to focusing only on reality and the rational, and he is also in tune with his subconscious and the supernatural. Nochimson argues that these factors are cause for his sustained audience appeal and his role as "the first detective truly appropriate to the medium of television".<sup>27</sup>

Laura Palmer, the murder victim at the centre of *Twin Peaks*' narrative, embodies duality in a variety of ways, but most obviously through her double-life. We learn over the course of the series – through Cooper's investigation and the testimonies of various characters in Laura's life, her best friend Donna, boyfriend Bobby and therapist Dr. Jacoby, etc., about the unexpected aspects of her life, despite her being dead.

Laura was on one hand an altruistic and socially active highschooler, even setting up the local Meals on Wheels Programme, while simultaneously engaging in sex work at One Eyed Jacks and coercing her boyfriend Bobby into selling cocaine to enable her own use. Furthermore, her illegal and self-destructive behaviours were a response to the sexual abuse she suffered for years at the hands of her father, Leland Palmer - leading to a greater dichotomy between how she presented herself outwardly and the internal struggles she grappled with in the lead up to her death. The way in which *Twin Peaks* reveals the many facets of Laura's personal life, struggles and personality to viewers through her impact on other characters elevates her as more than a simple murder victim and instead a multi-faceted, flawed character who connects the plot and characters of *Twin Peaks* to one another.

Despite already being dead when we first meet her, Laura Palmer's influence is so omnipresent in the narrative that she is felt as a character throughout *Twin Peaks*, in no small part through the positive and negative impacts she left on her community. Christy Desmet states that the saintlike reverence the townsfolk hold Laura in, along with her inability to fit perfectly into this role due to her more sinful actions create audience allure- her imperfection as a martyr humanizes her to the audience as more than simply a victim. "Laura Palmer refuses to fit neatly into her social role, just

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<sup>27</sup> Nochimson, 25.

as she refuses to be buried quietly in the funeral episode.”<sup>28</sup>

### **2.3 Surrealism on the Small Screen - Visual Aesthetics and Symbolism**

Chapter 1 looked at the surrealist movement and David Lynch’s use thereof as a director and storyteller; while this section will examine select surrealist imagery in the series and the unique symbolism it presents to viewers, with emphasis on how it functions within the narrative. Symbolism and irrational imagery are abundant within *Twin Peaks*, with the strongest and most central hub of surrealist themes and imagery being the Black Lodge, which will be a core focus of my discussion.

The Black Lodge is an extradimensional location in *Twin Peaks*, described by Native American legend within the series’ mythos as a manifestation of evil which souls must pass through, and an opposing force to the White Lodge – the home of good spirits and positive energy in this legend. The Black Lodge exists outside of space and time and can be accessed through the woods surrounding Twin Peaks under specific astrological circumstances. The lodge is depicted as a maze of curtained hallways containing a waiting room known as the Red Room.

Twin Peaks carries an underlying dreamlike and transient feel, and it gets no more explicit than the Black Lodge and Agent Cooper’s experiences therein. The existence of Laura Palmer in the Red Room is paradoxical; she is both dead and alive in this space existing outside of time. Her reversed speech and cryptic conveying of information, for example: "I feel like I know her, but sometimes my arms bend back." (Episode 2), are bizarre and yet crucial to Cooper’s investigation (in this instance revealing the fact that Laura’s arms were bound behind her before her murder). They reveal a truth about the surreal nature of things and happenings in *Twin Peaks*: despite their odd and chaotic nature, they adhere to their own logic. This fact is reaffirmed in William Delvin and Shai Biderman’s *The Philosophy of David Lynch*, where they argue that, in Lynch’s surrealist storytelling style, “reality is carefully planned and controlled for maximum effect, even when it seems uncontrolled and illogical to the viewer”.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Christy Desmet, “The Canonization of Laura Palmer”, in *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks*, ed. David Lavery (Wayne State University Press, 1995), p.101.

<sup>29</sup> Biderman and Delvin, 7.

The setting of the Red Room itself is surrealist in its existence as a physical manifestation of a dream, and its visual appearance reflects this (see fig.8). Concealing red curtains in place of walls and seemingly infinite chevron-patterned floors create a sense of unease as we can't place the scale or location of the Red Room. This fact is readily exploited in the looping chase scenes of the series Finale. The iconic chevron floorboards serve another function in Delvin and Biderman's reading of the symbolism, where they liken the pattern to the interlocking motifs of surrealist painter Maurits Escher; their twinning and opposing motifs an abstract representation of Agent Cooper's confrontation with his doppelgänger - "Lynch creates distorted Escher-like landscapes, such as the red room in Agent Cooper's dreams and visions, with appearances by a dwarf and a giant—distortions of normal human scale, and a black-and-white checkerboard or chevron-patterned floor."<sup>30</sup> The appearance of characters who don't appear in the physical world, some unconventional in their appearance such as The Giant and The Man from Another Place also speak to the location's liminal and transient nature.

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<sup>30</sup> Biderman and Delvin, 17.



Fig.8: The Giant, The Man from another World and Agent Cooper gathered in the Red Room, Ep. 29.

The agency of objects and capability of characters to function symbolically is not confined to the Red Room, as argued by Stefania Consonni.<sup>31</sup> As much can be seen when Twin Peaks' recluse, 'the Log Lady', has the log she carries everywhere with her assuming the role of a prophet – the log speaking through the Log Lady to Cooper to reveal details of the series' mysteries. Similarly, 'Waldo the Bird' (pet myna bird of Jaques Renault) serves as an eyewitness to Laura Palmer's murder and provides information on her case.

Consonni observes of characters: "people become either thing-like (Josie's damnation scene; Leo Johnson's petrification; Windom Earle's display of his victims) or beastly (see BOB [the evil spirit in possession of Leland Palmer when he murders Laura], crawling around on all four and laughing/barking; Albert Rosenfeld's comment on Sheriff Truman: "Look! It's trying to think"[a

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<sup>31</sup> Stefania Consonni, "The Good, the Bad and the Odd: A Cross-Semiotic and Systemic-Functional Insight into "Twin Peaks", *Elephant & Castle* (23, (2020)).

remark meant to poke fun at and dehumanize the Sheriff during their investigation together]).”<sup>32</sup> Moments where characters take on a symbolic role are both bizarre in their surreality, while simultaneously enhancing the narrative - BOB’s beastly quality reassuring his status as an inhuman entity for example, thereby adding to audiences fear and malaise about the character.

In a staged world rife with surrealism, which operates on its own logic, it is these uncanny elements that make *Twin Peaks* intriguing to an audience interested in unravelling a mystery, unlike those presented on tv before.

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<sup>32</sup> Consonni, 6.

## CHAPTER THREE: *Twin Peaks* – Its Legacy seen through a changed TV Landscape

This chapter will explore *Twin Peaks*' cultural impact, legacy and influence on select media. The main objective of this chapter will be to highlight instances where productions have directly paid homage to or incorporated distinctive elements of *Twin Peaks*. Broader observations of the television landscapes' evolution can be linked to *Twin Peaks*' legacy, which extends to the music found in tv soundtracks, an area which will be explored first. Subsequently, I will be examining this cultural impact through the select components and examples of the series' narrative presentation and complexity as they appear in media, specifically video games and television, in the wake of *Twin Peaks*.

### 3.1 Music and *Twin Peaks*

Television audiences are well accustomed to the music and soundtrack of a tv series accompanying and enhancing the narrative being presented visually on screen today. The trend of adding popular music and original soundtrack to television series beyond just a theme tune began in the 1970s with *World at War* (ITV, 1973-1974) and subsequently *Edge of Darkness* (BBC, 1985) and *The Singing Detective* (BBC, 1986). The use of music in tv broadcasts became more frequent in the '90s, and *Twin Peaks* was one of the “internationally acclaimed, flag-ship American series of the 1990s” to garner international success for its soundtrack.<sup>33</sup>

Despite audiences beginning to expect narratively relevant songs and musical cues from the programmes they were consuming, *Twin Peaks*' score by Angelo Badalamenti - a long-time creative collaborator of David Lynch - still manages to innovate and subvert in its role in the series' storytelling. In this section, I want to highlight the powerful way in which the soundtrack is used to enhance and elicit emotional responses during key narrative moments through the support of music. I will also discuss how the diegesis of the show's soundtrack enhances the uncanny world of *Twin Peaks*, as I believe that these characteristics of the soundtrack are what make it stand out in the

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<sup>33</sup>Anna Piotrowska, 'Music in TV Shows: Some Methodological Considerations', *The Art and Science of Television*, (14.3), pp.10–27. See: <https://doi.org/10.30628/1994-9529-2018-14.3-10-27> . Accessed 18 January 2026.

world of television scores.

*Laura Palmer's Theme*, as with many of the show's themes, is comprised of distinct musical cues. These cues are short melodies comprised of a few notes and are used to signal certain characters or events on screen. Clare Norelli provides in-depth analysis of the composition and use of *Laura Palmer's Theme* and the other major musical themes of *Twin Peaks* in her book, *Angelo Badalamenti's Soundtrack from Twin Peaks*. Norelli notes that Laura's theme contains two distinct musical cues which are played throughout the series to signal and enhance various events: the foreboding and ominous 'Dark Introduction' and the melancholic and romantic 'Love Theme from Twin Peaks'.

Norelli highlights the narrative significance of the duality of tone in *Laura Palmer's Theme*: 'The theme's "beautiful darkness" reflects the double life of Laura Palmer and, on a macrocosmic level, Laura as metaphor for the dualities that permeate the series: life and death, love and evil, light and dark.'<sup>34</sup> The use of the cues independently of one another within the series generally corresponds to the emotional tone of the scenes in which they appear. For example, the 'Dark Introduction's' use during the pilot when Laura Palmer's autopsy takes place, both as it relates to Laura's character and the sombre tone of the scene, or the 'Love Theme's' appearance in the same episode when friends and family learn of Laura's death, echo the deeply melancholic mood of on-screen events.

As the series progresses, the use of these cues continues to correspond to the emotional tone of events, however these instances relate less directly to Laura Palmer, to the effect that the cues feel much more integrated into the world of *Twin Peaks* as a whole. However, the initial ties to Laura mean that the audience, much like *Twin Peaks*' residents, continue to keep her in their periphery as events unfold, thanks to the continued repetition of the theme.

*Laura Palmer's Theme* also takes on a more omnipresent role as the series progresses, the significance of which Norelli emphasises, "It speaks where characters are too shocked or saddened to express themselves, and allows the mystique of Laura Palmer to truly captivate us."<sup>35</sup> This idea of the emotionally laden score of *Twin Peaks* speaking for the characters and story in moments of

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<sup>34</sup> Clare N. Norelli, *Angelo Badalamenti's Soundtrack from Twin Peaks*, (Bloomsbury Publishing USA 2017) p.69.

<sup>35</sup> Norelli, 57.

heightened drama is what makes it so impactful on the audience.

The diegesis of the music in *Twin Peaks* is also unique in its treatment, considering that in several moments throughout the series, it is unclear to the viewer whether a piece of music is physically being played aloud in a scene. For instance, in Episode 1 during the scene where Audrey Horne is seen dancing alone in her father's office, we are led by the scene to assume the music is playing in her head due to a lack of context for the sound; until her father comes in and scolds her for the racket, revealing the tune to be played aloud after all. In the essay "'Disturbing the Guests with this Racket': Music and Twin Peaks", Kathryn Kalinak discusses this phenomenon of disorienting diegetic music and its effect: "As viewers of *Twin Peaks*, we are repeatedly made aware not only of the line between the diegetic and the non-diegetic and between illusion and artifice; we are taught not to trust our ears to tell the difference."<sup>36</sup> Just like the lines between other opposing forces in *Twin Peaks* – good and evil, dream and reality – are not to be trusted, neither is the line between diegetic and non-diegetic sound.

In looking at these characteristics of *Twin Peaks*' soundtrack – the repetition of cues and interchangeability between physically present sounds and those existing outside of the scene which they accompany, it becomes clear that the show's music serves to enhance the narrative in a significant way through character association, heightening of emotion, and blurring the line of reality and surreality, a trend which we continue to see in modern tv.

### **3.2 *Twin Peaks* and Video Games**

The visual aesthetics of *Twin Peaks* discussed in Chapter 2, along with its uncanny disposition play a significant role in the series' intrigue. Since the release of the show, a variety of media has taken inspiration from the unique motifs and presentation of *Twin Peaks*, with video games, specifically those of the survival horror subgenre referencing and incorporating elements of the series' characteristics. This section will examine two of these instances, their purpose and efficacy.

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<sup>36</sup> Kathryn Kalinak, "'Disturbing the Guests with this Racket': Music and Twin Peaks", in *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks*, ed. David Lavery (Wayne State University Press, 1995), p.86

Survival horror video games as a subgenre are typically characterised by the gameplay constraints they place on the player in terms of combat capability, save points, health items among other game mechanics, demanding resource management and a sense of caution from the player. Naturally, games of the subgenre also contain a variety of horror elements, from supernatural enemies and jump scares to isolation, eerie settings and more psychological horror.

It can be argued that the constraints specific to the subgenre make it a suitable medium for exploration of the uncanny and surreal due to their ability to unsettle the player, in comparison to faster paced horror gaming subgenres such as action horror.<sup>37</sup> Elements of a game's design such as poorly lit, restrictive environments can disorient a player, while third person or fixed camera views create a sense of claustrophobia and alienation between player and avatar. This strained relationship between player and character is discussed by Laura Hoeger and William Huber in "Ghastly multiplication: Fatal Frame II and the Videogame Uncanny", where they acknowledge that the fragmented and incomplete picture, we, the player, are given of a game's protagonists, and its' capacity for the uncanny: "When the simulacrum is the avatar, the apparent, yet incomplete, contingency of the avatar on the player's input creates yet another space of the uncanny".<sup>38</sup>

The dissonance between player/audience and protagonist (as in the *Twin Peaks* Season 2 Finale), coupled with the horror lurking in the mundane – residential and industrial settings – show the clearest overlap between survival horror games and *Twin Peaks*. As such, it's only natural to see the tv show's influence across the subgenre. Julian Novitz observes: "[survival horror] games replicate or draw upon elements of the distinctive uncanniness of *Twin Peaks* ... in terms of their representational content—their narratives, characters, settings, and their visual and audio aesthetics".<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Julian Novitz, 'Expansion, Excess and the Uncanny: Deadly Premonition and *Twin Peaks*'. *Arts* (7(3), Article 3) p.2. See: <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts7030049> . Accessed 15 December 2025.

<sup>38</sup> Laura Hoeger and William Huber, "Ghastly multiplication: Fatal Frame II and the Videogame Uncanny", *Proceedings of DiGRA 2007 Conference: Situated Play*, 2007. See: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228682024\\_Ghastly\\_multiplication\\_Fatal\\_Frame\\_II\\_and\\_the\\_Videogame\\_Uncanny](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228682024_Ghastly_multiplication_Fatal_Frame_II_and_the_Videogame_Uncanny). Accessed 17 December 2025.

<sup>39</sup> Novitz, 4.

Enduring survival horror classic, *Silent Hill 2* (Konami, 2001) hasn't shied away from *Twin Peaks*' influence. From the similarities in eerie rural settings and ambience (see fig.9 & 10) to the series' - and more generally David Lynch's -influence on artistic direction<sup>40</sup>, along with Angelo Badalamenti inspiring the game's composer Akira Yamaoka<sup>41</sup>, *Silent Hill 2* is rife with *Twin Peaks*' most inspiring attributes.



Fig.9 & 10: Screenshot from *Twin Peaks* (left), and *Silent Hill 2* (2001) (right) both depicting the wooded areas surrounding their respective titular rural towns.

Aside from soundtrack and aesthetics, *Silent Hill 2* also takes inspiration from *Twin Peaks* on a narrative and symbolic level. Supernatural elements serve as manifestations of guilt and the darker capabilities of man in both pieces of media: Pyramid Head – one of the main antagonists of the game *Silent Hill 2* - stems from the game's protagonist James Sunderland's internal guilt in a way not dissimilar to how BOB manifests in *Twin Peaks* as "the evil that men do". James in *Silent Hill 2* is pursued and tormented through the town of Silent Hill by Pyramid Head similarly to how BOB influences and torments Leland Palmer and Agent Cooper.

*Deadly Premonition* (Access Games, 2010) takes a more gameplay-focused influence from *Twin Peaks* by comparison. As Julian Novitz's examination of the game and its similarities to *Twin Peaks* in "Expansion, Excess and the Uncanny: Deadly Premonition and Twin Peaks" suggests, *Deadly*

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<sup>40</sup> Justin Keeling, "IGN PS2 Interviews Silent Hill 2 Producer Akihiro Imamura", IGN.com, June 21, 2012. See: <https://www.ign.com/articles/2001/03/29/ign-ps2-interviews-silent-hill-2-producer-akihiro-imamura> Accessed 8 January 2026.

<sup>41</sup> Daniel Kalabakov, "Interview with Akira Yamaoka", Spelmusik.net, July 16, 2002. See: [https://web.archive.org/web/20070629165120/http://spelmusik.net/intervjuer/akira\\_yamaoka\\_eng.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20070629165120/http://spelmusik.net/intervjuer/akira_yamaoka_eng.html) Accessed 8 January 2026.

*Premonition* succeeds, whether intentionally or not, to unsettle the viewer through an uncanny dissonance between player and avatar, particularly through the subversion of generic expectation: “Deadly Premonition disrupts not just the familiar player/avatar relationship, but the familiarity of the survival horror category of gameplay itself in order to deliver a distinctly uncanny effect. In this sense, it is very similar to the genre-bending elements of its source material *Twin Peaks*, which used the juxtaposition of different styles of familiar television narratives to subvert the expectations of its audience.”<sup>42</sup>

This is achieved, in part, through a juxtaposition of unnecessarily realistic and highly unrealistic gameplay mechanics and visuals, not dissimilar to the contrast between realism and surrealism within *Twin Peaks*. *Deadly Premonition* also expands on traditional survival horror gameplay by adding open – world and life simulation elements to the game, where the player is allowed to roam freely through the game’s setting and interact with non-player-characters at length, adding to the subversive uncanniness of the title.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, the game echoes the duality and duplicity of characters found in *Twin Peaks* through suggesting a dissonance between in-game avatar Special Agent Francis York Morgan and the player through the surrogate of Zach, an unseen individual who York frequently acknowledges and speaks to as though they were the player, before Zach and York subsequently switch places at the end of the game, revealing the fact that York had been Zach’s alternate personality the entire time. This plot development resembles possession and doppelgangers seen in *Twin Peaks*, while remaining subversive, considering that Zach is presented as a positive entity rather than a malevolent one.

Similarities go beyond the unnerving of the audience, or in this case the player, and extend to the setting, narrative and characters; yet the shared uncanniness and subversiveness is what Novitz argues “helps to explain [Deadly Premonition’s] niche appeal and divided critical reception”<sup>44</sup>, much like in the case of its predecessor, *Twin Peaks*.

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<sup>42</sup> Novitz, 10.

<sup>43</sup> Novitz, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Novitz, 10.

The impact of the eerie setting and narrative of *Twin Peaks* can be seen in *Silent Hill 2*, while *Deadly Premonition* innovates on these elements, giving way an uncanny result. *Twin Peaks*' unsettling presence continues to be felt in video games, and by extension pop culture at large, today.

### 3.3 *Twin Peaks* and its Legacy, as seen through Television

Echoing my discussion around narrative complexity in Chapter 1; *Twin Peaks* was unique in its storytelling – presenting a layered narrative with unconventional arcs and lack of resolution or explanation; with the result of inciting audience speculation and intrigue on a large scale. This section will look at instances of narrative complexity in modern television and how they share commonalities with *Twin Peaks*, thus perpetuating the series' legacy.

*Twin Peaks*' odd overarching narrative paved the way for a slew of series to follow, with creators of *Lost* (ABC, 2004-2010), *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999-2007) and *Fargo* (FX, 2014-2024) amongst those citing the series as inspiration.<sup>45</sup> *Lost*'s executive producer identified *Twin Peaks*' "purposeful ambiguity"<sup>46</sup> as having an impact on his creative process. *Lost*'s narrative was lengthy and complex; spanning 6 seasons and following a group of plane crash survivors stranded on an island. The story follows several timelines through means of flashbacks and flash forwards as the characters unravel the mystery of their circumstances. *Twin Peaks* may have opened the door for elements such as plot twists and supernatural involvement, the narrative's ambiguity, series mythology, and widespread fan theorisation.

German production *Dark* (Netflix, 2017), though significantly shorter than *Lost*, and perhaps tighter knit in its' narrative (with *Dark* providing more closure and answers to plot points raised in the series' narrative); is a modern narratively complex tv show which doesn't shy away from *Twin Peaks*' influence. Like *Twin Peaks*, the series setting in a small rural town with a dark side, and as confirmed by show creators Jantje Friese and Baran bo Odar,<sup>47</sup> this is one significant characteristic shared with

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<sup>45</sup> Eliana Dockterman, "Creators of *Lost*, *Fargo*, *The Sopranos* and Other Shows on How *Twin Peaks* Influenced Them", *Time*, May 11, 2017. See: <https://time.com/4769270/twin-peaks-lost-fargo-sopranos/> Accessed April 9 2024

<sup>46</sup> Dockterman, "Creators of *Lost*, *Fargo*, *The Sopranos*..."

<sup>47</sup> Gunther Reinhardt, "Wir gucken nicht so gerne „Tatort“, *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, March 14, 2018.

See: <https://www.stuttgarter-nachrichten.de/inhalt.macher-der-netflix-serie-dark-wir-gucken-nicht-so-gerne-tatort.3c85a320-7d35-4100-8f98-501f0edf151c.html> Accessed December 18, 2025.

*Twin Peaks*.

*Dark*'s narrative takes place in the German small town of Winden, centring on four families and their secrets, relationships and duplicitous natures; in four different timelines which converge and cross over in bizarre ways. Certain plot elements within *Dark*'s narrative are also reminiscent of *Twin Peaks*. The purposeful ambiguity to events and character motives in Season 1 of *Dark* come to mind, along with the inclusion of supernatural elements: the existence of time travel and, in *Dark*, the possibility of alternate dimensions, reminiscent of *Twin Peaks*' own mythos. Both series share common themes of love, duality and horror in the mundane. *Dark*'s subtle incorporation of *Twin Peaks*' more intriguing characteristics demonstrates a longevity to these elements of the show.

Another modern tv series which demonstrates narrative complexity, and incorporates *Twin Peaks*' influence with a different approach, is American thriller series, *Yellowjackets* (Showtime, 2021). The series follows a high school girls' soccer team after they are left stranded in the wilderness following a plane crash, as well as a parallel timeline of the surviving team members in the modern day. Creators Ashley Lyle and Bart Nickerson cite *Lost* as a source of inspiration and thematic overlap, while also acknowledging the influence of *Twin Peaks*. Nickerson highlights the duality of the darker, more serious and the weird and whimsical as one aspect of David Lynch's work which influenced *Yellowjackets*.<sup>48</sup>

Similarly to *Twin Peaks*, a central mystery propels the narrative of *Yellowjackets*: which of the protagonists survived the wilderness post- plane crash, and how? As in *Twin Peaks*, speculation is invited – about the survival and motivation of the protagonists – with which the series builds intrigue. In another shared element with *Twin Peaks*; *Yellowjackets*' wilderness is anthropomorphised - rife with supernatural elements, allusions to a greater force in the woods, all the while raising more questions than it answers.

This chapter has explored the legacy of *Twin Peaks* through its integral use of music interrelated with

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<sup>48</sup> Sharon Knolle, "'Yellowjackets' Creators Credit 'Twin Peaks' and 'Stranger Things' for Putting Genre Series on the Emmys Map", *The Wrap*, August 19, 2022. See: <https://www.thewrap.com/yellowjackets-creators-stranger-things-emmys-interview/> Accessed December 18 2025.

the narrative. Furthermore, it has shown how layered narratives, an ominous and self-contained setting, and characters that are multi-faceted, secretive and duplicitous owe one of their earliest appearances on the television screen to *Twin Peaks*.

## Conclusion

On the completion of this research I would argue that visual aesthetics, characters and narratives are utilised in media are central to garnering and sustaining an audience. These facets are also primed for originality, subversion and experimentation, which is to say that the tv landscape presents and opportunity for series to innovate. Presently, in the mid-2020s, viewers are spoiled for choice when seeking narratively complex or visually unique tv series to spend their time watching. With the rise of streaming services, audiences' consumption of tv has changed dramatically since the '90s when *Twin Peaks* was first released. The fact that the series has remained pop culturally relevant and influential for such an extended period of time in spite of the major shifts of the tv landscape in recent years, is what motivated my research into this topic.

This thesis has sought to pinpoint the areas in which *Twin Peaks* innovated on preexisting tv conventions of the '80s and '90s and carried elements of surrealist cinema to tv for the first time. Through bringing David Lynch's directorial style and use of surrealist themes and visuals to television, *Twin Peaks* opened the door for irrational, surreal and supernatural elements in detective dramas, as well as the incorporation of cinematic camera techniques and set design. The serial narrative mode and grittier, *Hill Street Blues* -adjacent detective drama elements brought to *Twin Peaks* by Mark Frost added an extra layer of originality to the project. Through the combination of these aspects, *Twin Peaks* presented a new option for what a detective drama could be in the '90s. This innovation and the public discussion it spurred offered a space where tv series could continue to experiment and innovate.

The unusual and uncanny world of *Twin Peaks* presented a layered and intriguing mystery for audiences to unravel as the series explored the inhabitants, occurrences and mythos of the small town. This thesis has sought to highlight some of the most bizarre and captivating aspects of *Twin Peaks*; elements which are replicated and have subsequently inspired other media. Among these are the existence and presentation of the Black Lodge; its design and mythology being central to narrative of *Twin Peaks*, and also the setting of a quaint small town with a secret dark side – a repeated subject of David Lynch's work, which can nowadays be seen as the backdrop for many a mystery narrative. Another element original to *Twin Peak* is the subversion of character tropes. This characteristic the series with a nuance that allows audiences to deepen their understanding of said characters, and the characterisation of both Laura Palmer and Dale Cooper allow for audience connection to these characters, and moreover *Twin Peaks* as a whole.

The impact of *Twin Peaks* on video games and tv alike can be seen through the unique elements of the series incorporated by more modern releases. The unique relationship between the setting and themes of *Twin Peaks* and survival horror video games is evidence of the series' efficacy in creating an unsettling atmosphere through its meshing of familiar and unfamiliar elements. Furthermore, the use of supernatural and surreal plot threads in mystery and thriller tv series has continued to persist into the modern day, continuing to entice viewers with the opportunity to speculate on and decipher a series' narrative. Without the success of *Twin Peaks*' unique, season-and-a-half long hook of 'Who killed Laura Palmer', and the various red herrings and supernatural, cryptic clues the narrative presented, we may not have been presented with the breadth of series incorporating and experimenting with similarly cryptic narratives.

The elements that comprise *Twin Peaks* discussed throughout this thesis – its complex narrative, supernatural and surreal visuals and plot points, subversive characters and uncanny setting – are what I believe to be the factors of the series' legacy that maintain its' pop cultural relevancy. These elements have enabled more modern media to experiment and continue to push the capabilities of the medium of television to this day.

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