

## THE DREAM FACTORY: MULHOLLAND DRIVE

David Lynch and the right wing agree on one thing: Hollywood is a sick town. Like an auteur Jerry Fallwell, Lynch has spent his career excavating all the perversions hidden inside the nooks and crannies of even the “safest” pop culture entertainments. That nice young man, Billy Ray Cyrus, who had that country song everyone liked so much? In *MULHOLLAND DRIVE*, he’s the pool man who screws you wife when you are not home. The bright young chipper blonde whose can-do attitude solves every problem just like Nancy Drew? A total lez. And that big purple blob thing that teaches children to speak? A card-carrying homosexual. Both know that perversions are hiding just beneath the surface of every product the dream factory produces. Lynch just admits to liking them.

*MULHOLLAND DRIVE* swims in the muck that hides underneath the cleanest of our celluloid surfaces, and no one leaves the theater clean. The familiar Lynchian touches feel tighter here than usual (most of it is pretty little league compared to the “mommy” scene in *Blue Velvet*.) Rather than contrast “normal” to “abnormal,” Lynch blends them together, and the result feels strangely authentic. There are a couple of odd touches in the first two thirds of the film, an unexplained cowboy, a diner scene that has nothing to do with anything else in the film, and some over the top violence, but none of it is all that odd. *MULHOLLAND DRIVE* is a lot like other movies—until it shows its seams in its last third.

The first two-thirds (unbeknownst to the first-time viewer) is the fantasy world of a lonely young actress (played by Naomi Watts). Watt’s character, Betty/Diane, (Betty the chipper young ingénue, her fantasy persona, and Diane, the embittered actress of she is in real life) constructs a world she would like to inhabit, a world where a young actress with a can-do attitude can walk into a room full of people and nail the role of a seductress without a second thought, a world straight out of the movies. It’s a place so comfortable to the viewer that he never even questions the reality of her fiction.

Betty (the fantasy) meets Rita, an amnesiac on the run who she manages to rescue, fall in love with, and remake in her own image (they even wear matching wigs). After making love for the first time, they attend a performance of at a mysterious midnight cabaret. At the cabaret, performers appear to be playing instruments and singing, but as the emcee tells you, they are actually just lip-synching and pantomiming. A woman comes on stage and proceeds to sing a Spanish version of the Roy Orbison song, “Crying.” Betty and Rita are obviously haunted by the performance. Betty even begins to shake. Then the performer collapses, and the music continues to play. Betty remembers that the woman wasn’t actually singing

It was all a trick. None of it was real.

The cabaret collapses the dream world of Betty and introduces the audience to the reality of Diane: a lonely, discarded woman, who has nothing but memories left of Camilla (the “real” Rita), who seems to take delight in Diane’s obvious humiliation when she kisses

her new lovers in front of her. Diane is an actress like Betty, but she has experienced only mediocre success, bit parts found for her by Camilla. Diane wakes up to a world where she has been discarded, a world she will eventually choose to leave. Like the movies that laid its foundation, her dream world is only a small detour to a place easier than her own. When the lights came back on, she is wrenched into a world that she could no longer stand.