

REVVING UP MALE FERTILITY | FARM FRESH, 30 MIN. FROM MELROSE

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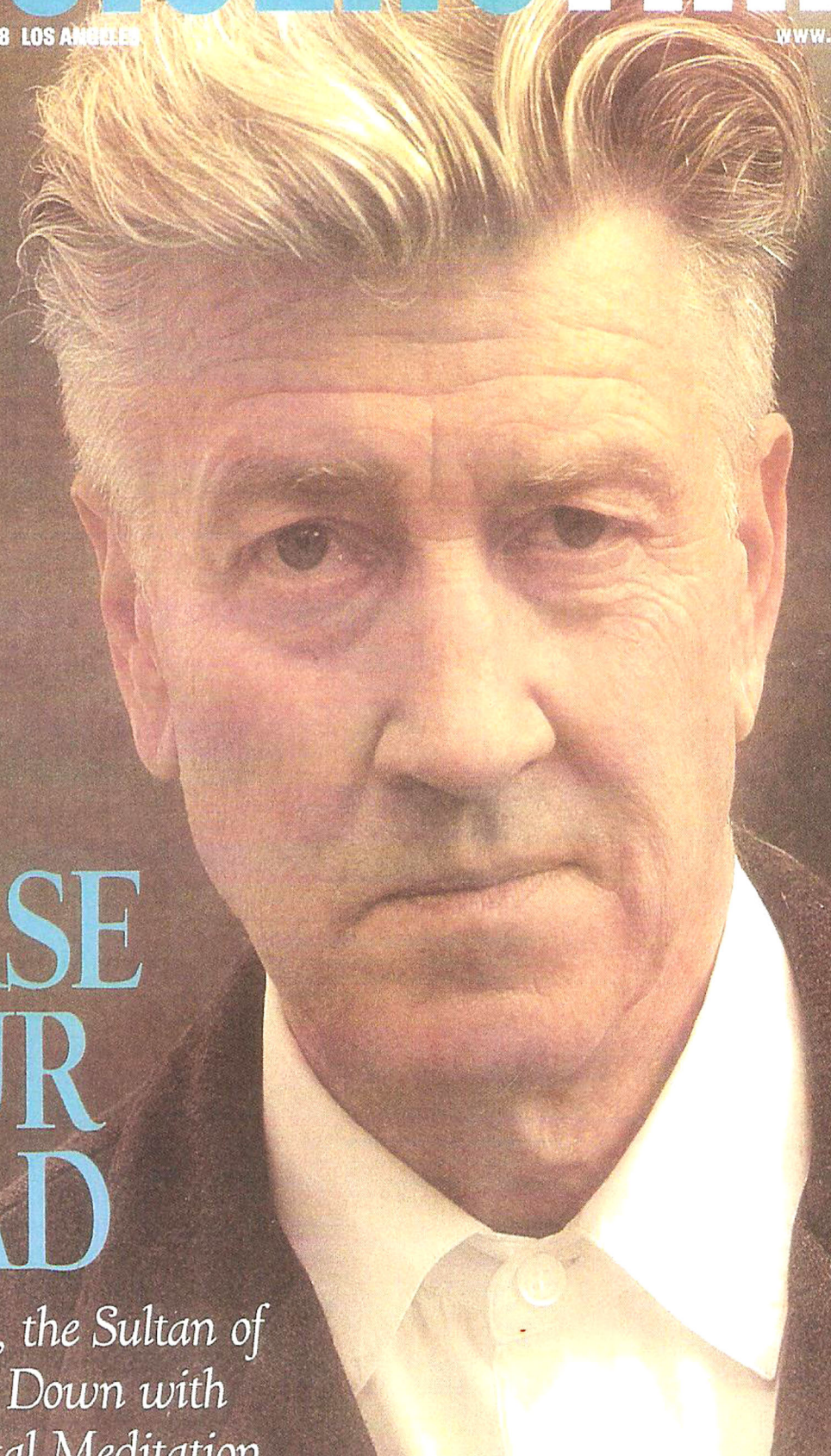
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## ERASE YOUR HEAD

*David Lynch, the Sultan of  
Surreal, Gets Down with  
Transcendental Meditation*





In one of the more memorable moments from David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*, a menacing, underworld sage named "The Cowboy" reproves an arrogant Hollywood director. On a dark, deserted ranch where nobody would hear a scream, The Cowboy looks the self-involved filmmaker squarely in the eye. "A man's attitude," he growls, "goes some ways toward how a man's life will be."

Behind the scene's distinctive Lynchian suspense and eerie *mise en scène* is a very simple but powerful statement that reflects the filmmaker's personal convictions. Speaking face-to-face with Lynch, one gets the idea that he envisions his films as a first step toward creating a moral or spiritual revolution, and perhaps a better tomorrow for everyone.

Lynch's home office is a classy, minimalist compound of several buildings linked by cascades of stone steps surrounded by trees. Nestled on Mulholland Drive—near the very same iconoclastic street sign that one night leapt out at Lynch and started his creative wheels turning—his home has a communal vibe. Here, people appear laser-focused on producing that most elusive of Hollywood creations: genuine art.

Lynch himself emits a gracious and warm presence, his trademark swirl of gray hair reminiscent of Jack Nance's Henry Spencer from *Eraserhead*, the 1977 picture (recently preserved by the National Film Registry) that put Lynch on the map of avant-garde filmmaking.

The consummate artist, Lynch is a filmmaker, writer, painter, photographer, furniture designer, animator and musician who composes cacophonies of sound that often accompany his camera work. A complex amalgamation of character traits, Lynch is as careful a

listener as *Twin Peaks*' Special Agent Cooper and as unfailingly sincere as the tractor-driving protagonist from 1999's *The Straight Story*. Perhaps these similarities between the artist and his work indicate an ethereal need for Lynch to use his canvas as a tool to meditate on—and between—different selves battling within one soul.

# Nobody Hears a Thing

David Lynch's Interior Journey

With a framed picture of Transcendental Meditation (TM) founder Maharishi Mahesh Yogi resting on the table, Lynch describes his first experience with TM, which occurred during the marathon four-year *Eraserhead* shoot.

"It was July 1, 1973 when I started," Lynch recalls, remembering back to the stressful days of

early fatherhood and concentrated career building. "I was having a lot of anxiety and anger at the time. My sister said that she was doing TM. It was more the tone of how she said it than what she said, and I said to myself, *I gotta have that.*"

Upon sampling TM, Lynch was immediately hooked. He marvels, "After two weeks of meditating my wife said to me, 'Where did all that anger go?'"

Lynch thinks of TM as a "treasury" within one's self. It's his driving force, a daily process that informs all aspects of his life and work. It's the source of his films' compellingly meditative quality, the style that fans like novelist and essayist David Foster Wallace assert is best "experienced rather than explained."

"David's entire being creates the story he tells," says actress Laura Dern, graduate of three Lynch films and star of his latest project in progress, *Inland Empire*. "His meditation I'm sure has been part of his creating a consistent, easy-going set."

"Even if an audience doesn't appreciate or embrace a film as you hoped, you can still say that you loved the process of making it," muses Lynch. "If you're feeling the studio down on you, it can make going to the set a nightmare. But if you visit that [TM] treasury, you can actually look forward to going to the set."

"Of course, you have it in your contract that you get final cut anyway!" he quips with a laugh.

Introduced to the west by the Swami Brahmananda Saraswati and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the late 1950s, the practice of Transcendental Meditation is thousands of years old. At its

core, it consists of sitting for 15 to 20 minutes twice daily and repeating a mantra, a unique sound vibration that literally translates to "sacred utterance" in Sanskrit.

"One of my friends thinks of it as 20 minutes of here-goes-nothing," says Lynch.

But, as in the scene with *The Cowboy* and the

director; the real stuff is happening beneath the surface. The nothingness of TM is not really nothing; it's pure consciousness.

Lynch explains: "If you have a golf ball-size consciousness when you read a book, you're going to have a golf ball-size understanding of the book," he says. "When you look out the window, a golf ball-size awareness, and when you wake up in the morning, a golf ball-size wakefulness. When you start TM, that golf ball starts growing."

Of course, on the path to enlightenment or no, life still does not come easy—and Lynch has experienced his share of personal challenges. In 1984, after creative differences with his producer, Lynch had his name removed from the TV version of *Dune*. And in 1999, when ABC rejected the pilot for *Mulholland Drive*, the director was forced to seek completion funds elsewhere, finally finishing the project as an independent feature.

"Even with meditation, I've hit some mighty low times," Lynch shares, choosing his words carefully. "But meditation makes the doing of things so much more enjoyable."

Lynch believes that those armed with TM can pass through the darkness faster. "Let's say there's a line on granite, there's a line on sand, and there's a line on water," says the analogy-happy Lynch. "Some people get depressed, and they're depressed for years; some people get depressed and they come out of it relatively soon; and some people get depressed and [it disappears] like a line on water."

These words of hope and optimism may shock Lynch fans, many of whom are likely to imagine the director as an introverted, tormented weirdo toiling away in his basement. Some might even wonder why an artist would seek the calming waves of TM to mute the creativity-rousing angst.

Well?

With a knowing grin, Lynch shrugs off the idea that artists must suffer in order to create.

"Maharishi laughs at it," he says. "It's so ab-

surd. Yes, you've got to understand suffering, but if you're really miserable you can't create, and it's like, what's the point? When I think about van Gogh, I feel that he was really happy when he was painting... All negativity does is cripple you."

And what if inspiration as brilliant as "The Starry Night" strikes during a TM session?

*"You've got to understand suffering, but if you're really miserable you can't create."*



"Thoughts may come and thoughts may go, but you go back to the mantra," he says. "It's after you meditate that the ideas start coming."

When pressed, Lynch confesses he's interrupted his TM in the past to write down the really good stuff.

"[But] I've only done it a couple times!" he in-

sists with a hint of embarrassment. "It's a very simple technique that shouldn't be added to or subtracted from."

**T**M is a technique so simple and yet so profound that Lynch wants to make it available to students in our nation's schools. With his latest project, the David Lynch Foundation

For Consciousness-Based Education and World Peace ([davidlynchfoundation.com](http://davidlynchfoundation.com)), Lynch hopes to use TM to tackle such common classroom problems as school-related stress, attention disorders and other learning disabilities, depression, anxiety, high blood pressure (one of 12 teenagers suffers from high blood pressure, with a startling one in five African American teens suffering from the condition), and, ultimately, help develop each child's full brain potential.

"Meditation is everybody's birthright," asserts Bob Roth, a prominent TM teacher whose own experiences teaching meditation to kids inspired Lynch's interest. "We're giving children proven techniques to bring them inner calm."

Both Roth and Lynch participated in an Oct. '04 conference for the Committee for Stress-Free Schools, which has established TM programs in about 25 schools nationwide. John Hagelin, former Natural Law Party presidential candidate and director of the David Lynch Foundation's board of advisors, says he's received a wave of requests from other schools throughout the country eager to bring TM to their students.

Similar efforts to introduce TM to schools in New Jersey in the 1970s were thwarted

when a state court ruled that TM had religious overtones and thus could not be offered in a secular public school environment. Asked about such perceived dogmatic elements of TM, Lynch counters that what drew him to the practice was that TM practitioners don't follow a guru.

"Once you start, you're on your own," he says.

*(Continued on page 24)*



PHOTO: RICK DONHAUSER

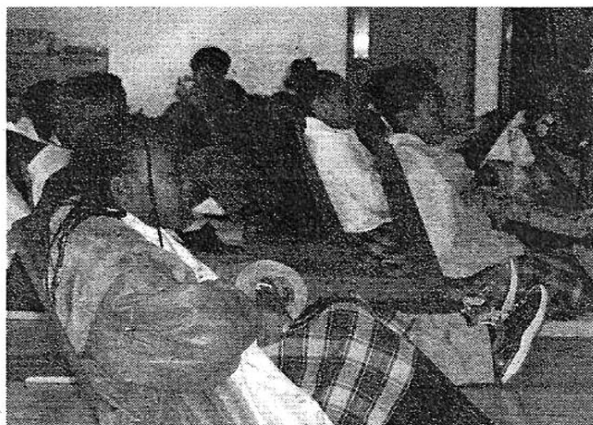
A high school student at Maharishi School in Fairfield, Iowa, where every school day starts and ends with several minutes of group meditation.

For whatever controversy still lingers around TM, modern science has begun to prove that practitioners, both young and old, have made significant strides in their mental and physical health. In one four-year study published in the *American Journal of Hypertension*, more than 5,000 inner-city youths in Augusta had their blood pressure screened daily. Part of the group was given TM instruction at school and practiced individually at home. The study found that the kids who practiced TM showed decreases of about 3.5 mm Hg (millimeters of mercury) in systolic blood pressure as compared to little or no changes in the group that did not meditate. Similar experiments with TM in inner-city gangs and in prisons have resulted in a dramatic decrease in violence.

"All this suffering is real, but it's the result of working with only a few cards instead of [a full deck]," says Lynch. "It's like the enjoyment inside makes life not so frightening."

Lynch hopes his Foundation can "raise seven billion dollars, achieve

*"After two weeks of meditating my wife said to me, 'Where did all that anger go?'"*



The David Lynch Foundation hopes to bring the practice of Transcendental Meditation to public schools worldwide.

world peace, and provide real education." It may seem like a tall order but then again, a man's attitude goes a long way.

Just ask The Cowboy.

WLT

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