How I’m Living Now: David Lynch, Director

The auteur has been productive in quarantine, working on various art projects for what he anticipates will be the long haul: “I don’t really think I can make a film until there’s a vaccine.”

With production grinding to a halt in the face of the novel coronavirus, the entertainment industry has found itself navigating uncharted territory. To offer a better sense for how, The Hollywood Reporter is running a regular series that focuses on how Hollywood’s writers, actors, directors, executives and others are living and working in these challenging times.

If the empty streets of America have taken on a distinctly Lynchian feel during lockdown, David Lynch himself hasn’t noticed. The writer-director of such eerie art house classics as Blue Velvet and Mulholland Drive and whose Twin Peaks: The Return on Showtime earned nine Emmy nominations in 2018 has been holed up inside his Hollywood studio during the COVID-19 crisis, busying himself with painting, music and film projects. He credits his positive state of mind to his longtime Transcendental Meditation practice; his David Lynch Foundation is now bringing TM to stressed health care workers with an initiative called Heal the Healers Now.

THR: How are you adjusting to the current situation?

DL: Very well. I like isolation.

Lockdown is not all that different from your day-to-day life?

No. It’s very nice and I’ve got so many different projects that I can work on solo, so it’s not a problem for me.

Have there been any challenges?

No. So far it’s really nice.
Do the empty streets remind you of any of your films?

I can imagine it in my mind’s eye, but I haven’t been out. I haven’t left the house and I’ve just been inside working on projects.

If someone is having a harder time with self-isolation, what could they do to cope better?

We’ve got this interior world and if it’s filled with fear and tension and worries, if they really want to clean the machine of negative things and bring in the gold, they need to get this technique — Transcendental Meditation. [It allows you] to dive within and transcend and experience the treasury within every human being, which is intelligence, creativity, peace, love, energy, happiness. They can get it in four days, about an hour and a half a day, from a legitimate teacher of TM and life will get so good.

Can people access TM courses now while in lockdown?

You need a legitimate teacher and the initial teaching is one-on-one. So you could be six or eight feet from the teacher at all times and learn this technique during this time of staying away from people. I know it’s a tricky thing to say, “Go out and get this now,” but it’s there for them and they can get it.

Where do you envision humanity going after the COVID-19 crisis?

I don’t know how it’s going to unfold, but I think Mother Nature is playing a big role in what’s going on. They say from the satellite pictures they see things are way cleaner in the world, because people aren’t out polluting so much. And it’s a quieter, peaceful, cleaner, friendlier world, in a way. I think that people are going to come out of this different than they went in. There are many people that want to go back to work now, and I don’t think it’s going to be that easy. I think this is going to last long enough to kind of instill a change in people. And I think on the other side it’s going to be more spiritual, kinder, friendlier, more caring for one another, very exciting for inventions and cures for problems. And it’s going to come out to be a really, really great world.

Has the lockdown affected production on any of your projects?

The lockdown stopped all kinds of work that involves other people. It forces us to go to something that we can do on our own. Like, I’m experimenting with music. I can experiment with any kind of motion picture I can do on the computer. And I can work in the wood shop and build things. I can go to the painting studio and paint. You can’t work on a film right now and I think for a long time, we won’t be able to work with a big crew in a normal way of filmmaking. It’s just too dangerous right now. It’s really something to think about. I don’t really think I can make a film until there’s a vaccine.

I heard whispers you are working on a secret TV show for Netflix?

There’s all kinds of rumors. I’ve got a show called What Did Jack Do? on Netflix right now. It’s a great show about a monkey. It’s something you’ve got to see. And it will really help you in quarantine.

And the other show?

All these rumors are flying about, but I can tell you that there’s nothing happening in that regard.

OK, so the rumors are false.

It’s a rumor that even if it was true — there’s nothing happening.

This week they released a few photos from the new big-screen adaptation of Dune by Denis Villeneuve. Have you seen them?
I have zero interest in *Dune*.

**Why’s that?**

Because it was a heartache for me. It was a failure and I didn’t have final cut. I’ve told this story a billion times. It’s not the film I wanted to make. I like certain parts of it very much — but it was a total failure for me.

**You would never see someone else’s adaptation of *Dune***?

I said I’ve got zero interest.

**If you had your choice, what would you rather make: a feature film or a TV series?**

A TV series. Right now, feature films in my book are in big trouble, except for the big blockbusters. The art house films, they don’t stand a chance. They might go to a theater for a week and if it’s a Cineplex they go to the smallest theater in the setup, and then they go to Blu-ray or On Demand. The big-screen experience right now is gone. Gone, but not forgotten.

**What about the glamour of Cannes, bringing *Mulholland Drive* there and posing for the photo calls?**

It’s beautiful. Cannes is, you know, just a fantastic venue. But [Cannes director] Thierry [Frémaux] told me that the screen is actually smaller than it was then. I think *Mulholland Drive* played on this [smaller] size screen. But *Wild at Heart* in 1990, when I got the Palme d’Or, the screen was bigger and the room was built on analog sound. So *Wild at Heart* was full-coat mag [magnetic film] on a double system and the power! Smooth, smooth power. That was unreal. A giant screen with smooth, giant sound. Power. Visual and sound at the maximum good.

**Is making another feature film out of the question?**

No, you never say no to anything, really. But I really love a continuing story, and cable television I say is the new art house. You have total freedom. The sound isn’t as good as a great theater; the picture isn’t as big — but TVs are getting bigger and bigger and better and better, so there’s hope. And then you have this chance for a continuing story, so it’s the new art house, I say.

**With some distance between you and *Twin Peaks: The Return*, how are you feeling about it?**

*Twin Peaks: The Return*, it’s gold.

- Seth Abramovitch