

Not By Lynch is a screening series exploring the "Lynchian": an often-used but rarely examined term whose lineage stretches before, around and after David Lynch's own cinema. While Lynch's films offers the clearest expression of this sensibility, the roots and afterlives of what we call the "Lynchian" extend across film history. From haunted noir and ghostly Americana to experimental digital worlds and paranoid Los Angeles labyrinths, nine films — spanning the nine decades of Lynch's life — trace different faces of the Lynchian: dream-logic beneath everyday life, the uncanny invading domestic space, identities slipping or doubling, worlds that bend at the edges, and dread that mingles uneasily with play, humour and desire.



...at the Cinema Museum
January - October 2026

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...the final Not by Lynch:

COMA

A Film by Bertrand Bonello

+ Introduction

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NOT BY LYNCH

THE LYNCHIAN BEFORE
AND AFTER DAVID LYNCH

...at the Cinema Museum
January - October 2026

Curated by **Arta Barzanji**
Presented in collaboration
with **Cinema Year Zero**

UNDER THE SILVER LAKE

+ Programme note by **Ben Flanagan**



Bro Code

Words by **Ben Flanagan**

Under the Silver Lake (2018)

Directed by David Robert Mitchell

With Andrew Garfield, Riley Keough, Topher Grace

Written by David Robert Mitchell | Cinematography by Michael Gioulakis

Edited by Julio C. Pereze IV | 139 minutes

Lurking deep within the vast internet forum Reddit, a community thrives on a most despised film. *r/underthesilverlake*, named for David Robert Mitchell's 2018 film *Under the Silver Lake*, is a restless cabal of users attempting to decode the seemingly futile mysteries of this Los Angeles set neo-noir. In this Black Lodge, users argue over the film's dense barrage of circuitous locked codes, unanswered questions, and half clues. Just as David Lynch's examination of the darkness lurking beneath the white-picket fences of *Blue Velvet* (1986) necessitated vivid surfaces, Mitchell shoots a bursting, high-gloss digital approximation of Technicolor. His LA is a hipster once-Mecca, fractured by a twenty-first century paranoia that sends individuals into siloed conspiracy spaces: pick the one that fits you. Mitchell thrusts the viewers into this milieu, opening with a coffee shop queue where the words "BEWARE THE DOG KILLER", scrawled in red, are visible backwards in the window.

Like the algorithm's scroll, it produces a glut of mystery. Our slacker detective Sam (Andrew Garfield) soon catches the eye of Sarah (Riley Keough), who spots him peeping as she lounges by their apartment complex pool with her dog. She immediately becomes the object of Sam's fixation, doubly so when the morning after their encounter, she and her similarly glam roommates appear to have moved out in a hurry.

The encounters which follow, as Sam attempts to find Sarah amidst the city of dreams, are a sequence of pop culture fragments which coalesce into blissful incoherence. Its hostile Cannes reception steered it into ready-made cult status, recalling the fate of *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* (1992). The latter has been reclaimed as a feminist and even transgender text, but it's hard to imagine such a generous revival of Mitchell's spiky film, which should probably be read as a reflection of toxic male impotence.

Sam has no Hollywood ambition, but by his mere proximity to it, the language and drama of classic film seeps into his surroundings. In this way, it resembles the gigantic sprawl of *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017). Where Lynch was content to populate his late-career masterpiece with fragments for their sheer pleasure, Mitchell pushes the viewer through *Under the Silver Lake* as though holding a knife to their throat. Its collection of mysteries include but are not limited to: the identity of a pirate pimp, a dog killer, an Owl-woman, a code hidden in a hit record, a network of underground tunnels, and a spate of disappearances. This film is not strictly Lynchian. It never follows dream logic even when depicting dreams, and it's too bitterly ironic to embrace surrealism.

Yet moments of aesthetic splendour are common, detailed and sensually suggestive, drawing from the same well as Lynch. Numerous references to Hitchcock and Fellini, and the various film posters around Sam's apartment suggest Mitchell suffers the anxiety of influence. Which could be how we end up with character actor Patrick Fischler, so iconic for his terrifying *Mulholland Dr.* (2001) scene, as Sam's paranoid elder.

It's all so knowing, like an offhand refrain of "the city's male gaze" as Mitchell lingers on yet another long-gammed starlet. Lynch's Madonna-whore complex is eschewed here for a general distaste, or fear, of female attention. At one point, Sam and a friend fly a drone, first to observe Silver Lake, and then its women. As they stare at the city landscape, Sam spews his regrets and shame, and suspicion of being stalked. His friend sings "Pure Imagination" as a woman behind a window strips, and then cries. His lechery turns to disgust, feeling her phantom pain.

This primal fear is emphasised by the film's obsession with the animal kingdom from noble coyotes to vindictive squirrels, which is fitting for such a shaggy dog story. The dog killer is accused of being 'jealous of animals,' from there Mitchell draws an uneasy line to connect with the film's many, many fallen women, who are often depicted barking.

If the women are animals, then what of the man who looks at them this way? As Sam, Garfield twists his Golden Retriever persona into sheer unlikability. He viciously beats the children who scratch his Mustang, and sneers his way through the city's web of sellout creatives, although he can't resist dancing madly to turgid REM. Sam plays in no band, attends no auditions, nor does he sit at a typewriter hammering out a screenplay as in *Sunset Boulevard* (1950). He inhabits this city of dreams, accompanied by Disasterpiece's sarcastic orchestral score. Instead of a P.I.'s suit and cap, he wears faded band tees that smell of skunk.

Under the Silver Lake literalises the mystery of the Epstein-anticipant *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), hence Sam's libidinal desperation to *make it make sense*, by accessing a secret cabal above (or below) our current one. Tom Cruise, in that film, is shut out due to social class. But Garfield is a man without class. A pervert. The film returns thrice to his leering on an older woman (and her parrot) from his balcony while taking a call from his mother. Doesn't take a cryptologist to work that one out. So Mitchell's collection of scenes from a psychotic breakdown tell us what? That men can pursue harmful behaviour without the same threat of ostracisation or murder as women? That LA is a conduit for the apocalypse? In that sense, it echoes another Lynch favourite: *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955).

This was perhaps the last time (months before COVID) where a contemporary-set film could get away with ignoring the influence of social media on the psyches of its characters. 'We crave mystery because there's none left,' someone says to Sam. But is this true? Access to everything at once has only deepened our collective psychological dissociation, like Sam's angst at the crying nude. The lake recurs as a metaphor for a screen, a mirror, but also a place where artefacts might sink, never to be found again. In that way, it's a fitting afterlife on the likes of Reddit that *Under the Silver Lake* continues to be dredged by its intended audience.

Ben Flanagan is the managing editor of Cinema Year Zero.