

THE BIG INTERVIEW

TWIN PEAKS

The Log Lady on wood, David Lynch and letters from Death Row

ALTHOUGH YOUNGER BIZARRE readers may not realise it, *Twin Peaks* is the single most important television series ever made. Paving the way for slick, high budget oddities such as *Lost* and *The X-Files*, David Lynch's twisted tale of a small town rocked by the murder of prom queen Laura Palmer brought style, sex and surrealism to the small screen, showing how the humble goggle-box could convey stories as complex and intelligent as any Hollywood movie.

Recently released in a lush DVD box that few British fans seem to know about, *Twin Peaks* has stood the test of time admirably. We caught up with Catherine E Coulson, the actress who played the iconic Log Lady, to talk about her memories of the show.

The Log Lady existed a long time before *Twin Peaks*, didn't she?

When I was working with David on the movie *Eraserhead* in the 70s, he had this idea for a TV series called *I'll Test My Log With Every Branch Of Knowledge*, which featured 'the Log Girl'. This girl would take her log and interview experts about what they do, so you'd learn about the craft of whoever was being interviewed. Though it was David's fantasy to make the show, it never got off the ground. But in the 80s he called me and said, "I'm doing this TV pilot and I want to

put the Log Girl in it." I had to say: "I don't think she's a girl any more!" **It's strange that, even as a student filmmaker, Lynch was thinking about making TV. Surely most filmmakers frown on TV as inferior?** Yes, there was definitely a snob factor. Back in the 70s, young, edgy filmmakers didn't yearn to make TV shows. But even though David was a student at the American Film Institute where TV wasn't yet cool, he saw it as a medium he could use to tell a longer story than he could in a film. David likes the idea of being in people's living rooms – so long as he doesn't have to talk to them! He's a private person and doesn't analyse his work. I was happy not to ask too many questions and just go along for the ride.

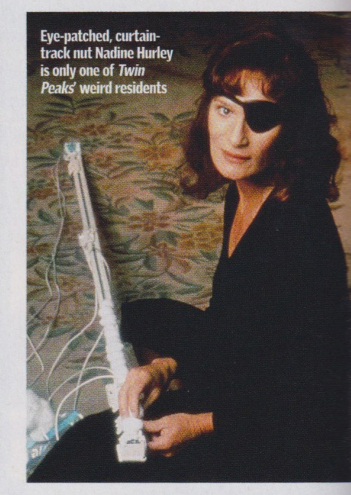
One of the most remarkable things about the DVD set is it includes Log Lady intros for each episode – weird little scenes never broadcast in the UK. How did they come about?

After we'd finished shooting the show and it was going to appear on cable, David had this idea for the Log Lady intros and insisted on writing and directing them himself. It was a huge undertaking as there were almost 30 episodes, and we shot them all in one very long day. David had spent time writing them in a cabin in the woods in Wisconsin, and that's why they came across as so mysterious and poetic. →

Read! Our full Catherine Coulson interview @ Bizarremag.com



When the body of prom queen Laura Palmer is found, wrapped in plastic, it's the catalyst for a surreal murder investigation



Eye-patched, curtain-track nut Nadine Hurley is only one of *Twin Peaks*' weird residents



The DVD has catch-up interviews with David Lynch and Kyle MacLachlan, (this pic), who played Agent Cooper

***Twin Peaks* made a few actors into household names, and the Log Lady became a superstar...**

Twin Peaks captured the imagination of the press, and without warning I became a cult figure. I remember going to this star-studded dinner in Los Angeles, and as we pulled into the venue in our old Volvo, all these flash bulbs started going off. My husband said, "I think that might be for you." All I remember thinking was, "Oh, I wish we'd washed the car!" Unbelievably, Roseanne Barr (star of huge 90s TV sitcom *Roseanne*) was nearby, and she just looked over and screamed, "Oh. My. God. It's the Log Lady!"

The Log Lady's popularity probably had a lot to do with her unique appearance.

Even back in the *Eraserhead* days we'd talked about the Log Lady wearing glasses and plaid skirts – kind of how I used to dress, but more rugged. But the glasses she wore in the show weren't the ones we'd intended to use. In the scene where Agent Cooper and Sheriff Truman open Laura's safety deposit box, the actress playing the bank clerk had been given the Log Lady's glasses by mistake, so I couldn't use them. But I had these big red reading glasses that I sometimes wore, and David said, "Let's use those instead." It was pretty strange to see

myself on T-shirts wearing that outfit, and how, for a while, that particular style of glasses became popular again.

Where did the log come from?

David had the prop guy find loads of different logs. It was important to him that the log was a Ponderosa Pine, as that was the kind of wood his father – a research biologist for the forest service – was an expert on. He rejected all the original logs, but the prop guy eventually came up with a log that had two little branches that looked like arms – even though we didn't want to anthropomorphise the log, or make it male or female. The main thing was it was a log I could cradle in my arms. It was freshly cut, very heavy, and oozing sap. We had to seal the ends so it wouldn't make too much mess.

Was it the same log throughout the both series?

Yes. During the second season the bark started to dry out and I was concerned about it cracking, so I drove out to where David's parents live in Southern California and his dad did a bark transplant. David wouldn't have allowed anyone else to touch it, but I have great photos of David's dad working on the log.

Where is the log now?

In a safe place, along with the Log Lady's glasses. It's a lot lighter now as it's dried out, but it's in an undisclosed

"I GOT THIS LETTER FROM A GUY ON DEATH ROW SAYING 'I WANT YOUR PHOTO TO PUT IN MY CELL'"

location with an humidifier running at all times so that the bark doesn't chip. **Do you still get recognised as the Log Lady?**

All the time. I work in theatre, but I'll often come out of my dressing room to find someone waiting for me to sign a log. Recently I got this letter from

a guy saying, "Here I sit on Death Row, an innocent man, and all I want is your photo to put in my cell." I've actually learned a tremendous amount about wood, allowing me to address environmental issues and teach children the importance of the forest. I've also planted a lot of trees for charity! Though there won't be new episodes of *Twin Peaks*, the Log Lady will go on. She still has important lessons to teach.

David McComb
Catherine is in *The Clay Cart and Our Town* – find our more at Osfashland.org. Get the *Twin Peaks: Definitive Gold Box Edition* online from retailers such as Amazon.com



The DVD set is incredible with completely remastered visuals. *Twin Peaks* never looked so good