

JANUARY 2025 | Just take me to the website, please.

# THE BEDLAM FILES

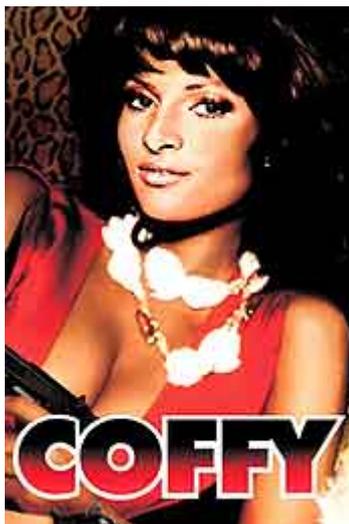
*With Adam Groves*

“A film—especially when it's a personal film—is going to hit somebody or it's not.

There's nothing you can do about it.”

— David Lynch

## Streaming Now



### 1. COFFY

“One of the best” is my repeated designation for this film, it being 1). One of the best **Blaxploitation** movie entries, 2). One of the best films directed by the great **Jack Hill**, and 3). One of the best roles played by Pam Grier. She’s the title character, a tough chick out for revenge against the drug dealers who caused her sister’s death. Much outrageous carnage ensues—a guy gets his head is blown apart by a shotgun, another gets dragged behind a car, a woman’s hands are sliced up by razor

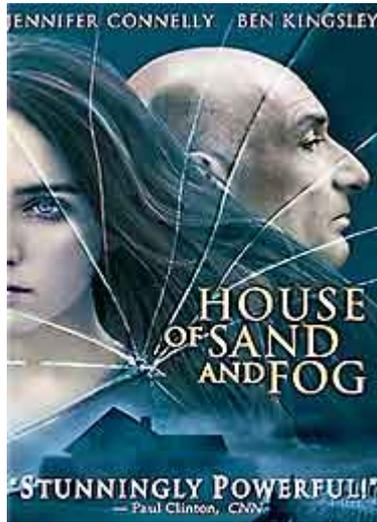
## Adam's Picks



### 1. BLUE VELVET

Here’s a touchy subject that hasn’t come up much in the **David Lynch** tributes that have flooded the internet: the man’s political leanings. An outspoken Ronald Reagan booster and unrepentant 1950s nostalgist, Lynch wasn’t anyone’s idea of woke. Nowhere were his opinions better represented than in **BLUE VELVET**, whose gruesome and perverse aspects are played for laughs or tempered with surrealism, while the outrageously sentimental dance scene with Jeffrey (Kyle MacLachlan)

blades in Coffy's afro, etc.—in an unfailingly entertaining grunge-fest marked by Hill's gift for outrageously profane ghetto-tinged dialogue (unsurprisingly, **Quentin Tarantino** is a big fan) and Grier's commanding screen presence. AMAZON



## 2. HOUSE OF SAND AND FOG

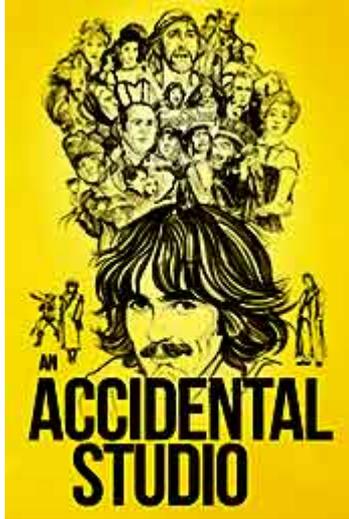
Few people saw this 2004 prestige item during its initial release, and even fewer seem to remember it. HOUSE OF SAND AND FOG is nonetheless one of the finest post-2000 examples of Oscar bait, with a story (faithfully adapted from Andre Dubas III's 1999 novel) that has a great deal of real-life relevance, and a thematic heft to match. The premise: a young woman (Jennifer Connelly) gets evicted from her San Francisco home and makes trouble for the immigrant couple (Ben Kingsley and Shohreh Aghdashloo) who buy it, leading to a spectacularly bleak finale of Shakespearean dimensions. It all works due to top notch performances, a compelling story and skilled direction by first-timer Vadim Perelman (whose follow-up, 2007's LIFE BEFORE HER EYES, was similarly neglected). PARAMOUNT PLUS

and Sandy (Laura Dern), and the equally sappy happy ending, are dead (some would say deadly) serious. Of course, that sincerity is a large part of what makes BLUE VELVET the enduring classic it is, while similarly minded, but less sincere, films like TRACK 29 (1988) and PARENTS (1989) have long since faded from view. FILM



## 2. ROOM TO DREAM

The ultimate David Lynch print resource, a wholly unique memoir in which author Kristine McKenna offers up biographical information about Lynch, followed by his self-penned responses. Covered is the entirety of Lynch's life and career (up to the 2017 release of **TWIN PEAKS: THE RETURN**), revealing a flighty and obsessive individual whose interpersonal skills could have used some work, as Lynch's artistic endeavors admittedly took precedence over his marriages and offspring. Overall, ROOM TO DREAM is a worthwhile tome whose biggest failing is that, simply, it can't hope to fully encompass the life and output of its very complex subject. As Lynch himself acknowledged, this book is "just the tip of the iceberg; there's so much more, so many more stories." BOOK



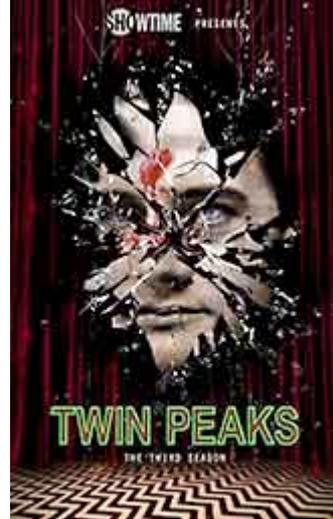
### 3. AN ACCIDENTAL STUDIO

A 2019 documentary about the UK's late HandMade Films, which put out some films that were interesting (including THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY and TIME BANDITS) and many that weren't (WATER, SHANGHAI SURPRISE, CHECKING OUT, etc.). AN ACCIDENTAL STUDIO offers an enjoyable recounting of HandMade's rise and inevitable fall, even if it doesn't offer too many revelations. Literally all HandMade's problems are blamed on its co-chairman Denis O'Brien, with his partner George Harrison portrayed in a manner that falls somewhere between Mother Theresa and Gandhi. CRITERION



### 4. RUNNING ON EMPTY

Another long forgotten prestige film that deserves a reappraisal. RUNNING ON EMPTY hailed from 1988, and dramatized an issue that back then seemed topical: middle aged sixties radicals attempting to



### 3. TWIN PEAKS: THE RETURN

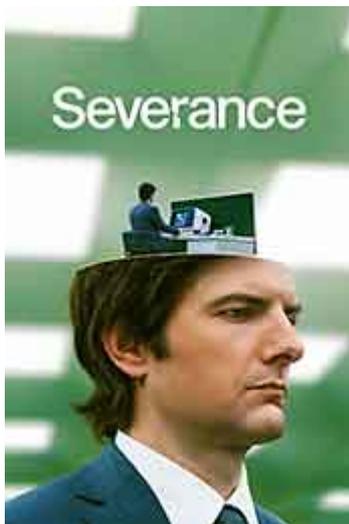
Far from a straightforward continuation of season two of TWIN PEAKS, this 26 years after the fact follow-up offered an 18-part blast of unfiltered David Lynch. Unlike TWIN PEAKS' initial incarnation, THE RETURN makes no concessions to network practices (and no wonder, as it was made for Showtime), with every episode directed by Lynch—who also rewrote all the scripts to his liking. It stands as an idiosyncratic and uncompromising, and so entirely fitting, final testament to one of the world's most singular visionaries. TV SHOW



### 4. MULHOLLAND DRIVE

Arguably the greatest movie salvage job since THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE (1977), on which Luis Bunuel had to replace his leading lady midway through the shoot with a different actress, inadvertently turning a straightforward film into the

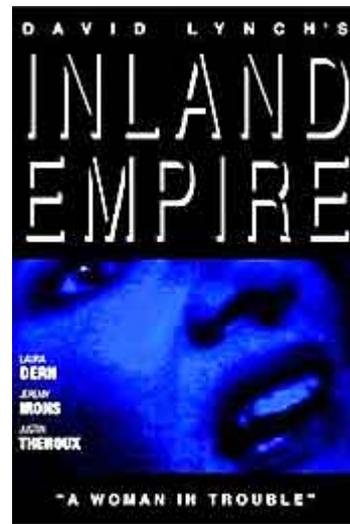
raise children while evading the feds. Judd Hirsch and Christine Lahti play just such a couple and the late River Phoenix one of their sons, who finds himself approaching college age and wanting to quit the fugitive lifestyle. The script by Naomi Foner could have done with some fleshing out in terms of logic and motivation (how is it that Hirsch and Lahti haven't considered that their children might desire a life of their own?), but director Sidney Lumet was quite inspired by the material, delivering one of his most satisfying late period efforts. PEACOCK



## 5. SEVERANCE season 2

A series, about office workers in a sterile underground environ who've undergone a brain severing that keeps their home and work lives entirely separate, that I find a shade overrated. The early episodes of this second season don't solve any of the problems that afflicted the first—after just two episodes it already feels too long—but there are some great moments. An unbroken tracking shot through a labyrinthine series of hallways is brilliant, and the storylines, which see Mark (Adam Scott) getting separated from his co-workers and Dylan (Zach Cherry) attempting to quit the job only to get lured back, are engaging. Whether the season on the whole lives up to the previous one (which, again, I found overrated) remains to be seen. APPLE TV+

surreal classic it is. MULHOLLAND DRIVE was a 1999 David Lynch TV pilot that was rejected by ABC, leading Lynch, faced with an enormously disappointed cast and crew, to do some extra filming and release it as a feature in 2001. The result has become one of his best-loved films (it's currently #8 on SIGHT AND SOUND'S "Greatest Films of All Time" ranking) and with good reason: it's a fascinating and absorbing puzzle box of a film containing beautiful women, atmospheric LA locations and a core mystery that's never solved. FILM

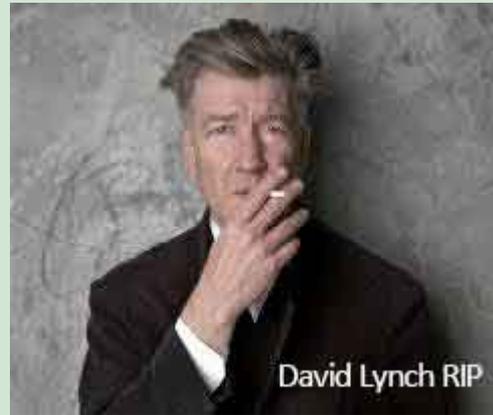


## 5. INLAND EMPIRE

According to some people this 2006 release, David Lynch's final feature, is his "worst film." Myself, I quite like INLAND EMPIRE, as it delivers most everything anyone could want from a Lynch movie. Of course, the pic makes zero sense, but that's part of the "everything" mentioned in the previous sentence; puzzlement is a major component of Lynch's universe, and few Lynch films are more puzzling than INLAND EMPIRE. Comprised of several years' worth of digitally filmed odds and ends, and held together by a wraparound narrative involving Laura Dern as a Hollywood based "Woman in Trouble," it's a sprawling, confounding, yet oddly entrancing work with a definite low rent beauty. FILM

## Also New

- **DAVID LYNCH BY THE DECADE** (Commentary)
- **2024 BEDLAM IN PRINT** (Commentary)
- **THE STRAIGHT STORY** (Film)
- **ERASERHEAD** (Film)
- **DON'T LOOK AT ME: DAVID LYNCH** (Film)
- **UGLY MUG 8** (Comics)
- **2024 THE YEAR IN BEDLAM** (Commentary)
- **2024 A LOOK BACK IN BEDLAM** (Commentary)
- **Archived newsletters for easy reference**
- ***And Much More!***



## Insider Info

Having already said most everything I have to say about the recently deceased **David Lynch** (RIP), I'll turn my attention to another renowned visionary who's been in the news: the UK's **Neil Gaiman**. I'm tempted to compare Gaiman's place in the publishing industry to that of David Lynch in Hollywood, but Gaiman's status in this comparison far outstrips that of Lynch.



Gaiman, who's written dozens of comic books and graphic novels, published a handful of prose novels and scripted some high profile films, is the closest thing that exists to a rock star in the comic book world. He's been around since the 1980s, with credits that include the legendary SANDMAN comic book and its Netflix miniseries adaptation, the bestselling novel AMERICAN GODS and its Prime Video adaptation, and the kids' book **CORALINE** and its much-loved **film adaptation**. He also seemed like a helluva nice guy; I'll always remember him for his friendship with **Harlan Ellison** in the latter's final years, with

Gaiman coming off as the kinder, gentler yin to Ellison's brash and unpleasant yang.

As you're probably aware, Mr. Gaiman is now officially cancelled. Allegations of sexual harassment dogged him throughout 2024, and came to a head on January 13, when NEW YORK magazine devoted a [Lila Shapiro authored cover story](#) to Gaiman's "Sadistic Power Games" (the sordid details of which I'll refrain from going into here).

Up until then it looked as if Gaiman had managed to evade cancellation, having [employed a PR firm](#) to keep the accusations from gaining traction. He also had high-power assistance from an industry desperate to keep their major cash cow in place. The NEW YORK piece, however, appears to have put a permanent end to all that.

The allegations, let's keep in mind, are just that, with Gaiman entitled to the presumption of innocence just like everyone else. Still, as [he himself has stated](#), "Men must not close our eyes and minds to what happens to women in this world. We must fight, alongside them, for them to be believed, at the ballot box & with art & by listening, and change this world for the better."

The fallout is already making itself apparent, as the comic book giant Dark Horse has [dropped](#) Gaiman from its publishing stable. Other publishers will likely follow suit, although one outfit that doesn't appear to be shunning Gaiman (yet) is DC Comics, which has made news of its own.

When the Maryland based comic book distributor Diamond Comics filed for bankruptcy two weeks ago, it seemed like comics were finished in the US. Diamond had an undoubted monopoly, being America's top comic distributor, and [its demise shook the industry to its core](#). That the industry survived is due to the actions of DC, who in 2020 created a rival to Diamond in the form of Lunar Distribution, a highly controversial action in its day.

Lunar, however, has served as a lifeline for DC and many other companies in the wake of Diamond's dissolution, and should keep things going for at least another few years. As for Neil Gaiman, I believe he's cooked.

Check out Adam's  
recommendations in the  
**NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE.**



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