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Why innovative filmmaker **David Lynch** still has 'Eagle Scout' on his bio.

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Inside The Weird, Wild Mind of David Lynch

The innovative creator of 'Twin Peaks' and 'The Elephant Man' reveals why **Eagle Scout** is still on his bio more than 50 years later.

By Bryan Wendell



“Remember — true happiness is not out there. True happiness lies within. It always has; it always will.”



David Lynch earned his Eagle Scout Award in 1962. He has since written, produced and directed movies and television shows.

It was the second-coldest Inauguration Day on record, and David Lynch was wearing little more than a thin Boy Scout uniform.

The date was Jan. 20, 1961 — Lynch’s 15th birthday and a full two decades before his film, *The Elephant Man*, would receive eight Oscar nominations.

On John F. Kennedy’s big day, Lynch and some of his fellow Scouts were invited to seat dignitaries in bleachers next to the White House. But with 22-degree temperatures and 8 inches of snow on the ground, not many VIPs showed up.

To keep occupied (and warm), the Scouts climbed the bleachers to look around. They were trying to spot the car carrying Kennedy.

At last, they saw something: a pair of gleaming black limousines driving toward them.

“We went running up, and the Secret Service said, ‘No, no, no. Go back, go back.’ And they pushed us away,” Lynch says. “But I heard a voice say, ‘You.’ And I turned around, and a Secret Service man was beckoning me back to him.”

Lynch was delighted as the agent placed him in the official line, squeezed between the besuited bulk of two Secret Service agents.

The limos crept past, close enough for Lynch to reach out and touch. Instead, he looked.

In the first, he saw President Dwight D. Eisenhower and President-elect Kennedy. They were talking. In the next, he

saw Vice President Richard Nixon and Vice President-elect Lyndon B. Johnson. They were not talking.

Years later, Lynch appreciates the historical significance of that moment.



“I realized I saw four consecutive presidents in that short amount of time — 10 inches from my face,” he says. “It was a great, great experience.”

SCOUT IN ACTION

Lynch was born in 1946 in Missoula, Mont.

His father, Donald, was a research scientist for the U.S. Forest Service. That job meant the Lynch family’s home address was constantly changing — Idaho, Washington state, North Carolina and Virginia.

Through it all, two things stayed constant: Scouting and time spent outdoors.

Whenever the family traveled with Donald Lynch for his job, they avoided hotels and motels. They camped.

“I grew up like that,” Lynch says. “The Boy Scouts was pretty much a continuation of that.”

Lynch was a Cub Scout and then a Boy Scout. He attended summer camp at Camp Tapawingo near Payette Lake, Idaho. He was a member of the Order of the Arrow, Scouting’s honor society.

“I liked working on my merit badges,” he says. “You know, it was all great.”

David Lynch was a Life Scout in Troop 113 in Alexandria, Va., when he consid-

FOR ASPIRING FILMMAKERS

Lynch offers these five pieces of advice:

- ▶ “Be true to yourself.”
- ▶ “Find your own voice.”
- ▶ “Always maintain freedom in your work.”
- ▶ “Don’t ever turn down a good idea, but don’t ever take a bad idea.”
- ▶ “Enjoy the doing.”

FROM LEFT: GABRIEL OLSEN/GETTY IMAGES; FRAZER HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES; TIBERINA HOBSON/GETTY IMAGES; RON GALLELLA, LTD./WIREIMAGE; DE LAURENTIS ENTERTAINMENT GROUP/SUNSET BOULEVARD/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES; SILVER SCREEN COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES



Clockwise from top: Comedian Russell Brand (from left), David Lynch and David Lynch Foundation Executive Director Bob Roth. Lynch attends the *Twin Peaks* Blu-Ray/DVD release party. Lynch and actress Isabella Rossellini in 1988. Actors Laura Dern and Kyle MacLachlan on the set of *Blue Velvet*, directed by Lynch. Hannah Gordon and John Hurt in *The Elephant Man*, written and directed by Lynch.

ered calling it quits. He began wondering whether Scouting was cool. It didn't help that his brother — his *younger* brother — already had become an Eagle Scout.

But his dad encouraged him to finish what he started. On Nov. 13, 1962, he did.

Lynch says he's grateful for that extra push. He says it's why his official bio, even after decades of awards and fame, is still just seven words long: "David Lynch. Born Missoula, Mont. Eagle Scout."

"That's in honor of my father," he says. "I think the Scouts is a great thing. I had a great time living during those years, but I had a great time in the Scouts as well."

SCREENS LARGE AND SMALL

Lynch has four Academy Award nominations, including three for best director: *The Elephant Man* (1980), *Blue Velvet* (1987) and *Mulholland Drive* (2002).

Lynch's groundbreaking *Twin Peaks* aired on ABC in 1990 and 1991 — and returned with new episodes on Showtime in 2017 — but its legacy of pushing the boundaries of what could be done on a small screen still looms large.

On the surface, it was the story of a murder investigation in a quirky small town in the Pacific Northwest. But Lynch wasn't afraid to take the show in interesting — and, yes, weird — places.

The show's influence lives on, with TV series like *Lost*, *The Sopranos* and *The X-Files*

tracing their roots to *Twin Peaks*.

His influence on television aside, some might wonder whether Lynch is a good influence on young people. *The Elephant Man* is rated PG, but other Lynch films earn their R ratings with graphic violence, strong language and explicit nudity.

While parents might want their young Scouts to wait a few years to see Lynch's work, the director himself sees no hypocrisy in creating characters that aren't exactly friendly or clean.

"Films reflect our world," he says. "Our world is filled with characters that don't reflect Scouting values. And stories are not all just shiny little pleasant tales. They involve all kinds of different characters — all different kinds of thinking."

Besides, Lynch says, it's incorrect to assume someone who creates disturbed characters is a disturbed person.

"I always say the artist doesn't have to suffer to show suffering," he says. "You want to be happy in your work, but you can tell stories that have darkness swimming along with light. It's stories. Have the suffering on the screen or in the books, not in your life." 🗨️

LYNCH'S GOOD TURN

The David Lynch Foundation is the director's way of giving back to the community. Its mission: Use Transcendental Meditation to help at-risk populations.

Lynch says Scouting inspired him to want to help other people at all times.

"It does something for one's character," he says. "It feeds the future, for sure. In a good way."

Lynch is a major proponent of Transcendental Meditation, which he considers the key to eliminating negativity, stress, anxiety and fear. When you perfect the technique, those bad feelings leave — "just like darkness goes when you turn on the light," he says.

He even suggests Scouts begin practicing Transcendental Meditation, which he emphasizes is "not a religion and is not against any religion."

If we had what Lynch calls Yogi Scouts, "Boy Scouts could change collective consciousness from a stressed black cloud to a beautiful, bright and shiny, peaceful collective consciousness."

That's not unlike the mission of Messengers of Peace, a global movement within Scouting. Whether young people become Yogi Scouts or Messengers of Peace, Lynch has a message everyone in Scouting should consider: "Remember — true happiness is not out there. True happiness lies within. It always has; it always will," Lynch says. "And then they can just fall back on their motto: Be Prepared."