

You're listening to Imaginary Worlds, a show about how we create them and why we suspend our disbelief. I'm Eric Molinsky.

Twin Peaks is coming back to TV this month. I can't believe I'm even saying that, even though I've known it for two years. On May 21st, a third season of Twin Peaks will air on Showtime, with most of the original cast. David Lynch is going to direct every episode. As I mentioned in my episode about The X-Files – I love the idea of returning to old characters and pretending that while the show's been off the air, they've have been living their lives and we're catching up with them. Since Twin Peaks ended on a cliffhanger – I'm really curious to see what happens.

In the Spring of 1990, I was graduating high school. Twin Peaks was a perfect show to get sucked into as a teenager – with all the melodrama, and supernatural intrigue. And since I hadn't traveled much beyond the Northeast, I fell in love with the world David Lynch created. The Pacific Northwest town of Twin Peaks felt like a real place to me.

But Twin Peaks is a real place – sort of. Most of the filming was done in the towns of North Bend, Fall City and Snoqualmie in Washington. Until 1990, those places were known as logging towns with great opportunities to go fishing, camping, hiking or skiing. Suddenly, they had a new identity imposed on by a filmmaker with a very strange sensibility.

KYLE: So when the first show came everyone town watching show and pictures of birds, and the mountains, fun stuff that people love about NB and then all the sudden this dead gal wrapped in plastic half the town turned TV off they didn't want to be known as serial killer town.

That is Kyle Twede, the owner of Twede's Café, which is the same location as the Double R diner in the show. By the way, I'm not there in Washington – I wish. I was relying on a local reporter to record the interviews named Casey Martin.

Sometimes I was on the phone with them, but in this case, Case went to the diner himself. He even met a tourist from Spain at the diner.

DAVID: Being here like inside series it's the place where many things happen and it's like the time stops and I think it's like in the '90s when it was filmed and I think it has that vibe still so it's impressive.

Kyle Twede is the owner of the diner, and he says it's difficult to walk the line between being a real restaurant for locals, and a destination for tourists who come with big expectations. Like on the show another guy named Kyle – the actor Kyle MacLauchlan -- is always going on about how this diner has the best damn good coffee. And the cherry pie?

COOPER: This must be where pies go where they die. Mmmm!

That's hard to live up to.

KYLE: Let me tell you, cherry pie is expensive to make, buy ingredients for and a pain in the butt to make by hand, which we do,

But it's worth it for him because he'd rather have the town be known for great cherry pie than a dark place where evil spirits are lurking in the woods.

In fact, when the show Northern Exposure came out a few months after Twin Peaks, Kyle says the locals in North Bend were jealous that the town of Roslyn – which is just an hour east – was enjoying a very different kind of fame.

KYLE: Why didn't they do light hearted comedy! We didn't want to be the murder capitol of the world!

Dana Hubanks is a musician and she works at the Black Dog Arts Café in Snoqualmie. She has a totally different point of view. She thinks that David Lynch captured something about the area that feels absolutely right to her.

DANA: There are so many specific elements whether it comes down to the track of chorus frogs he chooses to put in a scene behind dialogue at night or the way the road looks with towering evergreen trees when James is riding his motorcycle at night.

Dana was born in 1990 – the year the show came out. She actually went to the high school in the show, with the red stripes on the walls. She says her friends growing up were totally on board with being the real Twin Peaks.

DANA: Even from the time of being in middle school and high school, I remember this sense of curse hanging over town sounds cliché and corny often part of conversation, there was a string of years maybe 10 years where every year someone from high school would die in tragic way whether drowning in river, murder, suicide, terrible car accidents, and it creates this atmosphere you can almost see a story like Laura's story playing out.

HARRY: Twin Peaks is different. A long way from the world, you've noticed that.

COOPER: Yes I have.

HARRY: That's exactly the way we like it but there's a back end to that that's kind different too, maybe that's the price we pay for the good thing.

COOPER: What would that be?

HARRY: There's a sort of evil out there -- something very, very strange in these old woods.

This area does have a high number of grizzly murders. In the '80s and '90s, Gary Ridgway – the Green River serial killer – dumped the bodies of his victims along

the river east of Seattle. Dana remembers two instances of men who killed their entire families – one of them lived up the street from her when she was a kid.

There's also a literal darkness to the show, which is not a camera trick. That's just the way the area looks.

DANA: So I spent last year traveling country and returned 2 months ago, came back to WA, the people I was traveling with, I turned to them I forgot how literally dark, how literally the sky and colors and hillsides how literally dark this place is compared to anywhere else in the country.

Cristie Coffing owns the cafe where Dana works.

CRISTIE: We get so much rain and darkness and when it first begins in winter I can handle it an a couple months you think you're going to go insane.

But Cristie strives to keep a positive attitude. Her diner is a haven for local artists and musicians. And when they were filming the new season of Twin Peaks, the crew was in there regularly.

CRISTIE: We had David Lynch and he was very gracious.

Did he order pie or coffee?

CRISTIE: No, I think he ordered a turkey BLT!

Cristie loved Twin Peaks when it came out. In fact, before the show debuted, someone from the prop department bought a diary at a store she ran. She didn't think anything of it at the time, but that diary turned out to be a huge plot point on the show because it was filled with the Laura Palmer's secrets.

COOPER: Meeting with J tonight – that's the letter J, Diane. And that's the last entry in the book.

CRISTIE: You have to remember at the time we were a logging community so most of that community they didn't care either way, but the merchants stood up and took notice, it was amazing the tourism it brought to town.

She sees no downside to the area being known as a place where horrible or just creepy stuff happens all the time if it brings in tourists.

CRISTIE: Exactly and that was happening to us after logging industry, we had no identity, we were floundering and TP helped us through that period, it gave us a nice influx of tourism and identity and exposure and it was great, it was right when we need it.

When Kyle Twede bought his diner in the late '90s – the one that was featured on the show -- he thought Twin Peaks was a fad that passed its prime. So he remodeled.

KYLE: We tried to get locals back in here, we downplayed TP, we didn't up play, local sport, but 3 months after this gal looking at one or two pictures she had flown from Germany to New York, from New York to Seattle, got in taxi didn't have hotel, 19 years old had to get here, at that point we realized some fans it was a mecca for them, a place they needed to visit before died, so we began to amass as many TP memorabilia as we could.

Also, she started getting calls from fans that wanted to shoot their student films or music videos there. He's always game. And then:

KYLE: In 2015, I got call, we're thinking of shooting film that's fine, how many people, are you going to have rails, lighting? Do you need us to be closed down? Person said all of the above, and I went wait a second! Then found out that was TP and coming back up, kind of exciting, sat

down with Lynch what he wanted, take back to way it was before, I said if that's what you want to do go ahead.

But the town can't go back.

These days, they're facing a much bigger identity crisis than whether they're the real Twin Peaks.

North Bend and Snoqualmie are only 30 miles east of Seattle. Since the tech boom took off, they've become very desirable locations for people who work at companies like Amazon or Zillow. The population has quadrupled since 1990. Housing prices have soared beyond what a lot of locals can afford. They're even tearing down the old high school to make way for new families.

That bums out Dana Hubanks.

DANA: We want it stay the strange, weird place that it's always been, it's like coming here you could go into any bar in North Bend and meet someone just as weird and strange and whatever you want as a character on TP but more development and that gentrification happens the less of that you see and more suburban families and parts of the community that don't bring the character that has always been associated with this place.

So when Dana watches Twin Peaks, she sees a time capsule. Sure, everyone on the show is up in each other's business and trying to screw each other – but at least they know their neighbors.

DANA: I feel nostalgic for that time even though I was only an infant a time when this place protected from that craziness. I wish we could return to it.

Yes, to her craziness is not a supernatural serial killer named BOB – it's seeing a Banana Republic where there used to be a mom and pop store, or seeing BMWs where there used to be pick-up trucks.

DANA: Every week you see a new notice of public land use, and you're like, another shopping center, housing development – what's next? And I think people feel like we're destined to become another any town, USA basically.

In a moment, we'll hear a guy who is convinced Twin Peaks is not based on those towns in Washington. He thinks the show is based on his hometown – which is actually called Twin Peaks. That is just ahead, after the break.

BREAK

When Twin Peaks debuted in 1990, a lot of people felt disturbed by the show – but maybe no one more than Harry Teter – who goes by the name, Buzz. At the time, Buzz was working with the forest service in Arizona.

BUZZ: Came home from work one day and my wife, Debbie, had this show on. And she was real excited and she was like there's this show on called Twin Peaks, blah, blah, blah. And I was like huh? Really?

The Twin Peaks he used to live in was a logging town, with a big sawmill – just like the show. And it was full of oddball characters – just like the show, although maybe not as bizarre.

But when it came to the main storyline – the murder of Laura Palmer -- that's when the parallels got even more disturbing for Buzz.

In 1974, he came back to Twin Peaks after getting out of the Army. He got a cabin with his girlfriend Nancy Easton. One night, they went to a dinner party. Nancy

went back to the cabin alone because Buzz was staying with a friend who was helping him fix his jeep. In the middle of the night, Buzz got a call that his cabin was on fire. So they sped over.

BUZZ: It was nasty night, foggy, cold, windy by the time we pull up the grade to house the night was aglow with fire, it totally involved, and we pulled up and I'm like, where's Nancy?

A deputy took him aside.

BUZZ: And he said she's in the house. And I need you to identify her.

Buzz was completely devastated. But he had no idea things were about to get worse. The next day, he learned the cabin didn't burn down because of something like faulty wiring. It was arson. Nancy had been sexually assaulted, and murdered.

So when he watched Twin Peaks in 1990, he couldn't believe the parallels.

BUZZ: They were a couple years off in age in the TV series LP is 17, Nancy was 20. They both worked at the lodge across the lake, they were both homecoming queens. And they were both killed in the same manner.

Watching the show traumatized him all over again.

BUZZ: Yeah, I was angry, I didn't need that rubbed in my face and reminded on a weekly basis of what happened.

Another parallel: in the first episode, the cops immediately suspected Laura Palmer's boyfriend.

HARRY: Your girlfriend Laura Palmer's been killed. She was found just after dawn. You were with her last night but you weren't where you were supposed to be this morning. Have these fellas read you your rights?

That happened to Buzz.

BUZZ: They worked me over interrogation, trying to break my story and finally they go we want you to take a polygraph test, would you be willing to do that? I said of course. Well I went in and failed it because every time they mentioned her name, I could feel my heart took off, and I could hear the machine go ch-ch-ch-chi. Go crazy. So I stood up, came out of there, and they handcuffed me for first-degree homicide.

After a few days later, Buzz calmed down, and passed the polygraph test. Also, his friend could vouch for his alibi. But a cloud of suspicion followed him everywhere. One day, his boss at the fire department called him in for a meeting.

BUZZ: And basically told me I was never going to get a promotion, never go anywhere in that fire department and I was like wait a minute, I just saw my performance report, it was outstanding, he says that's not it, it's this Twin Peaks thing I was like what? He goes oh yeah. There's people upstairs, which would be the chief, they think you got away with murder.

Buzz quit that day. Ironically, he went into law enforcement, where he found himself working with the cop that arrested him. Again like the show, it's a small town where everyone knows each other. That's when he learned there was a suspect, but for various reasons this guy wasn't convicted.

Buzz spent the next few decades trying to prove this guy did it. He makes a compelling case, but since the man was never formally charged, I'm not going to go into the details. But in 2005, Buzz says he got a letter from a hospice care worker who told him this man was a former patient of hers.

BUZZ: This person had been providing hospice care and on several occasions he had said I killed a girl in TP and another time he was crying in bed going I'm sorry, Nancy but this person had no idea what happened until a couple years later, she was talking to the daughter of a friend of mine who told her the story and a light bulb went on over her head and she went oh my God.

How did you feel when you got that letter?

BUZZ: Oh boy. I went out behind the house, sat at the backyard at a table and cried my eyes out. Because it was over, as far as I was concerned.

Not quite. When he read that David Lynch was going to restart Twin Peaks, Buzz felt like he needed to tell his story. So he wrote a book about it because he thinks David Lynch was inspired by Nancy's death.

BUZZ: He lived in Southern California when this happened because at that time 1974, '76, a lot of people were talking about it. Another thing that makes me think he knew about this late 1985, '86, he pitched a movie script to Dino DeLaurentis about a murder mystery that was called "Up at the Lake." Anyone in Hollywood gone for a couple days and someone asked me where you'd been and I'd say I'd be up in the lake, everyone knows it's Lake Arrowhead, that's where everyone goes.

Buzz got a lot of flack for the book. First, the cops back home were not happy he was accusing them of dropping the ball on a murder investigation. And fans of the show were upset because they thought he was calling Lynch a thief.

BUZZ: You know, how dare you David Lynch would never stoop to something like this, and I was like whoa!

He actually loves David Lynch – not Twin Peaks for personal reasons -- but he's a fan of Blue Velvet, Mulholland Drive, he even likes Dune. If anything, he was

using the series as a hook to get people to hear his story -- because he in the end, he really wrote the book for himself.

BUZZ: When I wrote that book, it was cathartic, it helped remove albatross around my neck. I can talk to you about it right now. 10 years ago I couldn't, it would be too emotional.

(START MUSIC HERE)

There are over 100 towns in The United States named Twin Peaks. And I wonder if there is someone in every one of those towns who watched the show in 1990 and thought, hold on, I think that's my Twin Peaks.

But that's what great art does. It makes stories tied to a certain time and place feel universal. And Twin Peaks proved that TV – which people were still calling the idiot box back then – could produce great works of art. And art can shine a light when the world feels too dark.

That's it for this week, thank you for listening. Special thanks Cristie Coffing, Kyle Twede, Buzz Teter, Casey Martin, and Dana Hubanks. This is her in the background, the track is off one of her albums.

Imaginary Worlds is part of the Panoply network. You can like the show on Facebook. I tweet at emolinsky.

By the way, a version of this episode aired on Studio 360 as part of an hour-long special about the impact of Twin Peaks. There's lots of great stuff there. I'll put a link on my site [imaginary worlds podcast dot org](http://imaginaryworldspodcast.org).