

Sing Along With David Lynch on 'Dark Night of the Soul'

By [DAVE ITZKOFF](#)



The filmmaker and occasional vocalist David Lynch.

Ambiguity, discursiveness, leaving you with the feeling that you know less at the end than you did at the beginning — these are the hallmarks of the films of [David Lynch](#). And sometimes they are the characteristics of a conversation with him.

Case in point: Amid a film career that has included consciousness-scrambling films like [“Blue Velvet,”](#) [“Mulholland Drive”](#) and [“Inland Empire.”](#) Mr. Lynch has lately been turning up in all sorts of unexpected places: [a highly Impressionistic Twitter account](#), for example, and the new record [“Dark Night of the Soul,”](#) a [collaboration](#) between the band [Sparklehorse](#) and the producer [Danger Mouse](#), for which Mr. Lynch provides photography and, on two tracks, his singing voice. (It’s O.K. if you don’t get it — we didn’t get [“Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me.”](#) either.)

ArtsBeat spoke recently to Mr. Lynch in hopes of ascertaining how he got involved with the album, his musical interests and his other artistic plans. This is what we came back with.

Q.

How did you become a part of the “Dark Night of the Soul” project?

A.

Well, I became part of it on a day that Danger Mouse called and wanted to speak to me. And I didn’t know what was going on. I’m involved with music, but he probably wouldn’t know that. I didn’t have a clue what he wanted.

Up he came to the house, and explained this concept that he and Sparklehorse had been working on for three or four years, where they were writing the tracks and getting people to do lyrics and sing. He said I could do some still photographs, and listen to the songs and see what came from that. I joked with him and I said, “I thought you were coming up here to ask me to sing.” And Danger Mouse, being very polite, said, “Oh, sure, sure, we’d like to have you sing.” I ended up in fact singing.

Q.

The other music that you’re involved with, what do you make it for?

A.

Mainly for my own pleasure. I love sound and I got into music really because of sound in film. I have my own studio and I’m mainly just working on my own stuff.

Q.

What kinds of things do you do in your studio?

A.

Well, this article's about this album, so I'd hate to dirty the stream.

Q.

Have you ever sung before? Do you have a background in it?

A.

No, I hated singing. Totally embarrassing. But I started singing in the last couple of years, just trying to do it.

Q.

Did you make your songs first or your photographs first?

A.

Um, let's see. I honestly don't remember. Because it took a while to organize the shoot, which Danger Mouse organized. We shot for two days in various locations to generate the photographs. And somewhere in the planning for all this, I might have done the song "[Dark Night of the Soul.](#)" And then "[Star Eyes \(I Can't Catch It\)](#)" came later.

Q.

How did you find the subjects and the material for your photographs?

A.

The music talks to us. It comes right out of the music. You could shoot the lyrics, I guess, but there's so much in the mood of the music that images start coming. The same way that you listen to these tracks and lyrics start coming.

Q.

Have you written song lyrics before?

A.

Oh, yeah, I wrote lyrics with [Angelo \[Badalamenti\]](#). He writes beautiful music and I wrote lyrics for Julee Cruise in the "Twin Peaks" era. I think there's great lyricists, we all know about them, and I'm not one of them.

Q.

You show a lot of confidence in your other artistic efforts — you don't feel the same way about your lyrics?

A.

No, I like the lyrics. But it's a tricky business. It's a lot like poetry, where four lines done correctly open up an immense world and all kinds of levels. It's a real art form.

Q.

What about the writing you do on your Twitter account? There's a certain poetry to it, even when you're just writing about your day-to-day experiences.

A.

It's not even always day to day. Sometimes I talk to the Twitter friends and they tell me what they're doing and I tell them sometimes what I'm doing.

Q.

But some of the tweets you send can be more abstract.

A.

Well, meanings vary. I like abstractions a lot. I love concrete, though.

Q.

So when you say that [you're working with a pink cookie](#), does that have a concrete meaning?

A.

No, that's a fanciful thing. It paints a picture in the mind and the picture, you can imagine, would be different for each person.

Q.

And you'd prefer to let that remain ambiguous, rather than say what it is and spoil it for people?

A.

Exactly. And it's the same thing in film.

Q.

How did you feel about having to record your vocals in front of other people?

A.

Well, I didn't have anybody around me except the engineer. Big Dean Hurley is the engineer in my studio, and I don't mind singing in front of Dean. But I would never be able to go on the road. They don't have arenas big enough for me, anyway.

Q.

What about the thousands, if not millions, of listeners who will hear those recordings later?

A.

See, that's the thing. It's a beautiful world, this world of music, but it's changed so much. It's all divided up into so many small categories. Nobody knows what will happen in the music world today. There's not too many superstars that speak to everybody. So it's a strange thing, and gone are the days when you can be a studio band. You have to tour to make money because of piracy.

Q.

Are filmmakers at a similar risk?

A.

It will affect everybody, and it's started already, and it'll go the same way as music. I don't know exactly what will happen, but it doesn't look promising, and it's very difficult for a film director to tour. What's he going to do?

Q.

So is there no chance of pinning you down on the music that you listen to in your free time?

A.

Well, I like blues. But I like all different kinds of music. And I always say, I get a lot of ideas from listening to music, coming out of the music, so I think it's important to listen to all different types. I like the roots of rock 'n' roll, rockabilly. I like some country-western stuff, and I like symphonic stuff. I like avant-garde things. I like to listen to stuff.

Q.

I read that among your coming film projects is [a documentary about yourself](#) for which you're soliciting small financial contributions from the audience.

A.

That's a friend of mine who's been doing that for several years. And he's made "Lynch 1," "Lynch 2," and he's trying to raise money to do "Lynch 3." That's what he's up to. I'm working on a film about [Maharishi Mahesh Yogi](#).

Q.

How is the soundtrack coming along?

A.

Well you know, Dave, it's a huge story. But music will be part of it.