

# QLH-S04E01: Eraserhead

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

film, themes, parenthood, david lynch, movie, surrealism, baby, twin peaks, strange, theories, feel, creature, podcast, human, talk, alien, fear, radiator, watch, weird

## SPEAKERS

Jessi Chartier, Jen Myers

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- J** Jessi Chartier 00:04  
Welcome to quiet little horse. Here we talk about the films that creep under your skin and take up residence in the dark.
- J** Jen Myers 00:17  
Let's talk about Eraserhead. We talk about movies. So we're going to talk about parts of movies that may be spoilers. If that doesn't bother you, you can keep on listening. Or you can hit the pause button and go watch the films that we're talking about before you continue here. Consider yourself warned. Eraserhead, Henry discovers he's going to be a first time father and struggles in his new role as a parent.
- J** Jessi Chartier 00:48  
Well, Happy New Year, Jen.
- J** Jen Myers 00:50  
Happy New Year.
- J** Jessi Chartier 00:51  
So excited to start a new season here. This is we're going on season four. Can you believe that?
- J** Jen Myers 00:56  
No. I It's kind of blowing my mind. I actually we were just talking about this. I was still thinking

no, it's kind of blowing my mind. I actually we were just talking about this. I was still thinking this was season three, as we were sitting down to record.

**J** Jessi Chartier 01:04

I know, you know, if our podcast were a high schooler, this would be the senior year.

**J** Jen Myers 01:13

That's terrifying.

**J** Jessi Chartier 01:15

I know.

**J** Jen Myers 01:16

I don't know what I want to do when I grow up as a podcast.

**J** Jessi Chartier 01:19

I think I think we'll figure it out along the way. I think we'll figure it out a long way. But we've got a really cool topic for the first of the year, you know, everything's new and fresh. You know, everybody wants to have new things, new ideas. And so we're talking about parenthood for this month, new things. And I think that this is very apropos. Just because the new year does make people kind of think and reflect and what do they want to be and how do they want to live their lives. And I feel like the realities of parenthood don't get talked enough about like, everybody's like, Oh, it's so sunshine and happy and there are moments of that, but it's like it's life. So there are real dark sides to it, too. So let's, uh, dive into it. Okay, so for the Mini, we're going to be talking about Eraserhead. I always thought it was Erasurehead. But that's not true. It's Eraserhead by David Lynch. Who is I have mixed feelings on David Lynch, some of his stuff I find really great. Other stuff I found really bad. To talk about this one.

**J** Jen Myers 02:29

Yeah, I'm actually a really big David Lynch fan.

**J** Jessi Chartier 02:33

Are you know, have you seen Twin Peaks? Like all of the seasons?

**J** Jen Myers 02:36

Yes. Yes. Yeah, no, I'm actually yeah, maybe this is a good place to start out. Because we haven't talked about David Lynch.

J Jessi Chartier 02:47

Yeah. Let's talk about David Lynch. And let's talk about how this movie falls into our pod.

J Jen Myers 02:51

Yeah, that's interesting. So and it's funny, I don't think we've even we didn't even really talk about this much. Just like before we started recording. This is a good place. I'm actually really huge David Lynch fan. I was a little too young to get super into Twin Peaks when it aired but I remember watching bits of it like they existed for years and my memory is this kind of just like, you know, the strange thing that I saw once and like, you know, didn't understand what it was till years later. But I do remember, I was really captured by Lost Highway, which came out when I was an older teenager. And the soundtrack was very carefully arranged and produced by Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails, which was my favorite band at the time. So like, I was into the whole thing, like I was obsessed with the soundtrack. I was really into the film. It was like a really, it was it. That's an interesting entry point for David Lynch. But it was just a matter of timing for me. And then I was after that I think Mulholland Drive was an excellent came out which is a, in my opinion, just an incredible film. And so So yeah, I've Inland Empire actually always really loved to and then I remember going back to Twin Peaks, I really loved the the return Twin Peaks, the Return and all of that. So yeah, I will say I didn't get to see Eraserhead until I think it was somewhat recently. I think it's been in the last couple of years. So I had seen pretty much everything else David Lynch had done before I saw this film.

J Jessi Chartier 04:19

Got it. Yeah, I had seen Twin Peaks. So I have a buddy of mine. And I meet every week and our, we call it TV night. And our goal is to watch old TV shows that people were like, Oh, you have to have seen this. This is just so good. And so that's really cool. We started this in 2017. And we started with Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Which doesn't age well, but does a university name time there's like yeah, I won't go into that. But one of the seasons or series that we watched was Twin Peaks and we always commit to watching the whole thing unless it's really, really bad. And so we watched the first two seasons and you can kind of tell at least At least I don't know, maybe this is just me. But we could kind of tell when David Lynch was no longer part of the series.

J Jen Myers 05:06

Oh, yeah. No, I think you can. Absolutely. So I think that's a very reasonable and correct thing to be able to tell. Yeah.

J Jessi Chartier 05:13

Yes. So I feel like you can tell when he leaves in the show takes a strange ending in a strange turn. And then when he comes back, you can kind of tell that they were like, You have complete creative freedom. And he really returns to his roots of like, off the wall stuff. Yeah. And we, I was kind of hoping for a little bit. I don't know, I don't know what I was hoping for. But I was, it was kind of it landed. If I had to give it an out of 10. I would be like, this is more like, seven. Maybe six? Yeah, that's okay. But this movie. So then, of course, I was like, Alright, so now I gotta go back and watch Eraserhead because everyone had said, those. If you like, the early Twin Peaks, you'll like Eraserhead. And so then, of course, I watched this movie, and I was like, oh my god, this is totally my jam. Such a surrealist film. That's the only way I can just describe it. It's not even magical realism it likes goes beyond though. Yeah, it's straight up surrealism, straight up surrealism. And I find what I find interesting is that. So the two movies that we're going to be talking about in parenthood are Eraserhead and Lamb. We'll talk about lamb and in the main podcast or the main episode, but I find it really, I don't know if I found it interesting. But okay. I love the fact that the baby was this strange little alien that was breathing and mucousy and just not at all human. And I loved the imagery of the fear of parenthood, and the fear of losing oneself and all of that stuff. But I'm curious to hear from you. What was your takeaway in regards to the themes of it? I mean, the plot is really not much of a plot. It's like he discovers that he's going to be a new dad. So he asks his girlfriend who's pregnant to move in with them. They have, she has the kid and it's this alien creature. And then the rest of the movie is him basically tending to this alien creature, and mom rarely makes another appearance. So I'd love to hear kind of like your take 30 flights of fancy

**J** Jen Myers 07:28

Yeah, yeah, it's, again, this is a strange film. Even within the context of David Lynch, I feel like a lot of people maybe who saw his later work might not be as prepared for this. Because again, this is just experimental film. This is like our arthouse experimental film, the narrative isn't there isn't really so much of a narrative structure as there was like you said, these themes. I really, I really dug it, I think it's a good way to explore these themes, because these are really heavy, complicated themes. That is hard. And those sort of things are hard to take on. Like straightforwardly, you kind of have to do it within a context of weird art. Otherwise, I don't know. I mean, I guess you don't always have that's how I feel about I feel like it's easier, the bigger and the more complicated the topic that you're tackling, I think the easier it is to do it in kind of this very artistic realm where there aren't as many rules and you could just kind of go for what you're what's underneath, even if it doesn't quite always make sense. It's, it's a, it is definitely a perspective of a man of a certain era, I think, oh, and I think great way to put it, which, which is not my perspective. But I also appreciate the way that it's so I don't know, it's a weird thing where he said that you can't, you're not approaching the straightforwardly in the sense that nobody says this is the theme of it. But it's very raw in a way to where it is. It's not hiding the fact that there is a lot of fear and anxiety around this ad, like you mentioned out the bat is, you know, not real is definitely not human. We don't know what it is. Also quick sidenote, do you know the kind of story about this? No, I would love to learn Oh, there is a huge story. Well, that's the thing is that David Lynch has famously always refused to tell anybody exactly what the baby is not I mean, in the film, I mean, how they made it to film.

**J** Jessi Chartier 09:38  
Really?

J Jen Myers 09:39

Yes, there are some gnarly theories out there. And considering the timeframe and maybe you know, the context, there's a chance that this was some Yeah, like maybe not entirely prosthetic. Let's put it that way. Or no, maybe not entirely artificial things going on here. But yeah, it's been it's kind of like if you look This up I'm sure you'll find like I said, people have lots of gnarly theories about this. But he is always very famously, review has

J Jessi Chartier 10:06

to give us a teaser on what some of the theories are like I cannot

J Jen Myers 10:09

Gosh, I don't even know if I know any specific but like I said he,

J Jessi Chartier 10:15

let's see, he used to Okay, so the let's let's call the elephant in the room is the baby is too big to be anybody's actual phallus. So it can't be that.

J Jen Myers 10:24

Okay. Wow. Okay gnarly theory, like right out of the gate. I want to say that I've seen it. This is all just like, rumors. Also, let's be really clear about this, you know, that it's a I want to say like a fetal like rabbits, or maybe some or pig or something like that.

J Jessi Chartier 10:46

Oh, I see. I see. Yeah, there's that it might actually be organic,

J Jen Myers 10:52

that it may actually be organic. Yes, exactly. And, you know, the here's the thing that like the those are rumors, those are rumors, we don't know. But I mentioned this because it is it has taken on kind of its own these rumors, these stories have taken on their, their own life. And the fact that Lynch refuses to talk about it has turned this into, you know, its own kind of like urban legend almost of like what was Eraserhead at baby actually. And you know, in the end, it doesn't really matter, right? But it is relevant to what we're talking about here. In the fact that like this is very much not a human, it's very much just this strange thing where we literally don't know what it is. We don't have any idea of some sort of a mutant, like you mentioned, like it's kind of like alien looking. All we know that it's not human. But there's something in that,

that I feel like it's um, I don't know, there's some really deep anxieties being expressed through that I think about just dealing with I mean, small humans are also kind of freaky in different ways. But they are also, they're also kind of strange creatures. And we're all like that. So that's what I think this is getting at the there's what we see in the surrealism of this movie is a way to express these really deep anxieties about how weird like, babies and parenthood and children and all of this stuff is, it's deeply weird.

**J** Jessi Chartier 12:25

It is very weird. And I would not be surprised if it was like, I would not be surprised if it was a skinned rabbit. Because that that makes total sense. But I do think that there's it doesn't the end of the day, the story is still all about this child is odd, and not quite human. And also not quite fully. Because at the end we're obviously spoilers we give spoilers on this but at the end, he kills the child. But and he does so by cutting off the wrappings the swaddle material. And when the swallow material opens up, it exposes every it's almost like he opened up the chest cavity of this creature. And he stabs the chest creature like he cut, he kills them. And the chest creature amazing like this, or chest creature, the baby creature howls and grows and grows and grows to like, fill the room. I mean, it's very, very interesting. And I think that there's there is also a lot of figurative language cinematically around the fear of having more children. So there's some great scenes that have these worm like creatures that are, I mean, obviously, they look like enlarged sperm. Like they've got these round heads and these long tails. And there's like two scenes that stuck out to me. Specifically, that makes me almost feel like is this? Is this character regretting the fact that he had children? Or is he afraid of having more, because there's two scenes. So the two students that I'm thinking of is, there's a woman who dances in the radiator, spoiler alert. And as she's dancing on her on the stage, these sperm fall, and she steps on them, squishing them, killing them. And then there's another scene where he wakes up. And this is one of the rare occasions where you see the mother of the child who's sleeping next to him, just consists consistently influencing his sleep or disturbing his sleep. She's like, grinding her teeth and constantly like moving over and she's sweating. And she's, like, just totally oblivious to what she's doing. And he's very angry, like, move over, move over. And he reaches down under the bed and he pulls out and he sees that there is this, he has like sperm worms in his bed and he throws them against the wall. Like he's like, Oh my god, I gotta get him out. Gotta get him out. Gotta get them out. And it makes me think like, okay, so What is the what is the meaning of all of this? What is the storyline behind all of this? Is this his fear of more children? Is this this fear of having kids in the first place? Because the this little baby alien is almost parasitic and manipulative, like he prevents the father from leaving the apartment at any point in time and laughs at him, and it mocks him ever so slightly. And it's just this like, kind of low burn prison almost where it's like, he can't really go anywhere. And then the character on top of it doesn't really seem to be that agile, and he seems agitated, but he doesn't seem overly agitated. He seems almost rude, not remorseful, but he seems almost like oh, woe is me. Like, well, I guess I'm stuck here.

**J** Jen Myers 15:48  
Mournful?

**J** Jessi Chartier 15:49

Yeah, yeah, yeah, it was just, it's such an interesting movie.

**J** Jen Myers 15:53

Yeah, you know, any thing is, I don't, I could be wrong. And also, I also think it's worth saying that, like, all of this is speculation, even the parenthood angle, which, for me, I think is pretty obvious in this film is not something that Lynch has ever, He's not one to confirm this sort of thing. You know, I think also there this, this is the film about which there's a relatively well known meme of him and some interview where he says, Eraserhead is, you know, my most spiritual film and the interviewer says, elaborate on that. And David Lynch says, No, and that's it. So you know, like this is, and that's fine, that's fine. There's that that's almost kind of great because I don't think that there's anything in this that isn't necessarily like, this is what it means or it isn't 100%, this or 100%, that, you know, and that's why I think it lends it so well, itself. So well to this theme, though, because what the mean parenthood is one thing and human experience that I think is not black or white, is is is full of ambiguity, it is full of conflicting emotions, it is full of feeling trapped, and also being okay with that are even happy about it at times. And, like, you know, like it all these contradictions are part of a whole when it comes to this particular theme. And I honestly feel that that's something that this film gets across really well. And it's surrealism is that because it never at any point says, this is the thing, this is what I like, or I'm scared of, or any of that. It's just like, this is all weird. And there's a lot of anxieties and worries and frustrations, and you know, just all of that it's all just, it's all just mixed up in the same thing. And that maybe that's what response I respond to, and it is not so much any particular thing, but just this idea that all these contradictions exist in this theme.

**J** Jessi Chartier 17:56

Yeah. And I think that there's Yeah, I think you hit it right on the head, and that there's these things are not really resolved. You know, they're, yeah, they're just they're ever present. Yeah. But it's very strange. It's a very strange and unsettling movie. For the whole time. Can we talk about the woman in the radiator?

**J** Jen Myers 18:21

I would love to,

**J** Jessi Chartier 18:22

I love her. So what is your your theory on? What's going on there?

**J** Jen Myers 18:28

Let's see. That's the thing. I don't really think I have any theories about this movie beyond kind of a generalized, you know, expression of the weird feelings around parenthood and childbirth and all of that. I don't know. I mean, I don't want to be too lynchin about this and be like, I'm

not gonna elaborate on any of it. But Eraserhead for me is definitely a movie that I feel and kind of absorb. And I don't know if I have any other particular thoughts about it. Beyond that. I know that that's a very bad answer on a podcast.

**J** Jessi Chartier 19:05

No, I think that's totally you. I think that's totally fair. I think the one thing that I love about the woman in the radiator is like, it's the one form of escape he has. Yes, yeah. No, no, it's me. She is onstage she's performing. She's also not perfect. Yeah, she's got prosthetics, like she's not this smooth skin. Beautiful girl. I don't know. I agree with you. I don't think it needs to be any more than just that. It's a form of escapism.

**J** Jen Myers 19:37

Yeah, no, and I do like how you pointed out that she Yeah, she's she has some sort of like growths or something on her face where it's so she's not just like this. This idealized, beautiful woman. I know a lot of I think I've seen a lot of Lynch fans refer to her as the radiator fairy and that is how I like to think of her as this kind of strange little fairy creature. I think it's appropriate and that and that is how I think about her in my mind as the radiator fairy.

**J** Jessi Chartier 20:05

The radiator fairy, that's great. I love that. I love that. Well, I feel like you just got to watch the movie people. Like, if you haven't watched it yet, just go watch it, feel free to take breaks, you're not gonna lose anything in the narrative if you need to chunk it out. But I think it's a great segue into this idea of like, well, what really is? What is the dark side of parenthood? And I mean, we could have done something like, what's the matter with Kevin, or we could have done something a little bit more on the nose when it comes to that, the horrors of parenthood. But I kind of liked the fact that we went with something that's a little bit more subtle and a little bit less heavy handed. Metaphorically, it's just an art film about this man dealing with this alien thing.

**J** Jen Myers 20:52

Yeah, pretty much. Yeah, you're right. And I just wouldn't run that you mentioned it, though, this would be interesting to take in context with We Need to Talk about Kevin. I think particularly because like I mentioned before, this is a very much I feel like a Oh, frankly, like a cis male perspective on 100% on this, and that's a very, that's a, there's nothing that is invaluable about that. That just is what it is. And honestly, in a way that I think this is, it's really great to see such a raw expression of that that really acknowledges the fears around this. And I think that in some ways, it could be heightened by the fact that, in some respects, you're a little bit more distanced from the process. Like there are there are horrifying things about being less distanced from the process. I say, as a woman who has given birth and all of that. But yeah, I can this, this film does make me think about a perspective that is opposite from the one that I have had, it makes me think about, oh, what is it to have a little bit less control or a little more distance from it, you know, you don't have like, necessarily same hormones going



through your body, you don't necessarily always have the same. I mean, as far, you know, I guess, as far as I'm kind of extrapolating here, may not have the same type of like Joy hormones going on in your brain to you know, so maybe that makes it even harder. I don't know, it's that's what's interesting about to me, it just feels like a very raw exploration of what that could be like.

J Jessi Chartier 22:23

Yeah, and I think one of the reasons that this fits so nicely into our podcast is that it is from the cis male perspective, which we know is the most common lens to look through. But what I do like about it is that is one of the reasons that it is a quiet little horror is because here's a movie that came out in the 70s, late 70s. And the storyline is about, you'll notice that he's the one that has to stay home and take care of the baby. He's no longer the one that he's not able to fulfill his, the toxic masculinity role of being the one to provide, right, where you have to be the one to run the whole family, and you have to be the one to provide for the family, because the wife is the one that goes out and works. He's not. And so I think that there's a disempowerment angle to this, that is very, it's not heavy handed, it's very subtle. But it's, it's there, like he's the one that can't even leave the house. Because the baby needs tending to he fantasizes about the beautiful woman next door. And even in his fantasies, she redacted rejects him, because he has a baby. Like, there's just, there's a lot that I think goes on there that men just are not in our society allowed to talk about, because they're supposed to fit a certain role.

J Jen Myers 23:45

Definitely. And like I said, I don't I can't really think of a lot of films that really have dealt with it since, you know, I think there's, I'm sure there's some out here and if but whatever ones have, they definitely have not dealt again with this kind of like, like rawness and where it's more of an exploration, as opposed to coming from a very particular ideological starting point. You know, this is just more of like, this is weird and confusing, and I make, I'm gonna make a movie about it being weird and confusing. And that's it. But ya know, there's something really valuable in that. And yeah, like I said, I think it would be an interesting kind of counterpoint to films that are a little bit more specific, or a little bit more straightforward about the themes. But it's such a unique thing that it really should be a part of the conversation no matter what.

J Jessi Chartier 24:37

Agreed. Totally agree. And I'm excited to talk about how this might kind of look up against our main episode, which is going to be about Lamb because Lamb just addresses parenthood and tragedy and grief all in one and I think that it does a really nice job of it. And I think that here, the ending is a form of freedom and the ending and Lamb is also a form of freedom. So we'll talk about that in the next episode. Speaking of Jen, if people want to learn more about us and find out where they can listen to the next episode, where can they go?

J Jen Myers 25:16

Well, we have a website at [quietlittlehorror.com](http://quietlittlehorror.com). You can find us on all the podcast apps of your choice. We have links to most of them on the website. You can also find us on Twitter at

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Jessi Chartier 25:37

Awesome. Join us next time as we talk about Lamb and parenthood and happy new year everybody.



Jen Myers 25:44

Happy New Year.