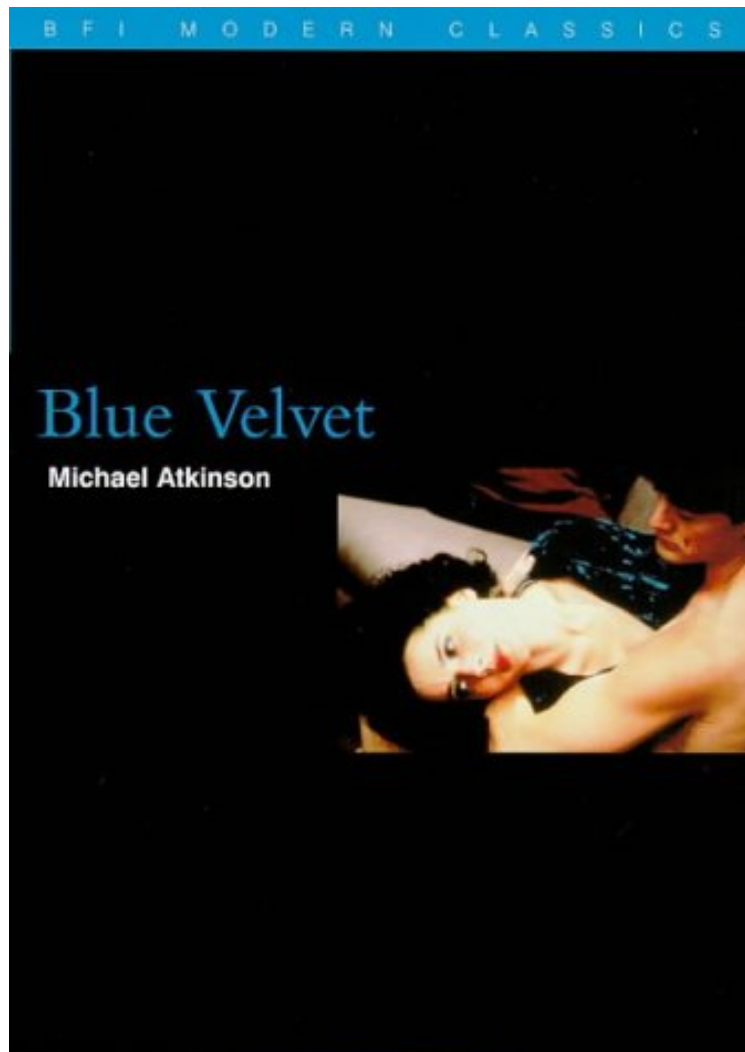


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Blue Velvet (BFI Modern Classics)

Michl Atkinson

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Michl Atkinson : Blue Velvet (BFI Modern Classics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Blue Velvet (BFI Modern Classics):

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Suggestive study of an endlessly fascinating masterwork.By darragh o'donoghueIn the decade and a half between his pioneering 'Blue Velvet' and recent renaissance with 'Mulholland Drive', David Lynch's reputation had seriously plummeted, his name a synonym for kitschy, affectless weirdness. It's good to be reminded what a major filmmaker he could be, and Michael Atkinson claims 'Velvet' as the most important and influential film of the 80s. Although the film deals with areas of human behaviour, psychology and sexuality we'd prefer not to think about, and is full of reeling violence and disorienting cinematic procedures, Atkinson argues that Lynch is ultimately a conservative artist, affirming a childlike, pre-Oedipal innocence by vividly portraying its dark,

disjunctive opposite. This thesis is arguable to say the least, and Atkinson himself isn't always very convinced by it. Using a loose psychoanalytic framework, he discusses 'Velvet' as a psychodrama, a narrative unleashing of the Id, with Jeffrey as a kind of Alice or fairy-tale figure undergoing the harrowing, identity-threatening psychic journey to maturity. You may disagree with Atkinson's wider conclusions, but his attentive, close reading of the film pays justice to its full, ambiguous complexity, singling out Lynch's idiosyncratic use of colour, composition and the widescreen frame; his manipulation of physical space in psychic space; the equal importance of his 'aural design' to his visuals; his unexpected sensitivity to class and gender politics; his use of performance (Atkinson brilliantly recuperates the famously vicious Frank (Dennis Hopper)). Each passing insight adds layers to the film's suggestibility, without ever hoping to tie it up, so bound up is Lynch's aesthetic to his own impenetrable demons. Atkinson has an annoying habit of repeating alienating buzzwords like 'interface' and 'topoi', where clearer words will do; his contention that 'Velvet' is a 'pure' movie, untainted by cinema history, is simply wrong (Douglas Sirk and Hitchcock's 'Vertigo' are obvious precedents for a start), and his interpretation of Lynch's Dennis Potter-like use of song is way off the mark. But if you want to tease out some of the stranger mysteries of Lynch's beautiful and enigmatic film, this is the book to get. 3 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Atkinson's "Blue Velvet" study a must for Lynch fanatics

By Peter Pender
Film writer Michael Atkinson delivers an exceptional short reading of one of the most influential and compelling films of the 1980s. Working with the efficiency of a Johns Hopkins-trained neurosurgeon, the author's recent addition to the BFI Modern Film Classics series irrefutably cements "Blue Velvet's" position in the canon and would undoubtedly turn the stomach of professed Lynch-hater Roger Ebert. 2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. It's A Strange World

By A Customer
Michael Atkinson does a great job of analyzing and pointing out all the weird little touches that "Blue Velvet" contains. It is helpful to fans and is sure to tell you something about the film, even if you were sure you knew everything about it. Atkinson does get a little long-winded in some places but it is otherwise a good book for anyone interested in this film.

For many, Blue Velvet is David Lynch's masterpiece. It crystallises many of his chief preoccupations: the evil and violence underlying the surface of suburbia, the seedy by-ways of sexuality, the frightening appearance of the adult world to a child's eyes. In this intricate and layered reading of the film, Michael Atkinson analyses Blue Velvet as the definitive expression of the traumatized innocence which characterizes Lynch's work.

About the Author
Michael Atkinson teaches Film at Long Island University, and writes criticism for Film Comment and the Village Voice.