

**Pierrot le fou DVD**

By Jan Uhde

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Despite the proliferating production of DVDs of all kind - bare-bone titles, directors’ cuts, discs with special material, collector’s editions, digital transfers and restorations, ”ultimate” collections, not to mention bootleg ware and the new blu-ray and high-definition discs - there are still many missing pieces in the DVD mosaic which include even the most significant milestones of cinema’s not-so-long history. Who would believe, for example, that Erich von Stroheim’s American silent classic *Greed* is still unavailable on DVD or that the DVD of Luchino Visconti’s *Ludwig* would exist only on PAL-Region 2 in the German-Italian language?

Some of the long overdue titles, however, are coming out. Most recently, Bernardo Bertolucci’s brilliant and neglected *The Conformist* has in recent months appeared on the shelves as well as his historical opus *1900* (in a 315-minute uncut original version). Criterion has published Buñuel’s *Viridiana* and Louis Malle’s famous ”adolescent trilogy”: *Murmur of the Heart, Lacombe, Lucien* and *Au revoir les enfants*. Last but not least, *The Passenger*, Antonioni’s long-sought-after *chef d’œuvre* with Jack Nicholson, has arrived just in time to be put under the Christmas tree of many a film devotee.

Recently, when searching for a DVD transfer of Godard’s *Pierrot le fou* (something more adequate than the 1998 Fox Lorber edition), I noticed a *Pierrot* DVD from the ”Legends of World Cinema” series, produced by a Russian company called SomeWax and decided to take a chance on it. To my delight, I found the image quality of the transfer very good, the English subtitles perfectly legible and the widescreen format maintaining the original frame ratio of 2:35:1. This DVD, like the rest of this series which includes *Last Tango in Paris, Blow Up, Satyricon, Ikiru, Lolita* and *Rocco and His Brothers*, is on PAL format-0 (all regions). The series’ slip-in cases geometric graphic design is also pleasing to the eyes. Some discs of this series are available online via Amazon.com, www.ozon.ru and on eBay.

It is commendable that SomeWax as well as a few Asian and European DVD producers have decided to make their products available in all regions, open to world-wide audiences. This is in fact how the DVD was originally conceived. Hollywood then forced the introduction of regional coding, using the argument - remember? - that it needed to protect its new blockbusters from pre-emptive bootleg distribution outside North America. But this restrictive idea of regional encoding was soon conveniently applied to other types of films, and not only by Hollywood, seriously impeding the universality of the DVD medium. Today, it is hard to find a US-published ”all region” DVD, no matter what movie is on it, including international cinema and silent classics - even the 1914 Italian *Cabiria*!

**Author Information**

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His professional and research interests focus on Singapore cinema; the identification and distancing mechanisms of the film viewer; the non-authored modifications and manipulation of films; and specific aspects of film history, including the Central European cinema.

He founded KINEMA in 1993.