

Pierrot le fou DVD

By Jan Uhde

Fall 2006 Issue of KINEMA

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

Jan UHDE is Professor Emer. (Film Studies) at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. Born in Brno, Czech Republic. Graduated (MA) from the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno; PhD received at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. He taught at the University of Waterloo (1970-2012) where he founded a General and Honours BA program in Film Studies at the Department of Fine Arts.

Publications: *Latent Images: Film in Singapore* Second edition, with Yvonne Ng Uhde (Ridge Books, National University Press of Singapore, 2010); *Latent Images: Film in Singapore*, with Yvonne Ng Uhde (Oxford University Press, 2000); *Latent Images: Film in Singapore CD-ROM* (2003, co-author); *Vision and Persistence: Twenty Years of the Ontario Film Institute* (University of Waterloo Press, 1990) and *Ontario Film Institute Programming Activities Index 1969-1989* (Toronto: Ontario Science Centre, 1990). He co-edited the *Place in Space: Human Culture in Landscape* (Proceedings from the Second International Conference of the Working Group "Culture and Landscape" of the International Association of Landscape Ecology, Pudoc Scientific Publishers, Wageningen, Holland, 1993). Jan Uhde has published articles and reviews in several countries (including Canada, USA, Germany, Italy), participated in international juries at film festivals and presented papers at international conferences in North America and Europe. In 1998/99, he was a visiting researcher at the School for Film and Media Studies, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Singapore.



Figure 1: *PIERROT LE FOU* DVD ¶ (Jean-Luc Godard, 1965), PAL, R-0, DVD-5. SomeWax (Russian import). Russian and English subtitles. USD 49.99 (Amazon Marketplace sellers.)

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.