Criterion and Others

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THE DVD MEDIUM, born a decade ago, has by now considerably broadened its content range to what one could only dream about just a few years ago. Masterpieces of world cinema new and old, movies forgotten, prohibited, censored, damaged or presumed lost, are now available on the small inexpensive silver discs in increasing quantities. Among the growing numbers of DVD publishers, some have earned worldwide reputation for the choice of content and superior technical quality of their output. The most noticeable among them is the Criterion Collection which has been distributing films of exceptional quality since 1984. By early 2009, Criterion had published over 460 outstanding DVD titles. Other companies fuelled by similar ambition have joined their ranks. Their discs have significantly contributed to the DVD revolution. The following are just a few examples of the recent output of remarkable titles.

After the resounding success of the Anthology of Polish Animation DVD, (1958-2007), the Polish audiovisual publishers brought out two more animated collections: the Anthology of Polish Animation for Children of the last 60 years (3-disc set, 360 min) and monumental collection of Polish experimental animation. Forty shorts produced between 1944-2007 made by the country’s finest animators, including Jan Lenica, Waleryn Borowczyk, Zbigniew Rybczyski, Józef Piwkowski, Piotr Szulkin, Mariusz Wilczyski, and Tomek Sikora make up this set from one of the world’s most vibrant animation sources.

Figure 1: ANTHOLOGY OF POLISH EXPERIMENTAL ANIMATION DVD ¶ (3-disc set, various directors, 1944-2007), PAL, R-2, 259min. Booklet. Polish w/English Subtitles. ¶ Polskie Wydawnictwo Audiowizualne.(USD 14.50-25.00).

Abel Gance’s masterpiece of the film impressionism featuring the characteristic rapid-montage which preceded his famous Napoléon, was now restored from scattered sources to its original epic length at Lobster Film Studios in Paris and published by Flicker Alley, a Californian company started in 2002 by film enthusiast Jeffery Masino. It is scored by award-winning American composer Robert Israel who wrote music for almost 100 silent movies. The DVD inclu des a making of documentary and a 16-page booklet with an essay by William N. Drew on the history and influence of La roue. Flicker Alley, named after London’s Cecil Court, the business centre of the British film industry during the silent era, also published Abel Gance’s antiwar J’accuse (I Accuse, 1919) and numerous other classics.
The first animation feature, Lotte Reiniger’s famous 1926 silhouette film *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (*Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed*) issued on DVD in 2001 (BFI Studio, Region 2) and 2002 (Image Entertainment, Region 1), now has a worthy companion. *Lotte Reiniger - The Fairy Tale Films* is a two-disc set containing nineteen shorts by the director produced between 1922 and 1961. Reiniger’s 1922 silent *Cinderella*, her 1953 *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, and *Grasshopper and the Ant* (1954) are included in this massive collection which contains half of the filmmaker’s lifetime production.
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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.