

Il Cinema Ritrovato DVD Awards 2017 EDITION XIV

Jurors: Lorenzo Codelli, Alexander Horwath, Lucien Logette, Mark McElhatten, Paolo Mereghetti, and Jonathan Rosenbaum.

Chaired by: Paolo Mereghetti

PERSONAL CHOICES

Lorenzo Codelli:

***Woman on the Run* (Norman Foster, 1950, USA, Flicker Alley, Blu-ray)**

A lost gem rescued by detective Eddie Muller's indefatigable Film Noir Foundation

Alexander Horwath:

***Déjà s'envole la fleur maigre* (Paul Meyer, 1960, Belgium, Cinematek/Bruxelles, DVD) and *Il Cinema di Pietro Marcello: Memoria dell'immagine* (2007-2015, Italy, Cinema Libero/Cineteca di Bologna, DVD)**

Regarding the latter: with this cinematheque-style DVD, subtitled in English and French, one of the greatest contemporary filmmakers, whose work is still under-appreciated outside Italy, receives his rightful chance for global recognition.

Lucien Logette:

***Tonka Šibenice* (Karel Anton, 1930, Czech Republic, Národní filmový archiv/Filmexport Home Video, DVD)**

One of the first Czech sound films. Like many great films of that era, it reflects several influences: expressionism, social realism, *Kammerspielfilm*, the art of Soviet photography, all used remarkably, without imitation. It contains all the great themes of the end of the silent period: the opposition between the city and the countryside, the misdeeds of modern society, frustrated loves ending in drama, themes served by an astonishing visual beauty.

Mark McElhatten:

***Kafka Goes to the Movies* (Germany, 1907-1921, Edition Filmmuseum/Goethe-Institut, DVD)**

All of the films extant that Kafka saw in cinemas and referred to in his writings are included in this set. The films range from a Mary Pickford feature to Danish and French silent dramas, documentaries from Russia and Palestine and more. A poetic concept with a factual basis yields a fascinating collection of films from seven international archives. An unimaginable miscellany made coherent through an inspired premise.

Jonathan Rosenbaum:

Two last features by great writer-directors, Josef von Sternberg's ***Anatahan* (Japan, 1953, Kino Lorber, DVD & Blu-Ray)** and **Robert Bresson's *L'argent* (France, 1983, Criterion, DVD & Blu-Ray)**, both released too recently to qualify as nominees. The former makes a perfect complement to Sternberg's first feature and the latter has two especially valuable extras: an audiovisual essay by James Quandt and Bresson's astonishing trailer, less than half a minute long.

Paolo Mereghetti:

***Déjà s'envole la fleur maigre* (Paul Meyer, 1960, Belgium, Cinematek/Bruxelles, DVD)**

A monument of ethnographic cinema, about the life of Italian immigrants in the Borinage region. This masterpiece of Paul Meyer has been magnificently restored by the Cinematek, which presents it along with two short features (*Klinkaart* and *Memorial to Egmont*), a few TV reports (also by Meyer) and an interview with the director. The DVD also includes a booklet with essays by David Houbrechts and Emanuelle Massart.

A SPECIAL PRIZE FOR TWO UNWIELDY RELEASES

***Wajda* (1954-2013, Poland, Cyfrowe Repozytorium Filmowe [Digital Film Repository], DVD) and *Robert Frank: Film Works* (1959-1975, USA, Steidl, DVD)**

Formidable retrospective collections devoted to directors and designed as unique objects. Both of these items, like the earlier *Murnau*, *Borzage* and *Fox*, are impossible to shelve with other DVDs and are seemingly targeted at individuals who own no other DVDs. *Wajda* comes with a book featuring Andrzej Wajda's

account of his career and offers itself as a nationalist monument (though regrettably not one available on the commercial market).

The more eclectic assembly of Robert Frank's films comes in what resembles a lunch-box, includes a book of critical essays (including one by me, which is why I recused myself from voting for this) and both PAL and NTSC versions of every film. Unfortunately both *Cocksucker Blues* and *Candy Mountain* are omitted. (Jonathan Rosenbaum)

BEST REDISCOVERY OF A FORGOTTEN FILM

Dissent & Disruption: Alan Clarke at the BBC (1969-1989, UK, BFI, DVD & Blu-Ray)

More than a rediscovery of forgotten films, this is a discovery of an almost unknown director. Alan Clarke signed three films in the '80s, but his essential work was for BBC-TV. The box set presents 32 films, shorts and features, made between 1969 and 1989, all remarkable for their content and their form, reflecting sharply the low and middle-classes of British society, with an acute point of view, often going deeper than Ken Loach. The narrative style is quite modern, with no equivalent in the European televisions of these two decades. *Elephant* by Gus Van Sant (2003), was strongly inspired by the TV film of the same title that Clarke directed 15 years before, but the Palme d'or winner is much less upsetting than the original. (Lucien Logette)

Les Saisons, une tétralogie de Marcel Hanoun (1968-1972, France, Re:Voir Video, DVD)

Les Saisons is Marcel Hanoun's most ambitious and representative work: four films - in the order of production, Summer, Winter, Spring, and Autumn - deal in an extremely personal style with those subjects that at the time shocked society (from May 1968 to the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw troops). Furthermore, the film can also be considered as a reflection on cinema and its practice; for example, on a signboard in one of the scenes we can read "Who creates and for whom?" Published by Re:Voir in collaboration with the Cinémathèque Française, this box set presents for the first time the complete tetralogy, subtitled in English, a 100-page booklet with essays written by Dominique Noguez, Emeric de Lastens, Jean-Louis Bory, Paola Melis, and a long interview with the director. (Paolo Mereghetti)

BEST SPECIAL FEATURES

***Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia* (Sam Peckinpah, 1974, USA, Arrow Films, Blu-ray)**

The curators of this splendid 4K restoration literally managed to bring us the head of Sam Peckinpah, along with those of the Wild Bunch of his collaborators. Since it's impossible to list all of the special bonuses included, let's propose a theoretical equivalent: biographer Paul Joyce offering the ten hours long, uncut version of the interviews for his documentary *Sam Peckinpah - Man of Iron*. (Lorenzo Codelli)

BEST BOX SET

***Pioneers of African-American Cinema* (1915-1944, USA, Kino Lorber, Blu-Ray)** and ***Dekalog* (1985, Poland, Arrow Films, DVD & Blu-Ray)** are both exemplary instances of the way in which a box set can shed light on a whole chapter of film history.

The 5-disc *Pioneers* gives us deep insight into the fascinating era of the so-called "race cinema circuit" in the U.S. from 1915 to the mid-1940s, with more than 20 works from black filmmakers such as Oscar Micheaux, Spencer Williams and many unknown ones, including discoveries like *The Flying Ace* (1926) or *Hell-Bound Train* (circa 1930). The 75-page booklet with a magnificent essay by Charles Musser is an important part of this rich collection.

Dekalog, published in both DVD and Blu-Ray versions, is not only a complete representation of Krzysztof Kieslowski's famous TV project about the ten commandments in wonderful restorations from Telewizja Polska, but also includes his other, much lesser-known films for television. The box thus shows that he was at least as much a master of the "home medium" as of the cinema. As with *Pioneers*, the beautiful little book that comes with the box is highly welcome, with the texts mostly by Kieslowski himself. (Alexander Horwath)

BEST SINGLE RELEASE

Colour Box: 19 Films by Len Lye (1929-1980, USA/New Zealand, Len Lye Foundation/Govett-Bewster Art Gallery/Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision, DVD)

Poet, philosopher, inventor, total artist Len Lye was a personality as exuberant and colorful as his films. He was a coalsman on a steamer, a postal worker, an adopted member of a Maori tribal community, a lecturer in New York. Lye was pioneer of kinetic sculpture ("Tangibles"), direct drawing and painting on film. Most of Lye's commercial public service commissions were as wildly imaginative as his personal projects. He was a mentor to Jack Smith (another one of the greatest colorists of cinema) and an influence on Stan Brakhage and many younger experimental filmmakers of our present century. His amazing work had key periods of exposure, then became unseen if not forgotten. Fortunately in the last few years there have been some fine exhibitions and publications devoted to Lye. Most essential is this DVD issued by the Len Lye Foundation of New Zealand that includes 19 films from 1929 to 1980. Our DVD of the year. (Mark McElhatten)

PETER VON BAGH AWARD

The Salvation Hunters (1925, USA, Edition Filmmuseum, DVD)

Josef von Sternberg's first feature, beautifully presented, with two precious extras: an audiovisual essay by Janet Bergstrom and a dazzling four-minute fragment from Sternberg's *The Case of Lena Smith* (1929). Alexander Horwath, who worked on this release, refrained from voting for it for that reason. (Jonathan Rosenbaum)