

June '09 Classics
Roundup



Written by Kevin Filipski

John Gay's 18th century musical classic, *The Beggar's Opera* (Arthaus Musik), received a straightforward TV adaptation by director Jonathan Miller in 1983 that starred the unlikely combo of The Who's Roger Daltrey and Bob Hoskins, but the seemingly slapdash casting works for this effervescent entertainment; the five sex romps from the mid-1970s released under the rubric *Classic Danish Erotica (Smirk)*, with zodiacal titles like *In the Sign of the Lion* or *In the Sign of Sagittarius*, are surprisingly explicit, with hard-core scenes interspersed among the goofy goings-on; Al Reinert's wondrous documentary, 1989's *For All Mankind (Criterion)* is an experience like no other as it tells the story of the Apollo moon landings through the voices of the astronauts themselves (best extra: *The Accidental Gift*, a new behind-the-scenes documentary); a vacuous piece of soft-core porn, *The Hostess Also Likes to Blow the Horn (Sinful Mermaid)* unfortunately doesn't come anywhere close to justifying its title; French director Alain Resnais' still-headscratching experiment, 1961's *Last Year at Marienbad (Criterion)*, is one of the most gorgeous films ever made, thanks to Resnais' artistry, Sacha Vierny's luscious B&W photography, and Delphine Seyrig's lustrous presence (best extra: Resnais audio interview); the late, lamented Andy Kaufman and wrestler Fred Blassie starred in a *My Dinner with Andre* parody from 1982, *My Breakfast with Blassie (VSC)*, a ludicrously uncomfortable and fitfully funny hour—which makes it of a piece with Kaufman's other forays into performance art (best extra: behind-the-scenes footage); there's not much wit, humor or insight in Wallace Shawn and Andre Gregory's meandering conversation throughout the 110 minutes of *My Dinner with Andre (Criterion)*, the nadir of director Louis Malle's intriguing but spotty career (best extra: *My Dinner with Louis*, a half-hour discussion between Shawn and Malle); 1996's *Nenette + Boni (Strand)* is still Claire Denis' best film, with fresh characterizations by the superb Gregoire Colin and Alice Houri that place this study several rungs above the metaphorical stick-figures the director has fetishized throughout the rest of her career; Ingmar Bergman's seminal *The Seventh Seal (Criterion)* remains a cinematic touchstone 52 years after its release, thanks to Gunnar Fischer's exquisite B&W compositions, uniformly fine acting by an ensemble led by Max von Sydow, and Bergman's dark, uncompromising vision (best extra: von Sydow audio interview); *Woodstock: 3 Days of Peace and Music (Warners)*, Michael Wadleigh's classic documentary about the 1969 music festival, seems like an entirely new film in this restored "director's cut" release (best extra: 90 minutes of unreleased performances).

http://timessquare.com/Movies/Film_News%10Stories%10General_articles/June_%2709_Classics_Roundup/