



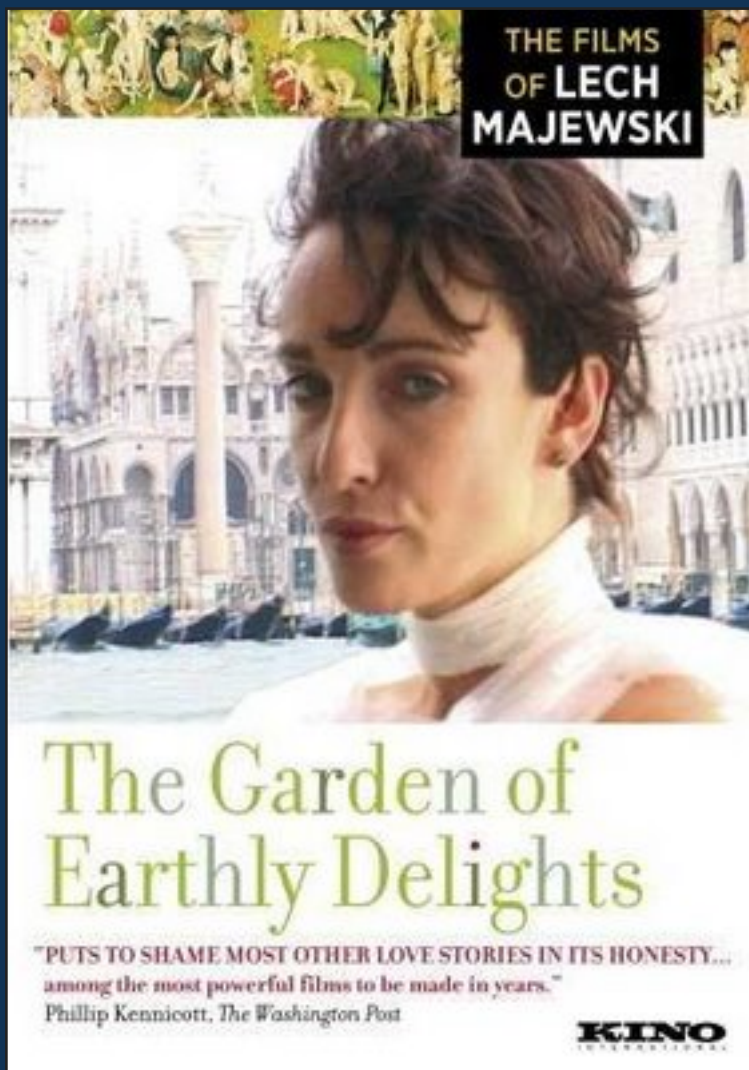
Sunday, December 14, 2008

VIDEO WATCHDOG's Favorite DVDs of 2008

This year, in order to keep things more focused and semi-concise, I have asked our contributors to select only their Top 5 picks, with domestic and import titles fair game. The results still offer variety and were able to zone in on one specific favorite title, even though the honored title was still chosen by fewer than half of our participants.

We start with the editors, then move on to our contributors. Thanks to everyone for participating!

TIM LUCAS (Editor's Choice)



In alphabetical order:

THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS (Kino on Video): The most moving, stimulating film experience I've had this year, probably this decade, and it would be my top pick even if this list wasn't alphabetical -- proving that, sometimes, a film alone is enough to qualify. Shot entirely by camcorder, Lech Majewski's masterwork shows what is possible within the limitations of hand-held cinema if the story is approached with sufficient density and imagination. It's a magical, chronologically skewed love story involving a terminally ill art historian and a naval engineer, who take an apartment in Venice and set about spending their remaining months, weeks or days making a film about Hieronymous Bosch's eponymous masterpiece. In the process of doing so, they blur the lines between art and reality and life and death, bringing the painting's details to life while inadvertently documenting their own desperate searches for truth in the face of inevitable tragedy. Rarely has a film taken its audience into such unflinchingly intimate contact with its characters, their hopes and fears, their spirit and dreams, *their* intimacy. You can read my full SIGHT & SOUND review [here](#).

GEORGES MÉLIÈS: FIRST WIZARD OF CINEMA 1896-1913 (Flicker Alley): Anyone who fancies himself a devotee of fantastic cinema needs to be better acquainted with the work of its father. While this revelatory compilation is not a complete set of Méliès' surviving films, it's as close as we're likely to see anytime soon. There is enough here, though, to offer a more rounded view of his achievement than can be derived from sets that focus only on his fantasy-themed shorts, which deny him larger recognition as the father of the docu-drama, as well. The set also includes Georges Franju's exquisite short film *LE GRAND MÉLIÈS* in excellent quality.

HOUDINI THE MOVIE STAR (Kino on Video): I'm not sure that Harry Houdini could have acted his way out of a paper bag, but you can't take your eyes off him, which makes the collection