

Silent London



BLOG, FESTIVAL

Le Giornate del Cinema Muto 2023: Pordenone Post No 6

OCTOBER 12, 2023 | PH | LEAVE A COMMENT

Good vibes only at the Giornate on this sunny Thursday. All of us who made it to the extra-early morning serial knew that we had got out of bed on the right side as soon as we realised that this episode of *Le P'tit Parigot* might have been called *La P'tite Parisienne*. Yes, it was young Bouboule's time to shine, as she raced to the rescue of Biscot in a very fetching Delaunay pinafore, and explained her actions in a nifty flashback while the two of them filed through his prison bars. The episode took a turn for the torrid towards the end, but otherwise oh what a joy.

Another fortunate case. Arnold Fanck's *Der Berg des Schicksals* (1924), was apparently a case of converting Dolomite-climbing footage shot for beauty not story into a narrative movie by shooting a new framing device. That explains a few plotheoles, but really this was a very taut, and not overwrought, mountain movie. Terrifying, too. One sequence in particular made my palms sweat, and I blame Mauro Colombis and Frank Bockius for making it extra tense. A sweet moment: as the snow thawed, the pine trees unfurled and sprang from curved to straight arrows. An oddly beautiful emblem of re-animation after the big freeze. Good to see one of my favourites, Hertha von Walther, in this as a young female climbing enthusiast.

Louis Feuillade was also reaping the harvest after a dark season, with his post-war vineyard drama *Vendémiaire* (1918), an epic that required the services of both Gabriel Thibaudeau and John Sweeney as accompanists. What I saw of this was beautiful (including a fair sight of winemaking practice) and I fear I missed something special, and very much of its era in the best possible way. A fine vintage, you might say.

I was at the talkies, you see. The talks I mean. Three more diverse books you could not find I am sure than Lisa Stein Haven's *The Early Years of Charlie Chaplin: Final Shorts and First Features* (Pen & Sword, UK), Ivo Blom's *Quo Vadis?, Cabiria, and the 'Archaeologists': Early Cinema's Appropriation of Art and Archaeology* (Kaplan) and Dimitrios Latsis's *How the Movies Got a Past – A Historiography of American Cinema, 1894-1930* (Oxford University Press). However, they all piqued my interest and this was a fascinating discussion.

I followed that with the annual costume lecture, which was a treat for the eyes indeed. Beth Werling toured us through the several stages of Mary Pickford's life, via 26 of her costumes, and six locks of her curly hair, preserved in the Los Angeles Museum of Natural History. So many gems, and great stories of filmmaking and costume preservation. MY favourite had to be the simply divine dress made from genuine cloth-of-gold, adorned with beads made of uranium glass (quite safe, we were told), that was designed for *Rosita*, but never made it to the final cut. Quite a life, and what a wardrobe.

I returned to the silent era in fine style, perched on a high balcony for tonight's treat from the Universal archives. Now, I don't really believe that Edward Everett Horton was ever young, but he did make silents before he made talkies and *Poker Faces* (Harry A. Pollard, 1926), co-starring Laura La Plante, was one of them. All of this was funny, though some of it broad, which worked believe me. But the best of it was Horton's intricate facial comedy, almost matched by La Plante's efforts, as he played an office worker known for his inscrutable features. With limited facial movement and no voice, was Edward Everett Horton still Edward Everett Horton? Yes, because apparently he can do it all with just half an eyebrow. Who knew? Jazzy accompaniment from Zerorchestra, playing joyous tunes and comic sound effects made this even more of a party. I told you it was a good day, vibes-wise..

Intertitle of the Day

"Roses are red, Violets are blue, I'm against royalty, How about you?" Anarchist poetry is short, sweet and to the point, in *A Truthful Liar* (Hampton Del Ruth, 1924)

- Happy birthday, Patricia!
- **Bouboule facts:** She was born Geneviève Juttet on 4 August 1916 and died on Christmas day 2015, aged 99, as Genevieve Temporel. She appeared in several Louis Feuillade films and then *Le P'tit Parigot*. For Feuillade she often co-starred with René Poyen, known as Bout de Zan, a prolific performer for the director. She had one adult role, likely a minor one, in 1934's short film *La Centenaire* (Pierre-Jean Ducis). She was not entirely forgotten in later life, however. She appeared at the Giornate in 2000, as part of the Louis Feuillade retrospective, and received a standing ovation. In 2004 Bernard Bastide interviewed her for his documentary *Bouboule fait du cinéma*.
- You can read more about the festival, and all of the films, on the Giornate website (<http://www.giornatedelcinemamuto.it/>).
- Silent London will always be free to all readers. If you enjoy checking in with the site, including reports from silent film festivals, features and reviews, please consider shouting me a coffee on my Ko-Fi page (<https://ko-fi.com/pamhutch>).

◀ ARNOLD FANCK ◀ BETH WERLING ◀ BISCOT ◀ BOUBOULE ◀ COSTUME DESIGN
 ◀ DIMITRIOS LATSIS ◀ EDWARD EVERETT HORTON ◀ FRANK BOCKIUS ◀ GCM42 ◀
GIORNATE DEL CINEMA MUTO ◀ IVO BLOM ◀ LAURA LA PLANTE ◀ LISA STEIN
HAVEN ◀ LOUIS FEUILLADE ◀ MARY PICKFORD ◀ MAURO COLOMBIS ◀