

Jean Renoir

In 1975 Jean Renoir was awarded an honorary Academy Award for his lifetime contribution to film. He is considered one of the first great *auteurs*, a cinematic master whose distinctive style always contained a concern for human issues and a reverence for natural beauty.

As the son of the great impressionist painter, Auguste Renoir, the filmmaker as a young man was encouraged to freely explore artistic and intellectual pursuits. He eventually chose ceramics, but during a long convalescence, developed a passion for film. He started his own production company in 1924, largely in order to launch the acting career of his wife, Catherine Hessling. His first film, *LA FILLE DE L'EAU* (1925) *THE WHIRLPOOL OF FATE*, and other silent films display early signs of what was to become characteristic of Renoir's work-- a sense of visual realism, the love of nature and the poetic representation of the physical environment. Film theorist Andre Bazin praised Renoir's early works for their modest use of camera movement and editing and emphasis on deep focus photography. Bazin argued that these techniques could lead the spectator to a more direct relationship with the landscapes and characters.

It was Renoir's "Popular Front" films of the late 1930s which brought him international acclaim. These films include such incontrovertible cinematic classics as *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* (1936) *THE CRIME OF*



Erich von Stroheim plays Captain von Rauffenstein in Jean Renoir's anti-war masterpiece *La Grande Illusion* (1937).

MR. LANGE, *LA BETE HUMAINE* (1938) *THE HUMAN BEAST*, *LA REGLE DU JEU* (1939) *THE RULES OF THE GAME* and *LA GRANDE ILLUSION* (1937) *THE GRAND ILLUSION*. Renoir lived in the United States in the 1940s and continued his career under 20th-Century Fox. His films from the time period include *THIS LAND IS MINE* (1943), *DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID* (1946), and *THE WOMAN ON THE BEACH* (1947). The UCLA Film and Television Archive has preserved the 1945 film, *THE SOUTHERNER*. Although Renoir considered his tenure in

Hollywood a period of "unrealized works and unrealized hopes," this film is a beautifully crafted story of a migrant worker who tries to start his own farm and who faces enormous hardship. Before Renoir returned to France, he traveled to India to make *THE RIVER* (1951). The film was made in Technicolor, and Renoir used this to explore the texture of the Indian landscape and culture.

FILMS

(this is only a partial list – consult the Archive Research and Study Center for further listings)

La Chienne (1931). Producer, Braunberger-Richebé. Director, Jean Renoir. Writers, Jean Renoir, André Girard. Study Copy: VD 322 M

La Règle Du Jeu (Rules of the Game) (1939). Producer, Claude Renoir. Director, Jean Renoir. Writers, Jean Renoir and Karl Kock. Study Copy: VD 24 M

Grand Illusion (1937). Producer, Raymond Blondy. Director, Jean Renoir. Writers, Charles Spaak, Jean Renoir. Study Copy: DVD 2643 M

The Southerner (1945). United Artists. Director, Jean Renoir. Writers, Jean Renoir and Hugo Butler. Study Copy: VA 5745 M

La Bête Humaine (Human Beast) (1938). Producer, Roland Tual. Director and Writer, Jean Renoir. Study Copy: DVD 2580 M

Le Crime de Monsieur Lange (1936). Producer, Geneviève Blondeau. Director, Jean Renoir. Writers, Jacques Prévert and Jean Renoir. Study Copy: VD 537 M

Boudu Sauvé des Eaux (Boudu Saved From Drowning) (1932). Producers, Michel Simon, Jean Gehret. Director and Writer, Jean Renoir. Study Copy: DVD 2766 M

Toni (1935). Films d'Aujourd'hui. Director, Jean Renoir. Writers, Jean Renoir and Carl Einstein. Study Copy: VA 5831 M.

La Petite Marchande d'Allumettes (Little Matchgirl) (1928). Producers, Jean Renoir and Jean Tedesco. Director and Writer, Jean Renoir. Study Copy: VA 2999 M

The Woman on the Beach (1947). RKO. Director, Jean Renoir. Writers, Jean Renoir and Frank Davis. Study Copy: VA 5351 M

PRINT RESOURCES

(for more information consult the UCLA Arts Library)

Bazin, André. *Jean Renoir*. New York: DaCapo Press, 1992.

Bertin, Célia. *Jean Renoir: A Life in Pictures*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

Renoir, Jean. *My Life and My Films*. New York: DaCapo Press, 1991.

Sesonske, Alexander. *Jean Renoir: The French Films, 1924-1939*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980.

RELATED RESOURCES

The Arts Library Special Collections unit of the UCLA Libraries Collection holds various materials related to Jean Renoir in the Jean Renoir Papers collection. For more information, please contact Arts Library Special Collections: (310) 825-7253.